

Media, race, and identity

Comm 5221-001 [graduate section]

Prof. Gil Rodman

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office hours (253 Ford): TuTh 10-11:15a, W 10-11:30a, and by appointment

Syllabus

Spring 2011

Course description and objectives

Racial prejudice and institutional racism remain significant problems in the US today. Whatever advances have been made over the years with respect to racial politics, the US remains a nation deeply divided along racial faultlines, and race continues to matter tremendously when it comes to the general distribution of education, jobs, housing, healthcare, justice, and political power.

One of the most significant arenas where racial politics manifest themselves in US culture is the mass media. We will spend much of the semester studying the ways that this thing we call "race" both shapes and is shaped by a variety of media practices and policies. In particular, we will examine:

- the social construction of race and racial identity,
- the nature of racial identity formation and self-awareness,
- the public discourses around assimilation and integration,
- the politics of media representation and invisibility,
- the history of interracial cultural borrowing and theft,
- the vexed question of racial ambiguity and hybridity, and
- the variability of racial formations across different geopolitical contexts.

Bear in mind that few (if any) of the questions we'll address this semester have easy answers. If simple solutions were truly effective in eliminating racism, it would have disappeared decades (if not centuries) ago, and there would be no need for courses such as this one. As such, soundbite approaches to these issues (e.g., "can't we all just get along?" or "let's just pretend race doesn't exist") will not serve you well at all, and a crucial part of your task this semester will be to think critically and complexly about the role of race and media in contemporary society.

Readings

The following required books are available at the University Bookstore in Coffman Union.

- Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*
- Michael Awkward, *Burying Don Imus*
- Paul Beatty, *The White Boy Shuffle*
- Todd Boyd, *The New H.N.I.C.*
- Grant Farred, *Phantom Calls*
- Herman S. Gray, *Cultural Moves*
- bell hooks, *Where We Stand*
- George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* [revised and expanded edition]
- Carol A. Stabile, *White Victims, Black Villains*
- Patricia J. Williams, *Seeing a Color-Blind Future*

Please note that an earlier edition exists for the Lipsitz book. If you opt to acquire your books from alternate sources, make sure to acquire the edition listed above. Other required readings will be distributed in class.

Attendance/participation

Our weekly meetings will be oriented around seminar-style discussions, rather than formal lectures. As such, your primary responsibility each week will be to show up prepared to contribute thoughtfully and productively to our conversations about the assigned readings. You are not expected to demonstrate perfect and immediate mastery of the issues raised by our readings -- questions and requests for clarification are perfectly welcome contributions to our conversations -- but you are expected to be an active and regular participant in our ongoing dialogue. I'll chime in often enough (and at enough length) that you'll certainly get my take on our readings, but this course is not designed to be a spectator event.

Course blog

We will conduct a significant amount of discussion and course business online via a course blog. Full details on how to access and contribute to the blog are available on a separate handout. Here's a partial list of the ways we will use the course blog this semester:

- a central "bulletin board" for official course announcements and major course handouts
- an informal discussion space for priming, continuing, and/or augmenting our in-class conversations
- a collection point for various online resources relating to cultural studies and/or the course
- a space for mutual support and feedback related to your final paper

Ideally, the course blog should function as a space that's serious enough for people to share thoughts on the course material at more length than is possible during our class sessions, but simultaneously casual enough for people to post fragments of work in progress, quick thoughts and/or questions about the course material, and jovial interaction.

Research paper

Your major project for the semester is a 6250-7500 word research paper. Topics can (and will) vary, but your overall project should demonstrate a clear relationship to the course theme. Ideally, your finished paper should aim to be worthy of submission to a conference or a refereed journal. Major deadlines for this project are as follows:

Preliminary 1-on-1 meeting	15 Feb
250-500 word proposal	22 Feb
Full-length draft	4 May
In-class group workshopping	11 May (1:30-3:30p)

Proposals and final drafts should be posted to the course blog and submitted in hard copy format.

