

AWS 2250/80: Race, Gender and Social Justice* Winter Session 2014

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"I have to warn my students time and time again that when you enter my classes you are not going to be comfortable...I am here to make you suffer because, if you are in any class, particularly a social science class and you are comfortable, chances are that you are being lied to. It is in these classes that you must attain a confrontation with yourself, with reality and where you must attain a confrontation with the lying world that has created you in terms of who and what you are now. You must confront the nature of this beast called education, of which you are a part, and how it is going to transform you into a beast; how you then must become conscious of what it is doing to you, and against you, so that you may escape its planned destiny for you" (Wilson, 1999, p. 58).

Course Description:

This course investigates the role and function of race, gender, sexuality and multiple forms of social oppression and inequality (better known as racism, sexism and heterosexism) within the lived experiences of African descended people in America. The 2008 presidential election has spawned the idea that we live in a "post-racial" society where race is no longer important and racism no longer exists. In order to tease out whether or not that is true (or even possible), we will examine and identify oppression in its many forms. We will examine systemic aspects of social oppression in different periods and contexts and the ways that systems of social oppression manifest themselves on individual, cultural, institutional and/or global levels thus becoming self-perpetuating, but not wholly unaltered, structures. A focus will be placed upon the consistency of social oppression within the post-Civil Rights era through an analysis of the impact of racism, sexism and heterosexism on such issues as the race/gender nexus, the criminal justice system, education, the media, housing and the interplay of race, racism and American popular culture.

Course Objectives:

1. To define the concepts of race, gender and sexuality and discuss the significance they hold in American society;
2. To define racism, sexism, heterosexism and classism and be able to identify the myriad of ways in which they function;
3. To critically examine the ever-changing forms of oppression in America;
4. To explore the intersecting oppressions: racism, sexism, heterosexism and classism and the critical role they play in our lives;
5. Understand the historical significance of global white supremacy and patriarchy;
6. Explain, discuss and identify everyday examples of racial, gendered and sexual privilege;
7. To understand the impact of racism and global white supremacy, sexism, classism and heterosexism on the lived experiences of all people.
8. To develop an understanding of individual agency and collective action in envisioning and creating a just, fair, and healthy society.

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Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Define the concepts of race, gender and sexuality and discuss the significance they hold in American society in exams and writing assignments;
2. Demonstrate in writing an ability to identify and critically examine social oppression and the myriad of ways in which it functions;
3. Explain the ever-changing forms of oppression in America in essays and online class discussions;
4. Effectively express in online class discussion and in writing an understanding of the intersecting oppressions: racism, sexism, heterosexism and classism and the critical role these oppressions play in their lives;
5. Effectively express in online class discussion and in writing an understanding the historical significance of global white supremacy and patriarchy;
6. Explain and identify everyday examples of racial, gendered and sexual privilege in online class discussions and in writing;
7. Demonstrate a written understanding of the impact of racism and global white supremacy, sexism, classism and heterosexism on the lived experiences of all people.
8. Discuss individual agency and collective strategies of resistance in online discussions or essays.

Text & Readings:

I will be providing the readings for the semester via Blackboard along with any other pertinent course information (syllabus, guidelines for assignments, etc.). *All students enrolled in this class have been automatically enrolled in Blackboard.* As a supplement to the readings, assorted viewings will be assigned periodically. Those that can be found on YouTube will be indicated. If you are having any trouble locating a clip/video/film on YouTube, please contact me and I will post a link for it. ***Please make sure to check Blackboard and your WPUNJ email accounts regularly for any announcements, information or changes that may be made to the class schedule.***

Course Requirements:

Participation: (200 points)

Course participation will be determined via two criteria. First, you must log on at least 4 (four) times per week during the duration of this course. Three (3) of these days should be between Monday - Friday, and one day should be on Saturday or Sunday. Second, you must participate in the course Discussion Board by providing substantive comments (50-100 words) and critical questions of the ideas expressed by your fellow classmates, instructor and the readings. Thus, you must not only log on at least four (4) times a week, but also provide substantive comments and questions on at least three (3) occasions within the course of a week in order to gain the minimum portion of your participation grade. *Please note that at least three (3) posts within the course of 7 days is the minimum and is equivalent to passing (i.e. a D), you must do more than the minimum to receive a higher grade.* Please also understand that I am concerned with the **quality** and **relevance** of your discussion board comments. Regarding **quality**, please keep your comments clear and to the point. Furthermore, your comments should be well written and grammatically clear. Regarding **relevance**, your comments should speak directly to the question or topic under review. Irrelevant or side-tangents that are not directly linked to the material at hand will only work against you for this portion of your grade, thus try to stay on task with clarity.

****PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT IF THERE IS AN ISSUE THAT WILL IMPACT YOUR ATTENDANCE AND/OR PARTICIPATION IN THIS CLASS SIGNIFICANTLY, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT I BE NOTIFIED IMMEDIATELY IN ORDER TO PREVENT ISSUES WHEN FINAL GRADES ARE DUE. IT IS SO MUCH EASIER FOR ME TO BE SYMPATHETIC AND HELPFUL IF WE CAN PLAN BEFORE THINGS GO WRONG RATHER THAN AFTER.****

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Assignments:

Be aware that it is only under EXTREME (i.e. documented illness, a death in the family, etc.) circumstances that late work will be accepted. ***Any work submitted after the due date will not be graded.***

Readings:

The weekly reading assignments should be critically analyzed and understood. My expectation is that students are able to answer the following questions about the assigned readings for the week:

1. What is the main idea of the article(s)?
2. How do the article(s) relate to the larger issue/class topic? What is the relevance of this article?
3. How do the articles relate to each other?

