Sociology 251
Sociology of Race: Racial Regimes in the United States and Beyond
M/Th: 9:50-11AM
Location: PNE 127

Instructor: Prof. Smitha Radhakrishnan
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Office hours: M 11-12, T 4-5 or by appointment
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I. Course Description
This course takes a historical look at the production and reinforcement of race as a lived material, symbolic, and experiential category, with a special focus on the United States. By examining various historical periods as “racial regimes,” we highlight underlying relations of power as well that help us to recognize race as a social construction, a set of power relationships, and ultimately a form of domination.

We will examine four major racial regimes in this course: slavery, empire, segregation, and multiculturalism. For each regime, we examine the American case and a comparative case, allowing us to reflect on both the particular and universal aspects of racial domination in the US. Our comparative cases borrow primarily from South Africa, but also from China, Australia, and imperial Britain, among others.

We begin by looking at slavery as the foundational racial regime, developing out of a need for labor to work the growing plantations in the American South. In this context, racial domination is a strategy through which to extract labor, and the boundaries between slave and master make real the relationship between dominant and superior races. From slavery, we move on to investigate the creation of the U.S. as an empire and imperial power. We witness how “race” could be used as an explanatory vehicle for the control and exploitation of peoples as a means of taking land from native populations in the US and Australia. During the same period, as the state was flexing its imperial muscles, domestic strife developed after the end of the Civil War around the integration of former slaves into the body politic. Formally and informally, the next racial regimes began to form around segregation as a technique for domination. In the American South it became known as Jim Crow, while in the Northern cities a form of residential segregation became dominant. We look at these two techniques of racial segregation in comparison with the South African apartheid regime. From there, we move to contemporary issue of multiculturalism. Again, South Africa serves as our comparative case, as the end of apartheid in 1994 brought about a series of other concerns around the problem of “difference.” Finally, we bring the class to a close by addressing two current events: Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, and the political debates around immigration.

II. Course Materials

Most of the readings for this course are available either through e-reserve or electronically through the Wellesley library. In addition, you are required to purchase the following texts, available at the bookstore and also on reserve at the library:

III. Grading and assignments

Students will be graded on the following assignments:

1) **Weekly reading responses (<300 words)**: In these assignments, you will reflect upon the readings for the week and connect them with material covered earlier in the class. These are not summaries, but it will be useful for you to state the key concept/contribution of the reading in your response. Mainly, the responses should focus on what stood out to you about the readings and what it made you think about. Each student must post one response to the course conference per week and I encourage you to read one another's responses.

2) **Participation/Attendance**: Discussion, exchange, and participation are critical components of this class and classtime will be important in facilitating your understanding of the readings. Therefore, attendance is mandatory. More than two absences during the course of the term will dramatically affect your participation grade. Tardiness is not acceptable; if you are more than 10 minutes late to class, it will count as an absence. If you are consistently late by a few minutes, this will affect your participation grade as well.

3) **Take-Home Testlet**: At the end of the first section of the course, you will be required to complete a brief take-home exam dealing with slavery, imperialism, and the foundational analytical tools of the course.

4) **Comparative Film Analysis**: You will compare the films *Birth of a Nation* and *Daughters of the Dust*. Both films were controversial in their own right in their own time, but for very different reasons. You will be asked to consider the question of representation (who can/is able to speak for history? who can speak for the less powerful? what stories get told? which stories are heard?), and must integrate readings from the relevant portion of the course. Multiple copies are available for viewing at the library and are also readily available on Netflix.

5) **Book Review**: You will write a short review (3-4 pages) on the text *Black Metropolis*. We will be covering a portion of this landmark text in class, and the book review will be an opportunity to read the rest of the book and write up a critical analysis that integrates other readings we have covered in the relevant portion of the course.

6) **Current Events Research Paper**: This is your final project for the course. In groups, you will research and produce media that examines race around the key issues of Hurricane Katrina and Immigration. You will have some class time to work on this. Specific instructions TBA.

Your final grade will be computed as follows:

- **Participation & Responses**: 20%
- **Testlet**: 15%
- **Movie Analysis**: 20%
- **Book Review**: 15%
- **Current Events Research Paper**: 30%
A note about grading: I grade work according to quality, effort, and a demonstrated understanding of the key concepts of the course/assignment. A grade of “B” indicates good work. It means that you have made adequate effort, have shown that you understand the main ideas, and have met the expectations of the class. To get a grade in the “A” range, your work must surpass those expectations. In short, “A’s” are for work at an excellent level. Grades of “C” or below indicate that you have not fulfilled the expectations of the coursework, either by not completing the assignment or by not putting in the required time and effort.

IV. Course Schedule

Week 1 (9/2): Introduction and outline of course
  • In-class video and discussion: Race the Power of an Illusion

Week 2 (9/8-9/11): Contextualizing/Conceptualizing Race
  • Barack Obama’s speech on race in America; watch on-line prior to class (9/8)
  • Berreman, Gerald. 1972. “Race, Caste, and other Invidious Distinctions in Social Stratification”

PART I: SLAVERY

Week 3 (9/15-9/18): Slavery in Comparative Perspective
  • Patterson, Orlando. 1982. Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study. Intro & Chapter 1.
  • Kolchin, Peter. American Slavery. (1-63)

Week 4: (9/22- 9/25) The Economic Roots of Slavery in the US
  • Kolchin, Peter. American Slavery, (pp63-237)

PART II: EMPIRE

Week 5: (9/29-10/2): Imperialism, Race, and Land
  • Cornell, Stephen. “Solving the ‘Indian Problem’” from Return of the Native: American Indian Political Resurgence.
  • Race: Power of an Illusion Part II, will be on video e-reserve

Week 6: (10/6-10/9): Global Expansion Projects
  • Stoler, Anne. “Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power.” (on e-reserve)
  • McClintock, “Whitewashing the Empire” (on e-reserve)
  • In-class film: Rabbit Proof Fence
PART III: SEGREGATION

No class on 10/14 (Fall Break)

Week 7 & 8 (10/16-10/23): Segregation I, Violence in Jim Crow and Apartheid
- Ida Wells Barnett, “Mob Rule in New Orleans”
- www.withoutsanctuary.org
- COMPARATIVE FILM ANALYSIS DUE: Oct 23

Week 9 (10/27-10/30): Segregation II: Understanding the Ghetto
- Sennett, Richard, “Fear of Touching” from Flesh and State: The Body and the City in Western Civilization.
- Black Metropolis, Intro, Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6


PART IV: MULTICULTURALISM

Week 11 & 12 (11/13-11/20): The neutralization or proliferation of difference?
- Brown, Wendy. States of Injury. (selections)

Week 13 (11/24): Reconciliation in Post-apartheid South Africa
- Film: Long Night's Journey into Day and Discussion
- BOOK REVIEW DUE 11/24

No class on 11/27 (Thanksgiving)

Week 14 (12/1-12/4): Race and Politics in Contemporary US
• In-class group work on Hurricane Katrina, Immigration

Week 15 (12/8): Wrap-up

FINAL CURRENT EVENTS PAPER DUE DECEMBER 20\textsuperscript{TH} AT 4PM.