SOCIOLOGY 572 – RACE, ETHNICITY, AND INEQUALITY
FALL 2010
Thursdays, 9:50AM-12:30PM
Davison Hall

Professor: Zaire Dinzey-Flores
Sociology / Latino & Hispanic Caribbean Studies
Email: zdinzey@rci.rutgers.edu
Office Hours: Thursdays, 3-4 PM in Lucy Stone Hall A261 and by appointment
Course Website: sakai.rutgers.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers a foundational introduction to the field of race and ethnicity in US Sociology. A vast field at the very foundations of US Sociology, in this course we will cover some of the central theoretical and thematic debates that have characterized the study of race and ethnicity in the discipline. The course is divided in three parts. We will begin with an overview of the trajectory of the study of race and ethnicity in Sociology, along with a deep examination of the different perspectives on the “social construction of race. In the second part we will survey the contributions of key authors as they lay the parameters of the theoretical debates, terms, and language that would frame the study of race and ethnicity. In the third part of the course, we will sample thematic areas that have been at the heart of the study of race ethnicity, explore how they revive or contest the debates of prior eras, and determine whether they have repositioned the theoretical premises and foundations in the study of race and ethnicity. Together, the course hopes to offer an integrated and foundational understanding of how the study of race and ethnicity has been pursued in Sociology and some of the major theoretical and practical concerns that have concerned sociologists with respects to the field race and ethnicity.

Given practical limitations, it is impossible to examine the breadth of work in the area of race and ethnicity. For that matter, this course chooses to focus on foundational works, and thus leans towards “older” work that spans the last 100 years rather than on newer trailblazing work being produced in this field. Nevertheless, while the course is not structured to survey the new contributions in the field, it is my hope that having a strong understanding of the foundations will help motivate, contextualize, and further future study of contemporary work in the field. Nietzsche believed that there are no original texts, and the field of race and ethnicity has been accused of regurgitating (in frame, underlying theories and logics) much of what has been written before, from the very early scholars to the very new contributions in the filed. In exploring this foundational work, and comparing it to newer work, I’m hoping to create a basis to assess work in the field with respects to their ability to break from, enforce, or recreate foundational debates and positions.
A Note on the Course and Prior Knowledge

This course does not recount the history of different ethnic and racial groups. In fact, you will notice that the course reflects the gaps and valleys that have been true to how race and ethnicity has been studied in Sociology. Nevertheless, and to be able to note these blind-spots, this course assumes a basic general historical understanding of race and ethnicity in the US, that is, how different groups have come into contact and have been incorporated. For those who want to refresh their knowledge on this history, I strongly recommend reading Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Cultural America* (New York: Back Bay, 2008). Other web resources that may be useful are:

- [http://www.understandingrace.org/history/index.html](http://www.understandingrace.org/history/index.html)

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

I expect you to attend class and to come prepared and ready (may I dare say excited!) to engage in conversation about the week’s readings.

1. **2 Weekly Discussion Questions (10%)**
   The discussion questions should be based on the readings and should reflect engagement with, and careful thought about, the readings. You are to post your questions on Sakai the Wednesday PRIOR to class, by 5pm.

2. **5 Discussion Memos (25%)**:
   You are to write a total of five 1-2 page memos on the week’s readings. In the memos, you will choose one of your weekly discussion questions to go about preliminarily answering the question, from your perspective, or offering ideas as to what directions would be worth pursuing in getting closer to developing an answer to the question. Memos are to be submitted on the Sakai Discussion forum by Wednesday at noon and be accessible to all. You will sign up to submit memos on specific weeks.

3. **2 Discussion Leadership (30%)**:
   You will lead two class sessions (individually or paired), the weeks to be determined on the first day of class.

   The first discussion leadership will occur during Part II of the course. In the first discussion leader role, each facilitator will develop questions and themes pertaining to the readings that the class can discuss.

   The second facilitation will occur during Part III of the course. For this discussion leader role, each facilitator will develop questions and themes, and also
introduce a piece of your own choosing to discuss alongside the assigned readings. You may choose an article (academic, journalistic, or current events), a book, or even a creative literary, art work, or film that illuminates or complements the week’s readings. Be ready to give sufficient background on the piece so that others can engage with it. You can choose to bring a selection of the piece or an illustration to share, or show a brief clip. I can also suggest readings. Please feel free to consult with me.

4. **Final Paper (35%)**: **DUE in my box by 3pm on MONDAY DECEMBER 13**
   You will complete a final paper of 18-20 pages. The paper can take different forms, based on what would be most useful to you. You can decide to do a research proposal, an analytic literature review, a theoretical essay examining and combining literatures or identifying new directions or perspectives for racial and ethnic research, or revise an ongoing article or piece with the topics, perspectives, and literatures of the course. Be sure to discuss your intent with regards to the topic and format of your paper by **October 7**. A one-page description of the paper topic with five references is **due on October 28**. On the last day of class, you will have the opportunity to briefly present your paper and get feedback and questions that might help completing last-minute revisions to the paper.

**COURSE READINGS**

Most course readings will be available via Sakai. However, this is a great time to build your personal library, since many of the texts we will be reading are considered classics in the field. You may obtain most of these texts online.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: September 2**  Introduction

I. FOUNDATIONS: Sociology and the Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity

*How have race and ethnicity been studied in Sociology? What does it mean to say that “race is a social construction”? While race is accepted as a “social construction,” Sociologists have developed a wide variety of theories and propositions on how race is actually “constructed.”* In this part we examine different approaches to the study of race in Sociology and the many ways in which the social construction of race has been formulated.

**Week 2: September 9 Race and Sociology**

Week 3: September 16 The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity I


Week 4: September 23 The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity II


II. LOGICS OF INEQUALITY

Racial and ethnic inequality is engineered via varying ideological dimensions of “worthiness” vs. “unworthiness,” “fit” vs. “unfit,” “ability” vs. “inability,” “power” vs. “powerlessness,” “having” vs. “lacking.” In the next four weeks we will examine the theoretical debates that underlie explanations of racial and ethnic inequality.

Week 5: September 30 Culture, Structure


Film: Herkovits at the Heart of Blackness (see before class, available at the Media Library Call No.

Week 6: October 7 Class, Caste

Oliver Cromwell Cox, “The Modern Caste School of Race Relations,” Social Forces 21,2 (December 1942), 218-226.


Week 7:  

October 14  

Assimilation, Colonialism, Internal Colonialism


Week 8:  

October 21  

Race, Ethnicity, Nation


*Recommended*


### III. TOPICS:

*In this third part of the course, we will sample five subtopics that have been central to the field of race and ethnicity. Although not exhaustive, these themes provide examples of some of the main avenues for pursuing race and ethnic research, and the theoretical debates, questions, concerns, and methodologies that have characterized the field.*

**Week 9: October 28 Urban Inequality, Family, and Community**


Oliver and Shapiro *Black Wealth / White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 2006). Ch. 2 “A Sociology of Wealth and Racial Inequality” (p. 35-54)


[Recommended]


Film: Race, the Power of an Illusion – Episode 3 “The House We Live In”

Week 10: November 4 Segregation


David Harris. 1999. “‘Property Values Drop When Blacks Move In, Because…’: Racial and Socioeconomic Determinants of Neighborhood Desirability.” American Sociological Review 64, 461-479.

[Recommended]
**Week 11: November 11  Gender**


**Week 12: November 18  Prejudice and Racisms (Old and New)**


*Recommended*

**Week 13:** November 25  No Class. Have a good break!

**Week 14:** December 2  Whiteness


**Week 15:** December 9  Research Roundtable
Evaluations at 10:00am
Class at 10:30am