Grading policy

Presumably, you're enrolled in this course because you have a genuine interest in the topic, and so your presence is motivated by something other than the desire to add an(other) A to your transcript. Thus, my default assumption is that it's counter-productive to make you worry about how your work for this course translates into a letter grade. As of Day One, you begin the course with an A. If you show up for all our class meetings, participate intelligently in our discussions (both in class and online), and complete the final paper in satisfactory and timely fashion, you'll keep that A. That said, in cases where people are clearly slacking off, I reserve the right to go deeper into the alphabet when I submit final grades. Under such unfortunate circumstances, your grade will be calculated using the following formula:

Attendance/participation	15%
Course blog	15%
Research paper	70%

Reading/assignment schedule

Jan 18

no reading

Jan 25

Williams, *Seeing a Color-Blind Future*

American Anthropological Association, "Statement on 'Race'"

Omi & Winant, "Racial Formation"

Tatum, "Defining Racism"

McIntosh, "White Privilege"

Hall, "Race, Culture, and Communications: Looking Backward and Forward at Cultural Studies"

Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideology and the Media"

Said, "The Politics of Knowledge"

Goldberg, "Buried, Alive"

Squires *et al.*, "What Is This 'Post-' in Postracial, Postfeminist . . . (Fill in the Blank)?"

Feb 1

hooks, *Where We Stand*

hooks, "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination"

hooks, "Gangsta Culture -- Sexism, Misogyny: Who Will Take the Rap?"

hooks, "Madonna: Plantation Mistress or Soul Sister?"

Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters* [selections]

Nash, "Strange Bedfellows: Black Feminism and Antipornography Feminism"

Feb 8

Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*

Lipsitz, "White Fear: O.J. Simpson and the Greatest Story Ever Sold"

Feb 15

Gray, *Cultural Moves*

Gray, "Margin (in)to the Future: From a Racial Past to a 'Different' Future"

Jhally & Lewis, *Enlightened Racism* [selections]

Dyson, "Bill Cosby and the Politics of Race"

Feb 22

Farred, *Phantom Calls*

Farred, "Thinking in the Vernacular"

Yu, "How Tiger Woods Lost His Stripes: Post-Nationalist American Studies as a History of Race, Migration, and the Commodification of Culture"

Houck, "Crouching Tiger: Hidden Blackness: Tiger Woods and the Disappearance of Race"

Ommen, "LeBron James and the Protocol of Display"

Pang, "Copying *Kill Bill*"

Sterne, "The Computer Race Goes to Class: How Computers in Schools Helped Shape the Racial Topography of the Internet"

Coleman, "Race as Technology"

Dyer, "The Light of the World"

Mar 1

Dyson, *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster* [selections]

Wise, "An Open Letter to White America About White Privilege and Hurricane Katrina"

Ralph, "'It's Hard Out Here for a Pimp . . . With . . . a Whole Lot of Bitches Jumpin' Ship': Navigating Black Politics in the Wake of Katrina"

Porter, "Jazz and Revival"

Kish, "'My FEMA People': Hip-Hop as Disaster Recovery in the Katrina Diaspora"

Ontiveros, "No Golden Age: Television and the Chicano Civil Rights Movement"

Bell-Jordan, "*Black. White. and a Survivor of The Real World: Constructions of Race on Reality TV*"

Dubrofsky and Hardy, "Performing Race in *Flavor of Love* and *The Bachelor*"

Bird, "Imagining Indians: Negotiating Identity in a Media World"

Chvany, "'Do We Look Like Ferengi Capitalists to You?: *Star Trek's* Klingons as Emergent Virtual American Ethnic"

Mar 8

Hall, "New Ethnicities"

Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities"

Hall, "Who Needs 'Identity'?"

Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?"

St Louis, "On 'The Necessity and the "Impossibility" of Identities': The Politics and Ethics of 'New Ethnicities'"

Carby, "Becoming Modernized Racialized Subjects: Detours Through Our Pasts to Produce Ourselves Anew"

Grossberg, "Identity and Cultural Studies: Is That All There Is?"

