

Race and Ethnicity in America
Sociology 2820 / African American Studies 2820

University of Georgia / Fall 2009 / TR 3:30-4:45 PM / MLC 250

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Course Overview

“The problem of the 20th century,” W.E.B. DuBois wrote over 100 years ago, “is the problem of the color line.” Still today in the 21st century, there is a good deal of evidence that would seem to vindicate DuBois’s bold prediction. But if most Americans can agree that race is a problem in the U.S., there is a tremendous amount of disagreement about almost everything else having to do with race. Why has race been so problematic? Who (or what) is to blame? Have the problems posed by race changed in recent years? Will race continue to be a problem in the 21st century? If so, what should we do about it? What can we do about it? And, finally, can anything positive come of all this? This course is designed to help students begin to develop their own informed perspectives on American racial “problems” by introducing them to the ways that sociologists deal with race, ethnicity, race relations and racism.

We will begin by talking generally about racial identities and attitudes in the United States, the ways in which these have changed since the Civil Rights movement, and the kinds of conceptual tools and empirical information needed to properly think about American racial problems. Then, we will turn our attention to the experience(s) of African Americans in the post-Civil Rights period and the coterminous realities of racism, whiteness, and white privilege. This will establish the basic structure of racial formations in the contemporary U.S., the mechanisms by which they are reproduced, and possibilities for resistance and change. In the third part of the course, we will expand our understanding of racial and ethnic dynamics by exploring the experiences of other communities of color in the U.S. and how race/ethnicity intersects with sources of stratification such as class, nationality, and gender. These units will focus especially on the experiences of Asian and Mexican immigrants. The objective in these units is both to learn more about these groups and also to consider what their experiences reveal with respect to the challenges racial and ethnic formations present for conventional, individualistic understandings of citizenship, group membership and social justice. The course will then conclude by re-considering ideas about assimilation, pluralism, and multiculturalism. Throughout, our goal will be to consider race both as a source of identity and social differentiation as well as a system of privilege, power and inequality affecting everyone in the society albeit in different ways.

Expectations, Objectives and Requirements

Students must be willing to attend lectures, keep up with the reading, and do the required work. Lectures will structure most of the class meetings; though these will often be discussion based and questions will always be encouraged. Some small group activity will also be utilized and films will play a central role in the course. **There will be an average of 50-75 pages of reading per week.** These will be drawn from three books, one of which is an edited collection of articles and essays. These books are (in the order in which they will be used):

- *Rethinking the Color Line: Readings in Race and Ethnicity*, Charles A. Gallagher (2009);

Online: http://www.coursesmart.com/givecoursesmartatry?xmlid=0077287908&_instructor=1550968

- *Asian American Women and Men: Labor, Laws and Love*, Yen Le Espiritu (2008);
- *Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail*, Ruben Martinez (2001).

These books are available for purchase at the campus bookstore. Other readings will be distributed as assigned.

Progress and performance in the course will be evaluated in the form of **attendance and participation (10% of the final grade), two (2) exams (30% each), and five (5) writing assignments (30% of the final grade)**. The dates of these various assignments are listed below; the content of each will be more fully elaborated in lecture. Students who make informed, insightful contributions to class discussions, make regular and productive use of office hours, and/or improve significantly over the course of the semester may also receive special consideration for the class participation portion of the grade.

Participation: Attendance will not be taken in the class. However, it is vital that you attend class, as readings alone will not prepare you for the exams. Therefore, I offer 10% of your grade as an incentive to be in class. There will be in-class activities in some class periods and not in others. These can be as simple as a question turned in at the end of class or as elaborate as a small group exercise. If you're there and turn in the activity, you get full credit, if you're not, you don't. No exceptions. **No late participation exercises will be accepted.**

Exams: There will be a mid-term and a final exam which will cover roughly equal amounts of material. The exams will be primarily multiple-choice but will include short answer and short essay questions. Everything in the class is fair game for exam questions. Therefore, exams may include questions on lecture materials, readings, films, class discussions, guest speakers, and supplementary handouts. I will give you guidelines and more information on the format before the exam. **I do not give make-up exams.** In the rare instance that I am required to do so by University policy all makeup exams are essay format.

