

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

330 Pendleton East

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:

Kolchin, Peter. 1993. *American Slavery: 1619-1877*. New York, New York: Hill and Wang

Drake, St. Clair and Horace R. Cayton. 1962 (1993). *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press

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”
- Banton, Michael. 1979. “Analytical and Folk Concepts of Race and Ethnicity” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Vol. 2:2 127-138. (available online through Wellesley library)
- Dikotter, Frank. 1990. “Group Definition and the Idea of ‘Race’ in Modern China (1793-1949).” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 13:3, 420-32. (available online through Wellesley library)

PART I: SLAVERY

Week 3 (9/15-9/18): Slavery in Comparative Perspective

- Fields, Barbara. 1990. “Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America”. *New Left Review*. 181: 95-118.
- 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
- Bodley, John H. 1982. *Victims of Progress*. Mayfield Publishing Company. (chapters 2, 4)

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*

- TESTLET DUE OCTOBER 9

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

- Cell, John W. 1982. "The South Makes Segregation: the social interpretation" and "South Africa Makes segregation" from *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South*. New York: Cambridge University.
- Ida Wells Barnett, "Mob Rule in New Orleans"
- Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth. 1996. "Sex and Violence in Procrustes's Bed" from *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920*.
- www.withoutsanctuary.org
- COMPARATIVE FILM ANALYSIS DUE: Oct 23

Week 9 (10/27-10/30): Segregation II: Understanding the Ghetto

- Wacquant, Loic. 1993. "Urban Outcasts: Stigma and Division in the Black American Ghetto and the French Urban Periphery." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Planning*. 17:3, 366-384.
- 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

Week 10 & 11 (11/3-11/10): Segregation III: The American and South African cases

- Massey and Denton, "The Construction of the Ghetto" and "The Persistence of the Ghetto" from *American Apartheid*
- Western, John. 1981 (1996). "Apartheid: The Plan", "Group Areas and the Meaning of Places: Whose Mother City?" and "Epilogue" from *Outcast Cape Town*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

PART IV: MULTICULTURALISM

Week 11 & 12 (11/13-11/20): The neutralization or proliferation of difference?

- Brown, Wendy. *States of Injury*. (selections)
- Povinelli, Elizabeth A. 1998. "The State of Shame: Australian multiculturalism and the crisis of indigenous citizenship." *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 24 (Winter) 575-610

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 20TH AT 4PM.