

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY COLLOQUIUM SERIES

PAUL C. TAYLOR



BIOGRAPHY

Paul C. Taylor is W. Alton Jones Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt University. He received a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Morehouse College, a master's degree in public administration from Harvard University, and a Ph.D. in philosophy from Rutgers University. His research focuses primarily on aesthetics, social and political philosophy, critical race theory, and Africana philosophy. His books include *On Obama* and *Black is Beautiful: A Philosophy of Black Aesthetics*, which received the 2017 monograph prize from the American Society for Aesthetics. He has also provided commentary for a variety of print and broadcast outlets, including Xinhua News, the CBC, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and the BBC.

INNOCENCE AND DEVASTATION: RACE THEORY, PROPHECY, AND PRACTICE

As scholars increasingly turn to James Baldwin to diagnose the maladies of racial politics, and as theories of epistemic injustice grow increasingly sophisticated, it is tempting – and eminently reasonable – to use notions like innocence to track certain dubious and distressing features of contemporary ethical life. “Innocence and Devastation” begins with the thought that racial innocence is a problem, and will explore some aspects of this problem. But I will also argue for the importance of cultivating a more productive kind of innocence in relation to contemporary philosophical race theory. This productive innocence is a response to what Lewis Gordon calls “disciplinary decadence” and to what Elena Ruiz calls “epistemic imperialism,” and one route to it runs through the aesthetic theories of Mary Mothersill.

Thursday, November 21 • 3:45 PM • YMCA 401