

Contemporary Theories of Race and Ethnicity

Am St 526

Washington State University

American Studies Program

Tuesdays 2:50 pm to 5:50 pm

CUE 218

FALL 2011

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Wilson-Short Hall 116

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Th 12:00 noon to 1:15 pm and by appointment

There is a strange kind of enigma associated with the problem of racism. No one, or almost no one wishes to see themselves as racist; still, racism persists, real and tenacious.

—Albert Memmi

Race is always historically specific. At times, a confluence of economic, social, cultural, and political factors has impelled major shifts in society's understanding (and construction) of race and its constitutive role in national identity formation.

—Mae M. Ngai

White supremacy is the unnamed political system that has the modern world what it is today.

—Charles Mills

The threshold between inside and out cuts through families and across them, traces through selective genealogies and adoption agencies, “degree of blood” and dense webs of fictive kin...Evidence of a drop of blood could bar African Americans from citizenship, marriage, and mobility; starting in the 1880s Japanese and South Asians alternately won and lost access to citizenship based on determinations of their inclusion from the category Caucasian or Aryan.

—Ann Laura Stoler

For quite some time, many observers have held that money and interracial sex would solve the race problem, and, indeed, in some cases, they have. Nonetheless, poverty in a dark skin endures as the opposite of whiteness, driven by an age-old social yearning to characterize the poor as permanently other and inherently inferior.

—Nell Irvin Painter

Course Objectives and Rationale:

In general terms, this course seeks to develop a clearer understanding and stronger grasp of contemporary racial and ethnic theory by offering an overview of ongoing discussions and current conceptualizations of race, ethnicity, racialization, and racism both within the US and transnationally. Given the time constraints of an academic semester, the course cannot be exhaustive in its coverage of authors and topics. Instead, I chose texts that can be seen as representative of the current literature (i.e., post-Civil rights movement to the present) dedicated to articulating ideas involving the topics mentioned above.

Caveat: Although I use the sociological concept of racialization (i.e., the processes by which “we” attach meaning to socially-articulated racial categories), it is imperative that we talk about racism. Discussing articulations of or social dynamics involving race and ethnicity without discussing racialization and racism, is like discussing sun exposure without discussing sun burns and the potential consequence involving skin cancer. Thus, although we will talk about the more clinical/sanitized concepts racialization, racial/ethnic categories, racial dynamics, and race relations, such discussions will always and unfailingly be grounded in discussions of racism and its horrible faces.

And just so we are all on the same page, racism is not the equivalent of individual demonstrations of prejudice or individual acts of discrimination, for although these are certainly, and without question, informed by racism, they are NOT racism. Racism can be defined and should be understood in ways that transcend the individual level. To that effect, I offer the following definitions:

- (1) A principle of *social domination* by which a racial or ethnic group seen as inferior or different is *exploited, controlled, and/or oppressed by another group* (Newman, 1995).
- (2) A view that certain ethnic or racial groups are biologically inferior to other groups and *the systematic and institutionalized practices of domination and exploitation that result from such a view* (Sullivan, 1995).
- (3) The institutional process by which people within certain racial categories are systemically and systematically oppressed.

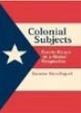
Although somewhat simple, these definitions capture the heart of racism as a societal manifestation with tangible consequences and ramifications. Also note that although some of the authors will be discussing “racists” (meaning individuals), these “racists” could not operate the way they do without the systemic infrastructure to back them up. Otherwise, a “racist comment,” would be just that.

Texts for the class:

Note: *The Bookie* and *Crimson and Grey* are both supposed to have the texts. I, however, knowing how bureaucracy operates, assigned articles that can be found online for the second week of the semester. That means we are not starting to discuss the books until the third week. That will give you ample time to get a hold of the books, “by any [legal] means necessary”—and I know I’m butchering Malcom X’s words and intent, my apologies to him. So I’m saying all this, because I do not want to hear “I have not been

able to get/find the books” from anyone. I do not even allow my (CES) 101 students to get away with that. To paraphrase what I usually tell them, given the world of hyper-connectivity in which we live, there are plenty of venues, ways, and opportunities for you to get a hold of a copy of the books we are reading this semester. So make sure you have the books/readings when you need them.

