

Race in US Politics

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Course Description

In this seminar, we start with the basic premise that race matters. How do we understand the conceptualization of race across time? How has the production of racial difference shaped our own experiences and relationships to the American state? What are the connections between racial power and protest — what are the possibilities for change? Together we will survey the literature in political science, sociology, anthropology, history, urban studies, ethnic studies, and other fields to explore how race and racialization processes are articulated in the production of everyday life and entangled with other social structures including gender, class, sexuality, nation, empire, and colonialism. We will spend the first half of the semester interrogating the roots of race and racism in the United States context, discussing the history of the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, genocide, migration, and borders. The latter half of the semester will focus on resistance and political agency — emphasis will be placed on contemporary moments for racial justice from the movement for Black lives uprisings to recent calls to #StopAAPIHate. Topics include but are not limited to ethnic and panethnic identities, diasporic intimacies, immigration, spatial segregation, incarceration, displacement, solidarity and abolitionist futures. Texts include Tehama Lopez Bunyasi and Candis Watts Smith's *Stay Woke: A People's Guide to Making All Black Lives Matter*, Lisa Marie Cacho's *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected*, Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor's *From Black Lives Matter to Black Liberation*, and more. As we read these texts together, you will be exposed to intersectional, comparative, and emergent approaches to the study of race, power, culture, and politics that can inform contemporary movements for racial justice.

The course has several main objectives: 1) to investigate the role of race and racialization in the production of American politics 2) to understand the effect of race on shaping American political institutions and systems 3) to become comfortable with key concepts and terminologies in critical race studies 4) to develop a shared vocabulary for talking about race and racism beyond the walls of our classroom 5) to learn about diverse methodologies that include qualitative, quantitative, experimental, and community-rooted research and how to produce scholarship that extends beyond the campus audience.

Course Requirements

Attendance: This seminar is designed to be participatory and collaborative in nature, attendance is necessary for you to understand the course material. I ask for regular attendance, if you are unable to attend due to illness or an emergency you should notify me over email before class begins.

Readings: Make sure that you have access to the required texts online or in print, it is expected that you will complete all assigned reading before class. Keep in mind that our syllabus is a living document, with future readings and content updated regularly based on our conversations together and also what unfolds in the world around us. For accessibility, our readings are accessible via Rutgers libraries or can be found under the files tab on Canvas.

Participation: I expect that you will come to class prepared to share, reflect, and challenge each other in a respectful manner. Be prepared to discuss the readings assigned for each week, actively engaging the course materials will help make our seminar more interesting and relevant for everyone. Part of participation will involve your facilitation of one class discussion.

Office hours: My office hours are virtual and on Friday mornings from 10 am-12pm, use the recurring zoom link sent via email to join office hours.

Assignment Overview:

Weekly Memos: You are required to write weekly memos about the readings to be uploaded in our shared One Drive folder **by 6 pm on Wednesday night**. Each memo should be one single spaced page and engage with at least two of the week's readings. The purpose of these memos is not to summarize the texts but to become more comfortable in articulating your own thoughts, critiques, contradictions, or original arguments that stem from the readings. The goal is to develop a consistent practice of writing that improves our substantive, methodological, theoretical, or practical understanding of the themes covered each week.

Facilitating Discussions: Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to co-facilitate one class discussion for thirty minutes. I will share a sign up sheet the second week of class. In addition to coming up with a list of guiding questions, facilitators are responsible for incorporating multimedia materials beyond written texts to supplement our readings for the week, for instance short films, exhibits, photographs, audio interviews, songs or mixtapes, which we will view together in class and then discuss.

