

Race in American Studies: Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Racial Formation

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Office Hours: M/W 11:00am-12:00pm; T 5:45-6:45pm; and by appt.

AMST 502T

Spring 2009

T 7:00-9:45pm

UH 333

COURSE OVERVIEW

This class is an advanced analysis of the ways in which Americans have constructed, defined, represented, and negotiated racial identity and racial hierarchies from the seventeenth century to the present. Although this course takes an historical approach, it is not meant to be a survey. Instead we will pursue an in-depth analysis of how different cultural historians with differing interdisciplinary specialties have approached the study of racial formation and interracial interactions. It attends to substantive conclusions as well as theoretical and methodological considerations. *Please note: I reserve the right to modify this syllabus at any time.

OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING GOALS

- compare and contrast the experiences of different groups of Americans according to such factors as race, ethnicity, gender, class, immigration status
- relate the comparative history of race and ethnicity to broader trends in American Studies scholarship
- complete an advanced research paper or critical synthetic review essay
- critically read interdisciplinary secondary sources on the cultural history of racial formation

REQUIRED TEXTS: The following books are required for this course. They can be purchased at Little Professor Text Books – 725 North Placentia Avenue, Fullerton.

Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.

Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. Boston: Back Bay Books, 1994.

Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Readings marked with asterisk (*) will be handed out in class or available online.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Participation and Seminar Leadership (30% of final grade)

•Active student participation is required. Read all assigned class material and come to every class meeting prepared to raise questions about the reading, to relate the readings to each other, and to relate the readings to broader issues in the cultural history of racial identities/hierarchies and American Studies. Class meetings will consist of seminar discussions on weekly reading assignments, and peer review of student projects. Students will also be assigned to frame one class discussion with a brief (10 minute) presentation (and accompanying five page paper) for a selected text. The discussion itself should be speculative and inquisitive: you should raise questions and open-ended issues that urge the rest of us to debate and expand upon your ideas and conclusions.

Written Assignments (70% of final grade).

•Since this is a graduate seminar, there will be no tests in this class. Instead, students will complete a seminar paper. (A separate handout will provide additional details on the writing assignment.) Because of the diversity of student interests, this paper may take one of two forms: students may either write a synthetic review essay on a selected topic, or undertake a traditional research paper on a selected aspect of race in American culture. The completed papers should be approximately 20 pages in length. The final product will be worth 40% of your final grade.

•Before embarking on your seminar paper, student will need to discuss their choice of paper topic, plan of research and reading, and approach to writing the essay. A preliminary 2-3 page statement of purpose and working bibliography will be required of all students and should 1) discuss your topic in some detail, 2) explain what you hope to learn by studying this topic, and 3) outline your methodology and sources. The preliminary statement of purpose and working bibliography will count for 10% of your final grade.

•During the last three weeks of class, students will make formal presentations on their seminar papers and provide drafts for review so that they may benefit from the comments and suggestions of other class members. This draft and formal presentation will be worth 20% of your final grade.

•Students who fail to provide any of these materials by the due date will have their grade for that assignment lowered by one letter grade for each day it is late. Students who fail to lead their assigned session will receive a failing participation grade. Moreover, since a seminar depends on student participation, students who miss two or more classes will be ineligible for “A” grades and consistent tardiness will factor in negatively to your grade. There will be no extra credit offered for this course.

Plus/minus grading will be used in this course.

Breakdown of percentages: A+ = 97-99; A = 94-96; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83; C+ = 77-79; C = 74-76; C- = 70-73; D+ = 67-69; D = 64-66; D- = 60-63; F = 0-59

Breakdown of grade points: A+ = 4.0; A = 4.0; A- = 3.7; B+ = 3.3; B = 3.0; B- = 2.7; C+ = 2.3; C = 2.0; C- = 1.7; D+ = 1.3; D = 1.0; D- = .07; F = 0

Students with Disabilities: Students in need of disability services should visit the DSS webpage, or call DSS at 714-278-3117. You are also encouraged to speak with me immediately.

Academic Dishonesty: I expect that all written work will be your own. Instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of Judicial Affairs, and may result in a failing grade for the course. For more information on academic dishonesty, consult the University Catalog.

Course Outline

Unit I: Race and National Identity

T 1/27 Introduction: Defining "Race"

Reading: *Barbara Jeanne Fields, "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America," *New Left Review* 181 (May/June 1990): 95-118.

T 2/3 Race, Ethnicity and American Studies I

Reading: Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, Parts One and Two

T 2/10 Race, Ethnicity and American Studies II

Reading: Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, Parts Three and Four

T 2/17 Whiteness and Citizenship

Reading: Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*

T 2/24 The "Other" and National Identity

Reading: Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*

Unit II: Intersectionality: Race, Class, and Gender

T 3/3 Theorizing Intersectionality

Reading: *Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Meta-language of Race," *Signs* 17 (Winter 1992), 251-74.

Paper Proposals and Bibliographies Due

T 3/10 Economies of Race and Gender in the Atlantic World

Reading: Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women*

T 3/17 Race, Class and Resistance

Readings: *Barbara Y. Welke, "When All the Women Were White, and All the Blacks Were Men: Gender, Class, Race, and the Road to Plessy, 1855-1914," *Law and History Review* (Fall 1995), 261-315.

*Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 1996, Introduction and chapter 1.

Unit III: Remapping Borders and Boundaries

3/24 Geographies of Race and Sex

Reading: Kevin Mumford, *Interzones*

3/31 Spring Break – No Classes

4/7 Legal Boundaries and Racial Formation
Reading: Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*

4/14 The Transnational Turn: Theorizing Race and Diaspora
Reading: Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*

4/21 Beyond Cultural “Purity”
Reading: Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*

4/28 – 5/5 – 5/12 Research Presentations and Peer Review

5/19 -- Final Papers Due