

APPLIED PHILOSOPHY LYCEUM

Hosted by the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

CULTURAL RACISM



Linda Alcoff, Ph.D.

Professor of Philosophy

Hunter College and the Graduate Center,
City University of New York

Friday, April 11, 2025 • 5 p.m.

College of Education, Room 164

Linda Alcoff will define what cultural racism is and argue that it is central to understanding racism today, though it has receded into the background. Biological claims about race that justified racial rankings have long been disproved, and such approaches also lost

influence after World War II because of their association with Nazism. But racism simply shifted to the terrain of culture, in which cultures are taken to be just as unchanging as biological races once were. Culture is used to explain differences in economic development, to justify disparities in global power, and to limit migration.

The principal antidote to cultural racism is a more accurate understanding of cultures as hybrid and inherently dynamic. As a corrective, Alcoff develops the concept of "transculturation" from the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz. This helps us to foreground the colonial context of cultural ranking systems and offset the tendencies toward reification and determinism.

While transculturation often emerged from colonial practices including enslavement, the fact remains that mythic narratives of Western self-creation are simply false. A more accurate understanding of the formation of cultures will disabuse us of ranking and demand a re-understanding of the formation of racial groups as well.

This event is free and open to the public.

A reception will follow.

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