

Professor: Christien Philmarc Tompkins, christien.tompkins@gmail.com

Fall 2018: Thursday 2:15-5:15 pm, RAB 109B

3 credits

Prerequisite: Intro to Cultural Anthropology

Office Hours: Wed or Thurs, by appointment only

01:070:376 - Power and Difference: Race as an Ethnographic Problem

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? They say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.

-W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

Course Description and Goals

It has been suggested that anthropologists, despite possessing key theoretical insights and methodological tools for interrogating diverse forms of social belonging, have lagged behind other social sciences in contributing to theories of race and racialization. This course focuses primarily on Works in the past few decades Which have self-consciously attempted to push race to the forefront of anthropological discourse. Through a series of ethnographic and theoretical readings we will explore the constitution of race as an object of analysis for anthropological inquiry. We will not start from the question of “What is race?” but rather we will be animated by the questions: how have anthropologists (and other social scientists) tried to get a hold of race? Where have they found it and how did they get a fix on it? What problems does race provoke for theory and politics?

The course readings open with an exploration of the concept and place of race in anthropological history while moving towards examinations of how race articulates to analytics such as gender, class, and colonialism. Course readings are designed to provoke students to consider why race has proven to be such an effaced, misrecognized, and ephemeral object of analysis and experience.

Department Goals

This course contributes to each of the five learning goals for majors in the Anthropology department (found here: <https://anthro.rutgers.edu/academics/undergraduate/undergraduate-learning-goals>). In particular, by interrogating the concept of race in anthropology, students will become more familiar with fundamental dilemmas in the history of the discipline (goal #1). In understanding race as a contested concept, students will begin to critically parse diverse approaches to studying racialized phenomena (goals #2 and #3). Various assignments will give students the opportunity to develop their skills for writing and speaking about a central issue in anthropology (goals #4 and #5).

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation (15%): Fifteen percent of your grade will reflect overall class attendance and participation. These points Will be based on attendance, involvement in class by raising questions and issues, listening and responding respectfully to others, and participating in group Work. Excellent class attendance and participation means not missing class Without notice, being on time and staying for the full time, and being actively engaged in the class. To that end, I will not allow the use of computing devices during class. All readings and materials must be printed out and brought to class.

To be prepared for the class you should do the assigned reading and assignments prior to the class, understand the major themes in the reading and/or ask questions related to your lack of understanding, as well as raise questions and issues for discussion.

Critical Analysis Papers (55%, Goals #1, #2, #3, and #4):

You will write a 5-page (Times New Roman, 12pt.) analysis paper on a topic that I will assign on the following date:

Paper 1: Assigned Week 5, Due Week 7

This paper will count for 20% of your overall grade.

You will write a longer, 10-page (Times New Roman, 12pt.) analysis paper during the final weeks of class.

Paper 2: Assigned Week 10, due Finals Week

This paper will count for 35% of your overall grade. It will take the form of a review and feedback essay of a work in progress by an early career ethnographer. You will be graded based on how you use course readings to inform a critical discussion of a draft paper/essay/chapter/article. I will be sending these to the authors in question, who are eager to hear your thoughts!

Slack Discussion (15%, Goals #1, #2, #3, and #4)

We will be using Slack this semester to conduct conversations between class sessions. (You will need to install the Slack program/app on your computing device if you have not done so). Rather than individual discussion board posts, we will be using Slack chatrooms to stage conversations on the readings for the upcoming class.

For each session, I will assign moderators for an online and classroom discussion. Every student will moderate at least once. The moderators will post questions at least 48 hours before class to begin a critical and concise conversation on the reading. You will have until 9:00 am before class to respond to the questions and reply to your classmate's. You must contribute at least five responses total, at least two of which must be in direct response to a classmate, one a question (which can count as a response), and one a link to a blog post, article, or social media discussion relevant to the topic at hand (which can also count as a response to a classmate).

Your participation in these online discussions will count for 15% of your grade. You will receive one point for each response per class. You will only fail to receive points if you do not post the required number of responses, or if a response is clearly not based in the readings or in response to classmates.

Class facilitation (15%, Goals #1, #2, #3, and #5)

You will each be responsible for facilitating (perhaps with a partner, depending on course enrollment) an in-depth discussion of the readings for the same session you will moderate on Slack. You will have ten minutes to present key ideas and tensions from the readings and tie them into highlights from the online

discussion. You will then be responsible for facilitating the next twenty minutes of class discussion with questions based on the reading and classmate tweets. Presentations are to be analytical, not summarizations, and your ability to guide and respond to classmates will count equal to your presentation. You are required to bring a one-page handout of key quotations and tweets to give to classmates.

