The new millennium is upon us, though the matter shouldn’t be taken too seriously. After all, the year 2001 for Christians is 1379 for Moslems, 5114 for Mayans, and 5762 for Jews. The new millennium starts on January 1 only because one fine day the senate of imperial Rome decided to end the tradition of celebrating the new year at the beginning of spring. The number of years in the Christian era is a matter of whim as well: another fine day the pope in Rome decided to assign a date to the birth of Jesus, even though nobody knows when he was born.

Time pays no attention to the borders we erect to fool ourselves into believing we control it.

--Eduardo Galeano, *Upside Down: A Primer for the Looking-Glass World*, p. 333

The equator did not cross the middle of the world map that we studied in school. More than half a century ago, German researcher Arno Peters understood what everyone had looked at but no one had seen: the emperor of geography had no clothes.

The map they taught us gives two-thirds of the world to the North and one-third to the South. Europe is shown as larger than Latin America, even though Latin America is actually twice the size of Europe. India appears smaller than Scandinavia, even though it’s three times as big. The United States and Canada fill more space on the map than Africa, when in reality they cover barely two-thirds as much territory.

The map lies. Traditional geography steals space just as the imperial economy steals wealth, official history steals memory, and formal culture steals the world.

--Galeano, p. 315

**Required texts**


**Course objective and rationale**

Stephen Steinberg argues that in the last third of the nineteenth century—in the generation following the end of the Civil War—the United States lost its last best chance to end racism. During that time, two curious technologies emerged that may offer clues into the nation’s racial politics. In 1874 barbed wire was patented. Invented as a tool for keeping out unwanted animals, it soon became a tool for keeping in unwanted humans. A mere quarter-century after the patenting of barbed wire, concentration camps were invented in Africa. As for the second technology: in the 1880s institutional leaders from imperial-industrial nations established the
Greenwich meridian as the standard for timekeeping. Among the staunchest advocates for standardization was the railroad industry.

What can these very different technologies tell us about racism's survival and persistence? The Industrial Revolution introduced technologies that, like these, escalated owners’ capacity to monitor and regulate workers’ bodies and movements—their time and space. Though Einstein would, early in the twentieth century, introduce theories that would liberate time and space from the fixity and absoluteness into which science and religion had locked them, still, ironically, new technologies were shackling workers by newly regulating them.

But what does this tell us about racism?

This course will examine a range of aspects of the politics of time and space. I should say that the connection of these politics to racism will not always be immediately apparent. Only two of our required books—Smith’s *Mastered by the Clock* and Butler’s novel—directly connect such politics to racism. Harvey, Lefebvre, and Neil Smith offer theoretical considerations of the production and manipulation of space in expressions of power. None of these latter writers, except in an occasional passage, directly links his subject to racism. Quite possibly, then, we may pass through long stretches in which we say nothing directly about racism.

And yet “racism” is the first word in our course title, and I hope that all our discussions will eventually, in one way or another, circle back to it. Like Einstein’s time and space, racism is not fixed, static, and unchanging. It adapts to the changing needs of institutional power. Here is a recent and obvious example: Back in the 1960s we struggled for representation, for a “place at the table.” Yet the Bush administration boasted, rightly, that it was the most “diverse” presidential administration in the history of the United States. This phenomenon that Angela Davis calls “black faces in high places” has not silenced charges that Bush was also the most racist-imperialist president in the nation’s history. Co-opting the language of “diversity” and the demands for representation, Bush even showed how these “black faces in high places” can be a necessary and indispensable component of racist-imperialism.

Language is a key site of struggle. The uses to which technologies are applied—sometimes even the very names of these technologies—often cloak racist-imperialist agendas. But even the work of resistance and revolution bogs down in occasional linguistic morasses. For example, are “public time” and “public space” good or bad? For many observers, especially those who work in social sciences, they are sites of exploitation or oppression. For others, they are sites of resistance. Consider this point from an essay by Henry Giroux:

> At the core of Bush’s notion of community and hyperpatriotism is a notion of temporality that detaches itself from a sense of public deliberation, critical citizenship, and civic engagement. Jerome Binde refers to this view of temporality as “emergency time” and describes it as a “world governed by short-term efficacy,” which under the imperatives of utter necessity and pragmatism, eschews long-term appraisals, and gives precedence to the “logic of ‘just in time’ at the expense of any forward-looking deliberation. . . . Against this notion of emergency time, educators, cultural workers, and others need to posit a notion of public time. According to democratic theorist Cornelius Castoriadis, public time represents “the emergence of a dimension where the collectivity can inspect its own past as the result of its own actions, and where an indeterminate future opens up as domain for its activities.” For Castoriadis, public time puts into question established institutions and dominant authority. Rather than maintaining a passive attitude toward power, public time demands and encourages forms of
political agency based on a passion for self-governing, actions informed by critical judgment, and a commitment to linking social responsibility and social transformation. Public time legitimates those pedagogical practices that provide the basis for a culture of questioning, one that provides the knowledge, skills, and social practices that encourage an opportunity for resistance, a space of translation, and a proliferation of discourses. Public time unsettles common sense and disturbs authority. . . . [P]ublic time affirms a politics without guarantees and a notion of the social that is open and contingent. Public time provides a conception of democracy that is never complete and determinate and is constantly open to different understandings of the contingency of its decisions, mechanisms of exclusions, and operations of power. At its best, public time renders governmental power explicit, and in doing so it rejects the language of religious rituals and the abrogation of the conditions necessary for the assumption of basic freedoms and rights. Moreover, public time considers civic education the basis, if not essential dimension, of justice because it provides individuals with the skills, knowledge, and passions to talk back to power while simultaneously emphasizing both the necessity to question that accompanies viable forms of political agency and the assumption of public responsibility through active participation.