Writing Assignments: You will have a total of 5 short writing assignments. You are required to write one short photo essay at the beginning of the course (5%). You will also be required to write 4 (each worth 5%) critical responses to questions in the text. There are "big picture" questions posed at the end of several of the articles in the Gallagher text. I have selected 9 that are particularly relevant to the work we are doing in the course. You are required to write a short paper (around 500 words) answering the question posed. Your response, while brief, should answer all parts of the question posed and rely your critical assessment of course material. You will receive guidelines about these assignments before the first one is due. **I do not accept late writing assignments.**

My style: Exams will cover material from reading, lectures, films, class discussions, guest speakers and supplementary handouts. That said, I generally do not lecture from the readings. I believe that my value to you is in offering original lectures that complement the readings, not in reviewing the readings for you. It is your responsibility to keep up with the reading and ask questions when you do not understand or need clarification. I also do not take attendance. I believe that at this point in your life you get to make decisions about where you spend your time. That said, it is imperative that you attend class. Your grade WILL suffer if you do not come to class. Again, I offer a 10% incentive for being there and reading in the form of participation exercises, but beyond that it's up to you. BUT--be warned, that you will not do well if you do not attend class regularly **and** do the readings!

Grading Scale

A	94 to 100 percent	C+	79 to 81 percent
A-	91 to 93 percent	C	76 to 78 percent
B+	88 to 90 percent	C-	71 to 75 percent
B	85 to 87 percent	D	64 to 70 percent
B-	82 to 84 percent	F	0 to 63 percent

Overall Ground Rules:

- 1) Race can be a very sensitive subject. We will all respect one another's viewpoints and opinions. We will also respect everyone's right to ask questions. I do ask that you think through your thought or question before you say it out loud to assess whether you think it will be outright offensive to anyone. I also will not tolerate personal or group-based attacks on anyone. To facilitate open discussion, I will ask students to submit any questions they do not want to ask in front of the class in writing after class or by email to the professor. I will try my best to get to all of them. Keep in mind that there will be many questions I do not know the answer to. However, I will do my best to get answers for us when possible.
- 2) Please arrive to class on time and prepared to be a full participant. You should have the readings completed before coming to class. This also means that reading the newspaper, surfing the internet, text messaging or whatever else, are unsuitable activities during class time. If you would prefer to do something else during class, you may choose not to attend. If you engage in any of these activities during class I will ask you to stop. If it continues, I will ask you to leave.
- 3) I post lecture outlines online but as a matter of policy, do not give my lecture notes or power point slides to students under any circumstances. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get any handouts from me and notes and/or an update from a classmate.
- 4) I will not discuss points on exams or grades on written assignments. I spend a considerable amount of time developing grading criteria and giving thoughtful attention to the grading process. Therefore, I will only consider any grading issues in writing. If you disagree with your grade on a written assignment, or think a test item was scored wrong, if you disagree with the answer to a given question, or even if you just think there was a calculation error, you may **submit a written request** for your exam or paper to be rescored. Please keep in mind that if I rescore a paper that the TA has graded, I reserve the right to assign a lower grade. The request should include a detailed description of the problem and a justification for your request. All written requests for exam or paper re-marking must be submitted within one (1) week of the day we hand back the assignment or exam.

Academic Honesty

All students are expected to adhere to the highest standard of academic honesty as represented by UGA's Culture of Honesty. For more on the policy, see: http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/culture_honesty.htm.

IMPORTANT:

This syllabus represents a tentative guide to the course. The professor may make changes to it as deemed necessary throughout the term. Any changes will be brought to your attention in lecture.

