

How to Be a Biological Racial Realist

Abstract. In this talk, I will show that the case for biological racial realism is more formidable than philosophers have thought, provided that one adopts the right semantic, metaphysical, and biological assumptions. Specifically, I will argue that given a referentialist account of the meaning of ‘race’, a genuine kind account of biologically real kindhood, a fuzzy graph-theoretic account of populations, and the landmark results from Noah Rosenberg et al. (2002; 2005) on human population substructure, one can fashion a respectable account of race as the “B-partition” of metapopulations in a species (or “BPM race theory”). After developing this nuanced biological theory of race, I defend it against popular criticisms, such as semantic objections (e.g. Feldman 2008), metaphysical objections (Gannett 2003; Kaplan and Winther 2012), and sampling and other methodological objections (Kittles and Weiss 2003; Kalinowski 2011). I finish by discussing how BPM race theory fares with racial constructivism, and how it might inform issues that social and political philosophers care about.