Even the indeterminacy of such terms as “public time” can usefully remind us to define our own visions of justice. Indeterminacy itself should not, however, be a guiding principle. Just because our visions of justice may differ in their particulars does not mean that our commitment to eradicating injustice should bog down in quarrels over pluralisms and “diversities.” Racism is not negotiable.

Course description
Since we meet only once a week, it will be doubly important to keep up with readings. Our reading load will be heavy at times, though considerably lighter than in most graduate courses in English! Some of our texts will be easy and accessible. Others—Harvey, Lefebvre, and Neil Smith—will be slower going. You would be wise, therefore, to peek ahead, to get a sense of the texts’ difficulties, so that you might allow sufficient time for readings.

I regard this as, in the best sense, an experimental course. The very fact that, four years after offering an early model of this course as American Studies 590, I can still use much of that old syllabus here attests not to my laziness or lack of progress in research but to the new and provisional nature of the work—it is still finding its form and direction. And, because so few books and articles directly link technologies of time and space to racism, we will break new ground, theoretically and practically. Share your ideas, observations, intuitions, suspicions, speculations, and inspirations. No one can claim to be an expert in the work we will undertake this term. I will share my own ideas and observations, but I hope that these will provoke discussion. I envision this course as being staunchly anti-authoritarian.

You will write two papers for the course, one short and one article-length. Details of the assignments appear below. We will watch several films, and I am trying to arrange for a few guest speakers to share their knowledge and observations. I have also created a coursepack with several short readings, and you should pick this up when it becomes available.
Requirements

Attendance and participation: Since we meet only once a week, these are expected.

Text presentation: At the beginning of the term you will sign up to lead a discussion of one of our texts during the semester. This presentation involves your briefly summarizing what you regard as the text’s most interesting or most important points and asking two or three questions based on the text.

Paper presentations: You will discuss both the short paper and the final paper. For the short paper, you need only to identify and briefly summarize the text you have reviewed, and then briefly discuss your critique. For the final paper, prepare to speak for roughly ten minutes, identifying your subject and your argument, then providing a few key details of your argument. If you have any multimedia aids or handouts, please use them.

Short paper: Your short paper will review a text that you will select from the list of Recommended Readings below. Obviously this list only hints at a vast number of possible books and articles, and so you should feel free to discuss with me any other book that covers material relevant to our course. Obviously some of the books in the list are lengthy, and so we can negotiate your covering only a significant portion of a lengthy text. As with most reviews, you should provide a brief overview and analysis of the text. What does it tell us—or what can it tell us—about racism? Limit your review to roughly five pages.

Final paper: Your final paper should be an article-length (ie, fifteen- to twenty-page) analysis of an aspect of the technologies of time and space as they facilitate or resist racism. I encourage you to write from a perspective new or unfamiliar to you. For example, if your previous work is in the fields of women’s studies, ethnic studies, literature, or history, you may want to read Michio Kaku’s critical biography of Einstein and write about the political implications, especially for policies affecting communities of color, of his theories of relativity. Or, after reading Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space, you may want to propose your own theory of the production of time.

Alternative to final paper: Since our course is concerned with technologies, you may propose an alternative to the final paper that uses a technology—probably a media technology—or an art form that will advance an argument or observation on the materials we will cover. Let me know as soon as possible that you are considering this alternative project. If you want to collaborate with a classmate, let me know and we can arrange this.

Note: We will have no quizzes or examinations.

Grading formula
Attendance and participation, 10 percent; text presentation and short-paper presentation, 10 percent (5 percent each); final project presentation, 10 percent; short paper, 20 percent; and final paper, 50 percent.

Policies
I will refrain from rehashing the standard (and obligatory) proscriptions against plagiarizing, aside from saying that you should not plagiarize. While obviously we should avoid abusive and hateful speech, I also want to encourage you to exercise your academic freedoms in thoughtful discourse. A racist idea is a racist idea, and we should be honest enough to say so.

Official university statement on special accommodations
Students with Disabilities: Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC). All accommodations
MUST be approved through the DRC (Washington Building, Room 217). Please stop by or call 509-335-3417 to make an appointment with a disability specialist.

Campus Safety Plan/Emergency information

Schedule of assignments
Note: Because of several possible and unforeseeable contingencies, our schedule of assignments is extremely flexible and subject to change. I will post changes by e-mail, so please keep up.

8/25: Introduction and syllabus.

Web readings: Thompson, E. P. “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism.” Accessible at http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0031-2746%28196712%290%3A%38%3C56%3A%3E2.0.CO%3B2-G

9/8: M. Smith: Chapters 3-6 and Epilogue.

9/15: Butler, read all of Kindred.

Henry, “White People’s Time, Colored People’s Time.”
Gould.
Schivelbusch.

9/29: Lefebvre: Chapters 1 and 2.
Coursepack: Roediger (both essays).

10/6: Lefebvre: Chapters 3 and 4.

10/13: Lefebvre: Chapters 5 and 6.
Coursepack: Netz, 39-55.

10/20: Lefebvre: Chapter 7.
10/27: Lefebvre: Afterword by David Harvey.
   Coursepack: Foucault.

11/3: Coursepack: Kristeva.
   SHORT PAPER DUE.
   SHORT PAPER PRESENTATIONS.

11/10: Harvey: All of Part III.
11/17: Harvey: All of Part IV.

11/24: No class.

12/1: N. Smith: Chapters 2-6.
   FINAL PAPER PRESENTATIONS.

12/8: Coursepack: Ricoeur.
   Warm Water.
   Césaire.
   FINAL PAPER PRESENTATIONS.

12/11 (Friday): FINAL PAPER DUE BY 4:00 PM EITHER IN MY MAILBOX OR IN MY OFFICE.

**Recommended readings**