LECTURE SCHEDULE, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS*

CL Rethinking the Color Line **AA** Asian American Men and Women **CO** Crossing Over

Part I: Historical Context and Conceptual FoundationsGetting Started

- T 8.18 Course introduction and overview
- R 8.20 Race Theory: Assimilation and its Discontents
CL: xi-xiii (Preface) 1-3 (Introduction) **AND** 22-32 (Theoretical Perspectives)

The Problematic of Race and Ethnic Formations in Post-Civil Rights America

- T 8.25 The constructionist approach—Socio-Historic Constructions
CL: 5-8 (Sorting by Color, How Our Skins Got Their Color)
- R 8.27 Race: The Power of an Illusion episode 1 – No new readings

Foundations, Continued

- T 9.1 Constructionism Continued—Race as Chameleon
CL: 9-17 (Drawing the Color Line) **AND** CL: 61-71 (Defining Race)
[BIG PICTURE p. 38 DUE]
- R 9.3 Contemporary Constructionist Approaches
CL: 17-22 (Racial Formations) **AND** 33-38 (Racialized Social System)

More Foundations

- T 9.8 TBA
- R 9.10** Race: The Power of an Illusion episode 2 – No new readings
****Photo Essay DUE****

Contemporary Legacies

- T 9.15 An Introduction to Contemporary Socioeconomic Trends: Focus on Education
CL: 39-49 (An Overview of Trends in Social and Economic Well-Being, by Race) **AND**
Excerpt from Savage Inequalities ONLINE
- R 9.17 Consequences of the Color Line
CL: 57-60 (Transformative Assets) **AND** pp. 165-183 (Residential Segregation)
[BIG PICTURE p. 49 DUE]

* Unless otherwise noted, all readings and assignments should be completed prior to the class meeting for which they are assigned.

Understanding Racism

- T 9.22 Attitudes, Behaviors and Beliefs in a Structural Context
CL: 125-137 (Race Prejudice, Discrimination)
[BIG PICTURE p. 60 DUE]
- R 9.24 Race: The Power of an Illusion episode 3 – No new readings
[BIG PICTURE p. 130 DUE]

Part II: African Americans and Structures of Race in the U.S.Mechanisms of Racial Formation and Reproduction

- T 9.29 White privilege
CL: 146-154 (Possessive Investment) **AND** McIntosh, White Privilege (hand out)
- R 10.1 Institutional Racism/Criminal Justice System
CL: 219-249
[BIG PICTURE p. 154 DUE]

Race and Representation

- T 10.6 Black Images
CL: 298-310 (Broadcast News Portrayal of Minorities, Television and the Politics of Representation)
[BIG PICTURE p. 225 and/or p. 249 DUE]
- R 10.8 Mid-term

Race & Representation

- T 10.13 Native American Representation
CL: 321-327 (Winnebagos, Cherokees, Apaches, and Dakotas)
- R 10.15 Film: In Whose Honor – No new readings
[BIG PICTURE p. 327 DUE]

Part III: Beyond White and BlackNew Immigrants and Other Communities of Color

- T 10.20 Contemporary Immigration and the Changing Face of America
CL: 335-342 (Introduction, Melting Pot)
- R 10.22 Immigration History/ Ethnic Identity
CL: 365-376 (Ethnic and Racial Identity)
[BIG PICTURE p. 342 DUE]

The Asian American Experience

- T 10.27 Overview to Asian Americans and Asian American Studies
AA: Chapters 1 and 2
- R 10.29 Historical context – Film: My America
AA: Chapter 3

The Asian American Experience Contd. & Mexicans “Crossing Over”

- T 11.3 Contemporary Asian America
AA: Chapter 4 AND pp. 97-110.
- R 11.5 The Mexican experience
CO: “Prologue” AND Chapter 1

The Mexican American Experience

- T 11.10 Film: Farmingville
CO: Chapters 8 and 9
- R 11.12** Wrap up Crossing Over/Farmingville
CO: Chapters 11-13

The Mexican Experience, continued/Critical Perspectives

- T 11.17 Color Blind America?
CL: 130-148 (Color Blind Privilege, Ideology of Colorblindness)
- R 11.19 TBA

11.24 & 11.26 NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAKAnti-Racist Strategies

- T 12.1 Black Movements: Civil Rights and Beyond
CL: 192-203 (Environmental Justice) AND Don’t Dump on Us & Masked Racism
(handout)
- R 12.3 Now what? / Exam Review
CL: 409-418 (Policy Steps, Ten Things)

FINAL EXAM Tuesday, December 15 3:30-6:30 PM