Race and Oral History Project: We spend the first weeks learning about how race, racialization, and the production of racial difference come to shape our own experiences and relationships to American politics. In a series of collaborative brainstorming sessions, each of you will be asked to identify a family member or chosen family member to conduct an oral history interview with. Throughout this process, I ask that you consider these questions: How can narrative work facilitate dialogue around issues of racial inequality and social change? How can oral histories inform our thinking about the policies, practices, procedures, institutions, and systems that uphold racial difference? What are ethical ways to conduct oral histories, especially when it comes to processing grief and trauma? What are specific ways in which oral histories and memory work can build community power? You will become familiarized with digital storytelling projects including Densho Project, Queer Newark, Mott Haven Oral History Project, and Asian/Pacific/American Voices: A Covid-19 Public

Memory Project. Your oral history interview transcript is **due on Thursday November 4**. The analysis and reflection is **due on Thursday November 11**, it should be no longer than three single space pages.

Futurities Collage Research Project: Throughout the semester, you will learn different methodological approaches to study race that links the past, present, and future. This project requires you to conduct some archival research to answer this question: What is the future of race in America? In a series of collaborative brainstorming sessions and workshop with collage artist Aaron Marin, each of you will be asked to create a collage that draws from and remixes various materials from the archives that you have easiest access to. Through the collage, this assignment emphasizes imaginative, speculative, and futurist approaches to understanding a specific theme or issue area that we explored in our seminar. In addition to remixing archival materials, the collage can incorporate a variety of other forms including quotes from your oral history interviews, illustrations, audio, photographs, poetry, etc. Your final project will be the production of a collage and 10-page paper with analysis, the assignment is broken down into two parts: 1) an in class peer review session and 2) the final project **due on Thursday December 16**. Note, send me a digitized version of your collage and paper in a single PDF.

Reflection: Instead of a final memo, each of you will be asked to write a one page reflection **due before class on December 9**. The reflection will provide a chance for you to reflect on our semester together. What were some of the most important lessons gained from our course materials and conversations? How would you describe your personal growth this semester? How will the knowledge gained from this course support your goals and visions for the future? There is no right way to write a reflection so long as it include your own thoughts and visions inspired by our conversations.

Grading Policy

Participation.....	30%
Weekly Memo.....	20%
Race and Oral History Project.....	20%
Futurities Collage.....	20%
Reflection.....	10%

Other Course Information

Email Policy: Feel free to email me with questions, I will check my email more frequently during the week and before assignments are due. Please do not wait until the last minute.

Electronic Devices: The success of our seminar rests on active participation and mutual respect for the space we build together. During class, I expect that you will abstain from sending emails and doing other work on your devices.

COVID-19 Safety: To protect the health and wellbeing of all members of the campus community, masks must be worn by all persons inside campus buildings when in the presence of others, and in buildings in non-private enclosed settings (e.g., common workspaces, meeting rooms, classrooms, etc.). Masks should securely cover the nose and mouth. Masks must be worn during all class meetings. Each day before you arrive on campus or leave your residence hall, you must complete the brief survey on the My Campus Pass symptom checker self-screening app at: [myRutgers Portal](#).

Campus Resources

Students with Disabilities: Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities, Rutgers is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students, and welcomes students with disabilities into all the University's educational programs. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to

disability. More information can be found at www.ods.rutgers.edu. You can contact ODS at (848)445–6800 or via email at dsoffice@echo.rutgers.edu.

Statement of Nondiscrimination: Rutgers enforces non-discrimination and anti-harassment policy and complaint procedures at all levels in order to create an environment free from discrimination, harassment, retaliation and sexual assault. Discrimination or harassment based on race, religion, gender and/or gender identity or expression, religion, age, national origin, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy, marital status, citizenship status, or on any other legally prohibited basis is unlawful and will not be tolerated.

Academic Integrity

At Rutgers you belong to a community of scholars and practitioners who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. A few examples of behaviors that would compromise academic integrity include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Plagiarism means knowingly misrepresenting someone else's work as your own. This includes offenses like buying a paper off the internet, as well as appropriating another author's words or ideas without proper citation. More information: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction.

Thursday, September 2

— Introductions

Week 2: What is race?

