

Seminar in Critical Race Theory

Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies 20003 | Spring 2019

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Course Overview

“Race is,” Stuart Hall wrote in 1980, “the modality in which class is lived.” It is, Michael Omi and Howard Winant argued in 1986, “an unstable and ‘decentered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle.”

“Racism,” Audre Lorde explained in 1984, is “the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance.” It is, Ruth Wilson Gilmore wrote two decades later, “the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death.”

What is race? What is racism? This course is about how cultural theorists, sociologists, poets, activists, geographers, and political philosophers have confronted terms that we all think we know—that we all live with and through—but struggle to define. Critical race theory arose, at least in name, in the 1970s as scholars and activists came to recognize the limitations and legal vulnerabilities of the gains of the civil rights era. The theoretical framework they built asks that we interrogate an idea that we hold dear in the United States: racial progress, the belief that the moral arc of the universe bends toward justice. Some of our readings will be difficult, some frustrating, and we will consider where theory serves us and where it may confuse and obstruct conversation and action. This course is about theory, but it is also about the uneven distribution of life chances and why we live our lives together and apart.

Required Texts

Deloria, Philip J. *Indians in Unexpected Places*. UP of Kansas, 2004.
Morrison, Toni. *The Origin of Others*. Harvard UP, 2017.

Readings on Course Website

Bell, Derrick. “Divining Our Racial Themes.” Introduction. *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*, Basic, 1992, 1–14.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. “The Strange Enigma of Race in Contemporary America.” *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*, 5th ed., Rowman and Littlefield, 2018, pp. 1–16.

Byrd, Jodi A. “Indigenous Critical Theory and the Diminishing Returns of Civilization.” Introduction. *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, U of Minnesota P, 2011, pp. xv–xxxix.

Cacho, Lisa Marie. “The Presumption of White Innocence.” *American Quarterly*, vol. 66, no. 4, 2014, pp. 1085–90.

- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "The Case for Reparations." *Atlantic*, June 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*, edited by Crenshaw et al., New Press, 1995, pp. 357–83.
- Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. Introduction. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, edited by Delgado and Stefancic, New York UP, 2001, pp. 1–14.
- Harris, Cheryl I. "Whiteness as Property." *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 106, no. 8, 1993, pp. 1707–91.
- Holland, Sharon Patricia. "The Last Word on Racism." Introduction. *The Erotic Life of Racism*, Duke UP, 2012, pp. 1–16.
- Kelley, Robin D. G. "'The Negro Question': Red Dreams of Black Liberation." *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*, Beacon, 2002, pp. 36–59.
- Lipsitz, George. "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness." *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, revised and expanded ed., Temple UP, 2006, pp. 1–23.
- Lorde, Audre. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference." *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, 1984, Crossing, 2007, pp. 114–23.
- Marable, Manning. "Inequality and the Burden of Capitalist Democracy: A Point of View on Black History." *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy, and Society*, updated ed., South End, 2000, pp. 1–19.
- Melamed, Jodi. "Racial Capitalism." *Critical Ethnic Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2015, pp. 76–85.
- Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant. "The Theory of Racial Formation." *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed., Routledge, 2015, pp. 105–36.
- Precious Knowledge*. Directed by Ari Palos. PBS, 2011.
- Smith, Andrea. "Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy." *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Daniel Martinez HoSang, Oneka LaBennett, and Laura Pulido, U of California P, 2012, pp. 66–90.
- Somerville, Siobhan B. "Notes toward a Queer History of Naturalization." *American Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2005): 659–75.

Assignments, Grading, and Policies

Assignments:

Reading Quizzes	15%
Participation and Preparedness	15%
Presentation	20%
Midterm Paper	25%
Final Exam	25%

Grading Scale:

A	93–100%	C	73–76%
A-	90–92%	C-	70–72%
B+	87–89%	D+	67–69%
B	83–86%	D	63–66%
B-	80–82%	D-	60–62%

C+ 77–79%

F 0–59%

Plagiarism: As defined by the university, plagiarism is “the appropriation, theft, purchase or obtaining by any means another’s work, and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of that work as one’s own offered for credit. Appropriation includes the quoting or paraphrasing of another’s work without giving credit therefore.” To avoid committing plagiarism, acknowledge and document all of your sources in your written work. If you are ever unsure whether something constitutes plagiarism, please check with me first.