Your Discussion Question and Facilitation assignment will be worth 15% of your grade. Points will be based on your preparation, relevant examples, and classroom presentation.

Course Materials

We will be reading two full length ethnographies in the second half of the course. They will be available at the campus bookstore as well as on reserve at the library. Other books and articles listed in the syllabus will be selections from the source material and posted as .pdf files for download.

Laurence Ralph (2014), *Renegade Dreams: Living Through Injury in Gangland Chicago*

Aimee Meredith Cox (2015), *Shapeshifters: Black Girls and the Choreography of Citizenship*

Course Schedule

Week 1 (Problems) 09-06

How has race been constituted as a problem for anthropology?

- Leith Mullings (2005): "Interrogating Racism: Towards an Antiracist Anthropology."
- Dorothy Roberts (2012): *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-Create Race in the Twenty-first Century*

Week 2 (Dueling Legacies) 09-13

How did early anthropologists and social scientists conceptualize race and racism? To what dilemmas were these formulations responding?

- W.E.B. DuBois (1898): "The Study of Negro Problems"
- Faye Harrison (1992): "The DuBoisian Legacy in Anthropology"
- Lee D. Baker (1998): *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954*
- Franz Boas, (1940): "Race and Progress" in *Race, Language and Culture*
- Jafari Allen and Ryan Jobson (2015): "The Decolonizing Generation: (Race and) Theory in Anthropology since the Eighties"

Week 3 (The Urban) 09-20

How have anthropologists conceptualized the articulations of race and the urban?

- John L. Jackson (2000): *Harlemworld: Doing Race and Class in Contemporary Black America*
- De, Genova Nicholas (2005): *Working the Boundaries: Race, Space, and "illegality" in Mexican Chicago*

Week 4 (Class) 09-27

How has race worked through political economy and social class?

- Stuart Hall (1980): "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance"

- Mary Pattillo (2007): *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City*
- John L. Jackson (2000): *Harlemworld: Doing Race and Class in Contemporary Black America*

Week 5 (Intersectionality and Gender) 10-04

How do we think race with gender and other categories of difference?

- Irma McClaurin (2001): "Introduction: Forging a Theory, Politics, Praxis, and Poetics of Black Feminist Anthropology" in *Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory, Politics, Praxis, and Poetics*
- Leith Mullings (1997): "Gender and the Application of Anthropological Knowledge to Public Policy in the United States" in *On Our Own Terms: Race, Class, and Gender in the Lives of African American Women*.
- Keisha Khan-Perry (2013): *Black Women Against the Land Grab: The Fight for Racial Justice in Brazil*
- Audra Simpson (2008): "From White into Red: Captivity Narratives as Alchemies of Race and Citizenship"

Week 6 (Colonialism and the Global) 10-11

How have imperialism and global political economy shaped formations of race?

- Frantz Fanon (1952): "The Fact of Blackness"
- Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1991): "Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness"
- Kamari Clarke and Deborah Thomas (2006): "Introduction: Globalization and the Transformations of Race" in *Globalization and Race: Transformations in the Production Of Blackness*

Week 7 (Whiteness) 10-18

What unique challenges does whiteness pose for the study of race?

- Micaela di Leonardo (1994): "White Ethnicities, Identity Politics, and Baby Bear's Chair."
- John Hartigan (2005): "Object Lessons in Whiteness: Antiracism and the Study of White Folks"
- Setha Low (2003): *Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America*

Week 8 (Ontologies of Race in the 21st Century) 10-25

How do we make race today? To what objects and narratives do we fix it?

- John L. Jackson (2005): *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity*
- Barbara Fields and Karen Fields (2013): *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life*
- Stephan Palmié (2007): "Genomics, Divination, "Racecraft"

Week 9 (Cyberspace) 11-01

How do digital technologies and representations influence the production of race?

- John L. Jackson (2013): *Thin Description: Ethnography and the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem*
- Shalini Shankar (2015): *Advertising Diversity: Ad Agencies and the Creation of Asian American Consumers*

Week 10 (Injury) 11-08

- Laurence Ralph (2014): *Renegade Dreams*

Week 11 (Injury, continued) 11-15

- finish Ralph book

Week 12 (Choreography) 11-22

- Start Aimee Meredith Cox (2015): *Shapeshifters* over Thanksgiving break

Week 13 (Choreography, continued) 11-29

- Finish Cox

Week 14 (Work in Progress) 12-06

- TBD