



With generous support from UConn's Humanities Institute, the Political Theory Workshop presents

"Enemies of the State: The Black Panther Party's Phenomenological Approach to Solidarity" Brooks Kirchgassner, PhD Student in POLS, with commentary by Benjamin Stumpf, PhD Student in POLS

What are the conditions of possibility in which those who are raced white could create and augment a political alliance based on practices of solidarity with individuals who are raced as non-white? What about individuals who identify as racially mixed, or multi-racial with people who identify as mono-racial? This paper argues that a phenomenological approach is best suited to understanding the function of race in the Black Panther Party's organizing efforts in creating The Rainbow Coalition in Chicago, Illinois, the implications and conclusions of which could potentially be applied to efforts of interracial solidarities in other contexts in the U.S. (or other settler-colonial societies).

As a direct challenge to liberal, state-based solutions to racist institutions, Kirchgassner argues that the Panthers' strategy was a phenomenological, and radical, one in that they did not view racial identity as innate or purely external to one's self (Monahan 2011). Instead, the Panthers' goal in building a Rainbow Coalition was to lay the foundations of a political solidarity that would not only have Black, white, Latinx, and Indigenous peoples work together to achieve specific goals, but transform how these individuals and groups saw themselves as political agents in creating de-centered community spaces to respond to the needs that the state (local and federal) ignored. With white participants, this involved a conscious refusal to participate in what Charles Mills calls the "civic and political responsibilities" of white members of the racial contract (1997, 14), in particular the "structured blindness and opacities" of the white racial order.

**April 5th, 12:15-1:30p.m.
on Zoom!
Questions? email
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