University Disabilities Statement: Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Student Disabilities Services in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 1010. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at (817) 257-6567.

Reading Schedule and Deadlines

Date	Readings	Deadlines
Week 1	Race and Ethnicity in Theory	
Monday, January 14	Syllabus	
Wednesday, January 16	Omi and Winant, “The Theory of Racial Formation” (website)	Presentation assigned
Week 2		
Monday, January 21	No class (Martin Luther King Day)	
Wednesday, January 23	Delgado and Stefancic, Introduction to <i>Critical Race Theory</i> (website) Bell, “Divining Our Racial Themes” (website)	
Week 3	Intersections	
Monday, January 28	Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins” (website)	
Wednesday, January 30	Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex” (website)	
Week 4		
Monday, February 4	Holland, “The Last Word on Racism” (website)	
Wednesday, February 6	Somerville, “Notes toward a Queer History of Naturalization” (website)	
Week 5	Indigeneity	
Monday, February 11	Byrd, “Indigenous Critical Theory and the Diminishing Returns of Civilization” (website)	Midterm paper assigned
Wednesday, February 13	Smith, “Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy”	Midterm paper proposal due Sunday, February 17 at 5 p.m.

	(website)	
Week 6		
Monday, February 18	Conferences	
Wednesday, February 20	Conferences	
Week 7		
Monday, February 25	Deloria, <i>Indians in Unexpected Places</i> (Introduction)	
Wednesday, February 27	Deloria, <i>Indians in Unexpected Places</i> (“The Killings at Lightening Creek”)	
Week 8		
Monday, March 4	Deloria, <i>Indians in Unexpected Places</i> (“Indian Wars, The Movie”)	
Wednesday, Mar. 6	Deloria, <i>Indians in Unexpected Places</i> (“I Want to Ride in Geronimo’s Cadillac”)	Midterm paper due Friday, March 8 at 5 p.m.
Week 9		
Monday, March 11	No class (spring break)	
Wednesday, March 13	No class (spring break)	
Week 10	Whiteness	
Monday, March 18	Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness” (website)	
Wednesday, March 20	Cacho, “The Presumption of White Innocence” (website)	
Week 11		
Monday, March 25	Harris, “Whiteness as Property” (Introduction and “The Construction of Race and the Emergence of Whiteness as Property”; website)	
Wednesday, March 27	Coates, “The Case for Reparations” (website)	
Week 12	Racial Knowledge	
Monday, April 1	Bonilla-Silva, “The Strange Enigma of Race in Contemporary America” (website)	
Wednesday, April 3	<i>Precious Knowledge</i>	
Week 13		
Monday, April 8	Morrison, <i>The Origin of Others</i> (Foreword by Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Romancing Slavery”)	
Wednesday, April 10	Morrison, <i>The Origin of Others</i> (“Being or Becoming the Stranger,” “The Color Fetish”)	
Week 14		
Monday, April 15	Morrison, <i>The Origin of Others</i> (“Configurations of Blackness,”	

	“Narrating the Other”)	
Wednesday, April 17	Morrison, <i>The Origin of Others</i> (“The Foreigner’s Home”)	
Week 15	Racial Capitalism	
Monday, April 22	Melamed, “Racial Capitalism” (website)	
Wednesday, April 24	Marable, “Inequality and the Burden of Capitalist Democracy” (website)	
Week 16		
Monday, April 29	Kelley, “The Negro Question” (website) SPOTs (please bring a laptop or tablet to class)	
Wednesday, May 1	Final review	Final exam assigned Final exam due Sunday, May 5 at 5 p.m.