Critical Analysis of Race and Representation
RTF 384C/LAS 381/MAS 392/WGS 393
Fall 2010
Th 9:30 – 12:30 NOA 1.110

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Course Description
This course is an introduction to the cultural studies approach to analyzing race and representation. It will cover key theoretical works and a range of scholarship informed by these theories. The field of media studies is central to this course, but other aspects of culture (popular and otherwise) will be treated as well. This course deals with a range of racial and ethnic formations, and considers how race intersects with gender, sexuality, class, and national identity. In addition to cultural studies, theoretical frameworks that inform this course include critical race theory, feminist criticism, and postcolonialism.

Course Requirements
10 responses  - 20% of grade
Performance as discussion leader – 10% of grade
Class participation – 20% of grade
Final paper – 50% of grade

There is a 2-page reading response due at the beginning of each class. This is your intellectual response to some aspect of the readings. It should not be a summary, but a combination of summary and analysis. There are a total of 10 responses. (Your list of questions for class discussion stand in for your response that week.) No late reading responses will be accepted. I do not accept reading responses via email.

Once during the semester, you will lead discussion of the readings (alone or with a partner) for about half of the class period. In all weeks, you are expected to be an active participant in class. Discussion guidelines are at the end of the syllabus.

The final paper is 15-page research paper in which you explore a theme inspired by course readings.

Course Materials
Books
Articles
There are several additional readings for this course. These will all be on electronic reserve. The password for the e-reserves page is [deleted].

Course schedule

Aug. 26
Course introduction

Sept. 2
The Cultural Studies Approach to Media
Stuart Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race & Ethnicity”

Sept. 9
The Cultural Studies Approach to Media, cont.
Stuart Hall, “What is this ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?”
Isaac Julien & Kobena Mercer, “De Margin and De Centre”
Lisa Lowe, “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian-American Differences”

Sept. 16
Discourse Analysis
Fiske, Media Matters, Chs. 1-4; epilogue
Additional readings, TBA

Sept. 23
in-class screening

Sept. 30
The Raced Body
Michel Foucault, “The Means of Correct Training,” in The Foucault Reader


Oct. 7
Gender & Sexuality, part I


Oct. 14
Gender & Sexuality, part II
Richard Dyer, White, Ch. 4


Oct. 21

**Whiteness**

Toni Morrison, “Playing in the Dark,” in *Critical White Studies*

Dyer, *White*, introduction, Chs. 1-3; 6

Oct. 28

**Desire/Consumption**


Nov. 4

**Nation**


Nov. 11

**Constructing Identities**

Arlene Dávila, *Latinos, Inc.*

Nov. 18 – American Studies Association conference – no class

Nov. 25 – Thanksgiving – no class
Dec. 2

Reception and Other Uses of Culture


Debate between Jhally/Lewis & Herman Gray. Read these in order


Discussion Guidelines

All students

Reading
Read carefully. Class doesn’t work if we don’t read. Period.

Note specific passages that you want to discuss. Read footnotes/sources. As scholars, we need to consider how others use evidence, and what counts as evidence.

Bring your readings to class, if at all possible.

Consider how the author’s discipline shaped the analysis. The seminar is interdisciplinary – you will likely encounter work that challenges your expectations (about theory, methodology, and so on). That doesn’t make it automatically lacking or ‘bad.’ (Although you can still decide that’s the case.) Don’t assume that across the academy, there is only one way to do research.

In general, I do not like computer usage in class. However, I recognize that many students read their articles this way. Computers will not be used for any other purpose during class (checking email, looking up material – for class or otherwise - on Web sites)

Participation
Participate. Class doesn’t work if we don’t talk. Period.

Call on your classmates to speak. Interaction with your classmates is the primary benefit of a seminar. Otherwise, you could just do independent studies. Remember to talk to address each other instead of just me. (This will get easier during the course of the semester.)

Don’t be afraid to disagree.

Try to stay focused on the topic at hand – race and representation. You will not like every reading and you can talk about what you like and don’t like about the readings. However, I will end protracted discussions about style if I feel that it is precluding discussion of the content.

Factors like word choice, fonts, the university press, footnote style and artwork can be interesting to discuss (yes, those have all come up in seminars), but to stay focused, we need to leave those topics until the end of class.

Beware of “race evasion.” Often, students find it easy to talk about everything except race, yes, even in a course about race. Race is the headliner for this class. If you skip it, I’ll be sure to ask you about it.

For a laugh, read “How to Suppress Discussions of Racism” http://coffeeandink.livejournal.com/607897.html

If you’re not the discussion leader, don’t bring in clips unless I’ve asked you to do so. We love our clips in media studies – I know I love mine! However, using clips in class can be time-consuming and may take us off-track. Plus, I may have something planned already. If you have a rare clip that you think I may be interested in, please send me an email in advance.

I encourage you to share images and clips on Blackboard.
**Student Discussion Leaders**

**Preparation**
Do some basic ‘research’ on the author(s) and tell us about it in class. Knowing a bit about their fields of study will help us all to understand their point of view and approach. This does not mean simply looking at their Wikipedia page or departmental blurb. You’re not giving a biography; you’re telling the things that you think will help us contextualize their research.

Note paragraphs, quotes or examples that you want to come back to. If you find something provocative, we want to be able to take a look at it for ourselves! This is good advice for everyone in the seminar.

**Turn in to me via email a list of discussion questions the day before your presentation.** There should be at least 10 questions on this list. The questions should deal with matters of ‘content’ (the subject, argument, and what they mean for analyzing race and representation). Avoid yes/no questions, questions that answer themselves, or questions that ask students to predict. Strive for questions that get to the arguments made in the readings and questions that get students to connect various readings (for that day and across the semester).

**Leading the discussion**
THIS IS NOT A PRESENTATION. In a presentation, you put on a ‘show’ of what you know. Here, your job is to stimulate and help conduct conversation. I hope that having students take turns leading the discussion will increase your investment in each other as classmates.

Relax! It is your ‘show’ only in that you are responsible for having ‘digested’ the material a bit more than you might otherwise. Your classmates are still responsible for sustaining the conversation, and I am here to help lead discussion and answer questions.

Clips are NOT necessary. I expect that there will be many weeks that do not lend themselves to clips. However, you may use them to illustrate something from the reading. No more than 5 minutes total can be spent on clips.

Some weeks may benefit from visual aids via PowerPoint, handouts or another form. Discuss this with me in advance. Again, I want to be sure that sharing images doesn’t turn into a presentation. Also, never pass a visual aid around in class while you are talking. It completely distracts from what you are saying.

Even if you are an expert on the subject, it is not your responsibility to enforce one particular interpretation of the material. Of course, this does not mean that you can’t have or display an opinion.