

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

READING GUIDE #0

SOCIAL PRIVILEGE

WHEN doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

READING

Deutsch, B. (2006, May 29). The male privilege checklist. *Alas, a Blog*. http://amptoons.com/blog/?page_id=2402

QUESTIONS

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. At the beginning of his article, Barry Deutsch notes a distinction (which he attributes to Peggy McIntosh) between racism/sexism as “individual acts of meanness” and racism/sexism as “invisible systems conferring dominance”.

What is the difference between these two forms of racism/sexism? Is one possible without the other?

2. What does Deutsch mean by “privilege”? In what ways are the privileges he lists thought to be invisible?
3. What does it mean to say (as Deutsch does) that it is a privilege to be oblivious to one’s privilege? If the privileges Deutsch lists are truly invisible, how is it possible to be made aware of them?
4. How does Deutsch respond to the criticism that his list errs because it ignores

the fact that men are disadvantaged in certain ways when compared to women?

5. If I (Professor Gray) can name items on this list that do not seem to hold for me, does that invalidate those items?
6. In general, how ought one go about proving or disproving whether something belongs on this list?
7. Should a person be blamed for using their privilege to benefit themselves and those that person cares about?
8. Who is responsible for addressing these invisible systems conferring dominance?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.