Thursday, September 9

— Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986) *Racial Formation in the United States*, “The Theory of Racial Formation”

— George Lipsitz (1998) *Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, “The Changing Same” and “Possessive Investment in Whiteness”

— Claire Jean Kim (1999) “Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans,” in *Politics and Society*

Week 3: Entanglements of race and empire.

Thursday, September 16

— Christina Sharpe (2016) *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, “The Wake”

— Lisa Yun (2008) *The Coolie Speaks: Chinese Indentured Laborers and African slaves in Cuba*, “Historical Context of the Coolie Traffic to the Americas”

— Edward Said (1978) *Orientalism*, “Introduction”

— Gary Okihiro (1994) *Margins and Mainstreams*, “Perils of the Body and Mind” and “Is Yellow Black or White”

— Thora Siemsen (2018) “[On Working with Archives: An Interview with writer Saidiya Hartman](#),” published in *The Creative Independent*

Week 4: Colonial histories and intimacies.

Monday, September 23

- Lisa Lowe (2015) *The Intimacy of Four Continents*, “Introduction”
- Lisa Yun (2008) *The Coolie Speaks: Chinese Indentured Laborers and African slaves in Cuba*, “The Coolie Testimonies”
- Vivek Bald (2015) *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America*, “Bengali Harlem” and “Life and Times of a Multiracial Community”
- Alessandro Portelli (1998) *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Alistair Thomson and Robert Perks, “What Makes Oral History Different”
- [Visit the Densho digital repository](#)

Week 5: War and the refugee condition.

Thursday, September 30

- George Lipsitz (1998) *Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, “Whiteness and War”
- Lisa Marie Cacho (2012) *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected*, “Introduction: The Violence of Value” and “Beyond Ethical Obligation”
- Lila Abu-Lughod (2002) “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?” in *American Anthropologist*

Week 6: Immigration and the boundaries of whiteness.

Thursday, October 7

— David Roediger (1991) *Wages of Whiteness*, “Irish American Workers and White Racial Formation in the Antebellum United States”

— Mae Ngai (2004) “The Strange Career of the Illegal Alien: Immigration Restriction and Deportation Policy in the United States, 1921–1965,” in *Law and History Review*

— George Lipsitz (1998) *Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, “Finding Families of Resistance: Frantic to Join... the Japanese Army”

— Monami Maulik (2011) “Our Movement Is for the Long Haul: Ten Years of DRUM’s Community Organizing by Working-Class South Asian Migrants,” in *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*

— Linda Shopes (2002) “Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes, and Possibilities,” in *Journal of American History*

Week 7: Intersectionality in theory and practice.

Thursday, October 14

— [The Combahee River Collective Statement](#)

— Patricia Hill Collins (1990) *Black Feminist Thought*, “Black Feminist Thought in the Matrix of Domination”

— Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, Violence Against Women of Color,” in *Stanford Law Review*

—Cathy Cohen (1997) “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics,” in *Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*

—Ange-Marie Hancock (2007) “When Multiplication Doesn’t Equal Quick Addition: Examining Intersectionality as a Research Paradigm,” in

Perspectives on Politics

— Sami Schalk and Jina B. Kim (2020) “Integrating Race, Transforming Feminist Disability Studies,” in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*

Week 8: Racial capitalism and the question of ownership.

Thursday, October 21

— Cedric Robinson (1983) *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, “Forward by Robin D.G. Kelley” and “Introduction”

— Jodi Melamed (2015) “Racial Capitalism,” in *Critical Ethnic Studies*

— Jordan T. Camp (2009) “We Know This Place: Neoliberal Racial Regimes and the Katrina Circumstance,” in *American Quarterly*

— Ta-Nehisi Coates (2014) “[The Case for Reparations](#),” in *The Atlantic*, also available as audio on [soundcloud](#)

— Listen to one episode of New Dawn: Race and Capitalism podcast with Michael Dawson

— [Anti-Eviction Mapping Project](#), view *(Dislocation):Black Exodus* zine

Week 9: Race and the paradox of representation.