Books:

	Memmi, A. 1999. <i>Racism</i> . Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
	Painter, N. I. 2011. <i>The History of White People</i> . New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
	Roediger, D. 2010. <i>How Race Survived US History</i> . New York: Verso Books.
	Grosfoguel, R. 2003. <i>Colonial Subjects</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press.
	Mills, C. 1999. <i>The Racial Contract</i> . Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
	Ngai, M. 2005. <i>Impossible Subjects</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press.
	Stoler, A.L. 2006. <i>Haunted by Empire</i> . Durham: Duke University Press.
	Smith, D.L. 2011. <i>Less than Human</i> . New York: St. Martin's Press.
	West, C. 2001. <i>Race Matters</i> . Boston: Beacon Press.

Readings:

These can be accessed through the Holland Library website:

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo, and David Dietrich. 2011. "The Sweet Enchantment of Color-Blind Racism in Obamerica." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 2011. 634: March. Pp.190-206. DOI: 10.1177/0002716210389702.

Winant, Howard. 2006. "Race and Racism: Towards a Global Future." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 29:5. Pp. 986-1003.

These can be accessed online:

Howard Winant. 2008. "Dealing with Racism in the Age of Obama." *The Huffington Post*. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/howard-winant/dealing-with-racism-in-th_b_141634.html?view=print.

Wise, Tim. 2010. "We Have a Black President, But That Doesn't Resolve the Deep Racism Built into the American Psyche." *Alternet.org*. <http://www.alternet.org/story/147204/>.

Requirements:

Attendance and participation (10 points): I will just say that if you do not come to class every week and/or if you do not participate in the discussions, your grade will be affected.

Weekly Discussions (Discussant 20 points; Respondent 10 points): At the beginning of the term you will sign up to lead a discussion (i.e., be a discussant) of one of our readings during the semester. The presentation involves a brief summary (5-10 minutes) of the readings' key points, a brief analysis (an extra 3-5 minutes), and finally, two or three questions to help start the discussion. You will also sign up to do one response (i.e., be a respondent) to another student's discussion during the semester. Responses should not take any more than 5 minutes, focusing on the discussant's take of the reading and also providing your classmates with several questions to pursue during the ensuing discussion.

- ✓ When you are a discussant, you will need to send the respondent your discussion points via electronic messaging no later than the previous Sunday @ 12 noon. You will copy me in your message. You will lose one point for every hour you are late with your message. After 24 hours, you will lose the entirety of the points for the discussion.

Questions and Quotes (Q & Q's) (15 points total): Each week you will need to submit (in class) one typed question and one typed quote from the readings assigned for the week. Pose open-ended questions, not questions that ask your audience to regurgitate "facts," or that can be answered with a "yes" or "no." Your question could address a specific reading, or a theme running through several readings. Quotes may be anything from the readings that resonates with you. Along with the quote, write a paragraph or two

explaining why you find the quote significant. Q & Q's may be used to facilitate class discussion.

Final paper (30 points): Your final paper should be an article-length (ie, fifteen- to twenty-page) analysis of an aspect of contemporary articulations of race, ethnicity, race relations and/or racism as they take place in US society and transnationally.

Paper presentations (15 points): We will leave the last day and a half of class for presentations. At some point I will ask you to sign up for a time slot and during your time you will discuss your final paper. You will prepare to speak for roughly fifteen (and no more than twenty) minutes, identifying and providing a few key details about your argument(s) and themes.

Policies:

Cellular Phones and other Communication Devices

I am including here the statement I unfailingly include in my undergraduate syllabi, because I want you to understand how much the use of cellular phones in the classroom really (really) bugs me. So please, read it and turn everything off. Here is the statement:

Turn your cell phones and communication devices off before coming to class (that includes laptop computers—even if your computer lacks an internet connection, blackberries and any other electronic device utilized to communicate with the world outside our classroom). Of course, iPods and other gadgets used for entertainment are also prohibited. The world can survive without getting a hold of you for an hour and fifteen minutes. And you will also survive without knowing what's going on outside the classroom for a few minutes. If, for a reason I cannot fathom at this point, you forget to neutralize your communication device, and it does go off during class, you will annoy the heck out of me, and will have the option of (1) turning it off immediately, or (2) handing it to me and letting me answer it. You will take full responsibility for what happens when/if you allow me to answer your phone. If your device goes off more than once during the semester, I will deduct points (at my discretion and without notifying you) from your attendance and participation points. I may also ask you to leave the classroom.