Senna, "The Mulatto Millennium"

Jones, "Is Biracial Enough? (Or, What's This About a Multiracial Category on the Census?: A Conversation)"

Piper, "Passing for White, Passing for Black"

Wald, "Race, Passing, and Cultural Representation"

powell, "The Colorblind Multiracial Dilemma: Racial Categories Reconsidered"

Perez, "Two or Three Spectacular Mulatas and the Queer Pleasures of Overidentification"

Sturm, "Opening"

Mar 15

NO CLASS -- SPRING BREAK

Mar 22

Awkward, *Burying Don Imus*

Wiegman, Lubiano, and Hardt, "In the Afterlife of the Duke Case"

di Leonardo, "Neoliberalism, Nostalgia, Race Politics, and the American Public Sphere: The Case of the Tom Joyner Morning Show"

McPherson, "I'll Take My Stand in Dixie-Net: White Guys, the South, and Cyberspace"

Statzel, "Cybersupremacy: The New Face and Form of White Supremacist Activism"

Gallagher, "On the Fault Line: Race, Class, and the US Patriot Movement"

Mar 29

Stabile, *White Victims, Black Villains*

Maurice, "'Cinema at Its Source': Synchronizing Race and Sound in the Early Talkies"

Wallace, "The Good Lynching and *The Birth of a Nation*: Discourses and Aesthetics of Jim Crow"

Stadler, "Never Heard Such a Thing: Lynching and Phonographic Modernity"

Bernstein, "Dances With Things: Material Culture and the Performance of Race"

Osucha, "The Whiteness of Privacy: Race, Media, Law"

Apr 5

Boyd, *The New H.N.I.C.*

Kelley, "Looking for the 'Real' Nigga: Social Scientists Construct the Ghetto"

Jafa, "My Black Death"

Rodman, "A Hero to Most?: Elvis, Myth, and the Politics of Race"

Rodman, "Race . . . and Other Four Letter Words: Eminem and the Cultural Politics of Authenticity"

Apr 12

Brooks and Wald, "Women Do Dylan: The Aesthetics and Politics of Dylan Covers"

Wald, "One of the Boys?: Whiteness, Gender, and Popular Music Studies"

Kheshti, "Musical Miscegenation and the Logic of Rock and Roll: Homosocial Desire and Racial Productivity in 'A Paler Shade of White'"

Lipsitz, "The Hip Hop Hearings: The Hidden History of Deindustrialization"

Rose, "'Fear of a Black Planet': Rap Music and Black Cultural Politics in the 1990s"

Rose, "Soul Sonic Forces: Technology, Orality, and Black Cultural Practice in Rap Music"

Adelt, "Germany Gets the Blues: Negotiations of 'Race' and Nation at the American Folk Blues Festival"

Barrera, "Hottentot 2000: Jennifer Lopez and Her Butt"

Cheng, "Skin Deep: Josephine Baker and the Colonial Fetish"

Vogel, "Lena Horne's Impersona"

Lott, "The Whiteness of Film Noir"

Osterweil, "Reconstructing Shirley: Pedophilia and Interracial Romance in Hollywood's Age of Innocence"

Apr 19

Ang, *On Not Being Chinese*

Gilroy, "The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity"

Brown, "The Racial State of the Everyday and the Making of Ethnic Statistics in Britain"

Silva, "Brown: From Identity to Identification"

Sharma, "Taxi Cab Publics and the Production of *Brown Space* After 9/11"

Apr 26

Beatty, *The White Boy Shuffle*

Beatty, *Slumberland* [selections]

May 3

final paper draft due

Berlant, "The Face of America and the State of Emergency"

Roediger, "All About Eve, Critical White Studies, and Getting Over Whiteness"

Gaines (*et al.*), "Of Teachable Moments and Specters of Race" [with responses]

Sharma, "'*Crash*' -- Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Whiteness?"

Harrison-Kahan, "Inside *Inside Man*: Spike Lee and Post-9/11 Entertainment"

Aal, "Moving From Guilt to Action: Antiracist Organizing and the Concept of 'Whiteness' for Activism and the Academy"

Middlebrook, "The Ballot Box and Beyond: The (Im)Possibilities of White Antiracist Organizing"

Jones and Mukherjee, "From California to Michigan: Race, Rationality, and Neoliberal Governmentality"

Goad, "Several Compelling Arguments for the Enslavement of All White Liberals"

Ignatiev and Garvey (eds.), *Race Traitor* [selections]

May 11

research paper workshop (1:30-3:30p)