Thursday, October 28

— Jane Mansbridge (1999) “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent Yes,” in *Journal of Politics*

— Michael Dawson (1994) *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African American Politics*, “Models of African American Racial and Economic Group

Interests” and “African American Partisanship and the Party System”
— Dara Strolovitch (2006) “Do Interest Groups Represent the Disadvantaged? Advocacy at the intersections of Race, Class, Gender,” in *Journal of Politics*.

— Marion Orr and Domingo Morel (2018) *Latino Mayors: Political Change in the Postindustrial City*, “Latino Mayors and the Evolution of Urban Politics” and “Patterns of Representation: A Descriptive Analysis of Latino Mayor Cities in the United States”

Week 10: Mapping a politics from below.

Thursday, November 4

— Robin D.G. Kelley (1993) “We Are Not What We Seem: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in Jim Crow South,” in *Journal of American History*

— Cathy Cohen (2004) “Deviance as Resistance: A New Research Agenda for the Study of Black Politics,” in *DuBois Review*

—Melissa Harris Lacewell Perry (2004) *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought*, “Everyday Talk and Ideology” and “Truth and Soul: Black Talk in the Barbershop”

— Andrea Roberts (2018) “Performance as Place Preservation: The Role of Storytelling in the Formation of Black Counter Publics” in *Journal of Community Archaeology and Heritage*

Week 11: Protest politics and the movement for Black lives.

Thursday, November 11

— Tehama Lopez Bunyasi and Candis Watts Smith (2019) *Stay Woke: A People's Guide to Making All Black Lives Matter*, “On the Matter of Black Lives” and “All the Words People Throw Around” and “It Doesn't Have To Be This Way”

— Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (2016) *From Black Lives Matter to Black Liberation*, “Barack Obama: The End of an Illusion” and “Black Lives Matter: A Movement, Not Moment”

— Movement for Black Lives, [Platform and Demands](#)

— Letters for Black Lives (2017) “[An Open Letter to Our Families About Black Lives Matter](#)”

— *Virtual collage making workshop with Aaron Marin, New York-based collage artist and illustrator*

Week 12: Wedge politics and cross-racial solidarities.

Thursday, November 18

— Diane Wong (2021) “The Future Is Ours To Build: Asian American Counterstories for Black Liberation,” in *Politics, Groups, and Identities*

— Laura Pulido (2006) *Black, brown, yellow, and left: radical activism in Los Angeles*, “Serving the People and Vanguard Politics: The Formation of the Third World Left in Los Angeles”

— Luis Alvarez and Daniel Widener (2008) “A History of Black and Brown: Chicana/o and African American Cultural and Political Relations,” in *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies*

— Mari J. Matsuda (1996) *Where Is Your Body*, “We Will Not Be Used: Are Asian Americans the Racial Bourgeoisie”

— Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*, “Care Webs: Experiments in Creative Collective Access”

Week 13: The carceral state and abolition politics

Thursday, December 2

— Angela Y. Davis (2003) *Are Prisons Obsolete*, “Introduction — Prison Reform or Prison Abolition”

— Kelly Lytle Hernandez (2011) “Amnesty or Abolition? Felons, Illegals, and the Case for a New Abolition Movement,” in *Boom*

— Vesla Weaver and Amy Lerman (2010) “Political Consequences of the Carceral State,” *American Political Science Review*

— David Cortez (2020) “Latinx in La Migra: Why They Join and Why It Matters,” in *Political Research Quarterly*

— Rachel Kushner (2019) “[Is Prison Necessary? Ruth Wilson Gilmore Might Change Your Mind](#),” in *New York Times Magazine*

— Mark Tseng-Putterman (2017) “[On Vincent Chin and the Kind of Men You Send to Jail](#),” in *Asian American Writers Workshop’s The Margins*

Week 14: Dreaming of otherwise worlds.

Thursday, December 9