- ✓ If I catch you “texting” during class, I will confiscate you phone and will make you stand in front of the entire class to share with your classmates why you were texting, who you were texting, and the content of your message. You will also lose points for attendance and participation (see explanation above). Finally, under those circumstances, I reserve the right to keep your phone in my office until one of two things happens: (1) you drop the class, or (2) the semester ends.
- ✓ But what if I want to take notes using my computer?—you may ask. Here is my standard answer: for over a century now, students have been able to

take notes using a pad of paper and a pen or a pencil. This method has worked for generations of students, so it will work for you as well.

Communicating in the classroom

While obviously we should avoid abusive and hateful speech, I also want to encourage you to exercise your academic freedoms in thoughtful, intellectually honest ways.

Official university statement on special accommodations

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: In the interest of campus safety and emergency procedures, please become familiar with the information available on the following WSU-provided websites:

- ✓ <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu> (Campus Safety Plan);
- ✓ <http://oem.wsu.edu/emergencies> (Emergency Management Website); and
- ✓ <http://alert.wsu.edu> (WSU Alert Site).

Plagiarism

If I actually have to ask graduate students not to plagiarize their work, something has gone terribly wrong. So I won't ask, but I will, however, use this space as a "teachable moment," and suggest that plagiarism is one of those "isms" (much like racism) that allows certain individuals/groups to take advantage of and use others while presenting themselves as something they are not, at the expense of those being used. So please, do your own darn work, for crying out loud. If you do not, the repercussions will be massive, involving department chairs, university officials and procedures (including a Student Conduct Board), and a not-so-pretty F in your transcript, among other possibilities.



READING SCHEDULE

Tuesday, August 23

Introductions, syllabus, and all those things we are supposed to do on the first day of class.

Tuesday, August 30

1. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and David Dietrich's "The Sweet Enchantment of Color-Blind Racism in Obamerica."
2. Howard Winant's "Race and Racism: Towards a Global Future."
3. Howard Winant's "Dealing with Racism in the Age of Obama."
4. Tim Wise's "We Have a Black President, But That Doesn't Resolve the Deep Racism Built into the American Psyche."

Tuesday, September 6

5. Albert Memmi's *Racism*.

Tuesday, September 13

6. Charles Mills' *The Racial Contract*.

Tuesday, September 20

7. Cornel West's *Race Matters*.

Tuesday, September 27

8. Nell Irvin Painter's *The History of White People* (pp. ix-200).

Tuesday, October 4

9. Nell Irvin Painter's *The History of White People* (pp. 201-399).

Tuesday, October 11

10. David Roediger's *How Race Survived US History*.

Tuesday, October 18

11. Ann Laura Stoler's *Haunted by Empire* (pp. XI-239).

Tuesday, October 25

12. Ann Laura Stoler's *Haunted by Empire* (pp. 240-272).

Tuesday, November 1

13. Ramon Grosfoguel's *Colonial Subjects*.

Tuesday, November 8

14. Mae Ngai's *Impossible Subjects* (pp. IX-126).

Tuesday, November 15

15. Mae Ngai's *Impossible Subjects* (pp. 127-270).

Tuesday, November 22

Thanksgiving holiday

Tuesday, November 29

16. David L. Smith's *Less than Human*.
Student project presentations begin

Tuesday, December 6

Student Project Presentations

Grading Scale

A	95 points or above
A-	90 to 94 points
B+	87 to 89 points
B	84 to 86 points
B-	80 to 83 points
C+	77 to 79 points
C	74 to 76 points
C-	70 to 73 points
D+	67 to 69 points
D	60 to 66 pints
F	59 points and below