In order to answer these questions, you should be performing a “close reading” of the assigned articles. Below are a couple of suggestions on how to perform close readings:

- When you read the articles for this course (and for any course, for that matter) you should be aware of and analyze the authors’ approach to the subject, his/her general argument(s), position(s), conclusion(s), etc.
- Again, you should ask yourself questions such as, “What is the author’s main thesis? What are the general strengths and weaknesses of the piece? Did the author sufficiently support his/her thesis by providing sufficient research and evidence to support his/her claims? Did he/she answer my own questions on this topic? Are there any themes in the readings or between selected readings?”

WebQuest Assignments: (50 Points each, 100 points total)

Two (2) WebQuest assignments will be given throughout the course of this class. WebQuest assignments are investigative web-based searches that you are required to perform. Instructions and directions for each WebQuest assignment will be given one week prior to their due dates.

Reaction Papers: (50 points each, 100 points total)

Students will be required to hand in two (2) short reaction papers throughout the course of the session. The 3 page typed papers will be assigned periodically and will cover various topics discussed in class as well as assigned course readings. (Paper guidelines will be distributed prior to the first paper’s due date).

General Comments on the Course Workload:

Given that this course is completely online, the workload may seem a bit much but, in actuality, it is not more than what you would regularly experience over the course of a regular class meeting during the course of a semester. As the above course outline and outline of requirements explains, you will be expected to complete: 2 reaction papers, 2 webquest assignments, and participate regularly during our online discussions. You will have access to your grades once assignments have been graded and the grades are posted on the Gradebook in Blackboard. This means that you can keep track of your progress throughout the duration of the semester.

General Comments on Electronic Communication:

Blackboard allows a variety of means to communicate. As discussed throughout this syllabus we will rely heavily upon Discussion Boards throughout this semester. When communicating with the instructor via email make sure your email subject line includes the course number (AWS2250/80) and that, within the body of the email, you identify yourself as a student in this course.

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Grading Policy:

Participation	200	points
WebQuest Assignments	100	points
Reaction Papers	100	points
Total	400	points

Grading Scale:

A:	100-95	B-:	82-80	D+:	69-66
A-:	94-90	C+:	79-76	D:	65-63
B+:	89-86	C:	75-73	D-:	62-60
B:	85-83	C-:	72-70	F:	59 and below

Policy on Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and academic cheating are prohibited. Essential to intellectual growth is the development of independent thought and a respect for the thoughts of others. The prohibition against plagiarism and cheating is intended to foster this independence and respect.

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's labor, another person's ideas, another person's words, and/or another person's assistance. Normally, all work done for courses -- papers, examinations, homework exercises, laboratory reports, oral presentations -- is expected to be the individual effort of the student presenting the work. Any assistance must be reported to the instructor. If the work has entailed consulting other resources -- journals, books, or other media -- these resources must be cited in a manner appropriate to the course. It is the instructor's responsibility to indicate the appropriate manner of citation. Everything used from other sources -- suggestions for organization of ideas, ideas themselves, or actual language -- must be cited. Failure to cite borrowed material constitutes plagiarism. Undocumented use of materials from the World Wide Web is plagiarism.

Academic cheating is, generally, the thwarting or breaking of the general rules of academic work or the specific rules of the individual courses. It includes falsifying data; submitting, without the instructor's approval, work in one course which was done for another; helping others to plagiarize or cheat from one's own or another's work; or actually doing the work of another person. Any student suspected of academic cheating and/or plagiarism will be given a zero for that assignment and will not be allowed to make up those points in any way.

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Schedule

Section 1: Introduction

Module 1: Introductory Assignment (12/22 - 12/23/14)

- Course Introduction; Student Introductions; Review of Syllabus; Posting of Questions/Comments/Concerns.

Our first few days of class will function as an attempt to orient each of you to the online learning experience and explore your thoughts and ideas on the topics that will be covered in this course. Your first assignment will be a short essay that answers the following questions:

- Who are you?
- Where are you from? Where were you born? Where are your parents from?
- How would you define yourself racially, ethnically and/or culturally?
- What is your gender?
- What is your major and/or minor? Or intended major/minor?
- How and what did I learn about race?
- How and what did I learn about gender?
- How and what did I learn about sexuality?
- How have my life experiences supported or contradicted what I learned?
- What assumptions do I bring to this class about race/gender/sexuality?
- Why have you decided to take this class?
- Why did you decide to take this course *online*?
- What do you intend to get out of this class?
- Have you ever taken a course online before? If so, what was the name of the course? What were the pros and cons of that learning experience?
- How do you think the online learning differs from the in class learning experience?

In a complete essay, answer the questions above to the best of your ability. You can answer the questions in any order you desire, but please keep in mind that there should be some flow and movement of ideas in order for this assignment to manifest itself as a **complete essay**. Student answers are to be posted online for all of the other students to view. Answers should be posted on the Discussion Board in the thread titled **Student Introductions**. As the first assignment of the semester, you must post your personal introduction by December 23, 2014 at 11:59 pm (the end of the day). Student introductions posted after this date will be considered late (please refer to my policy on late assignments above). Between December 23 and December 25, 2014, I will read each student introduction and provide my own answers to the questions.

In addition to your personal introductions, like in any class, you are required to review and discuss the course syllabus. Therefore, please review the following document (this syllabus) and place any questions, comments or concerns on the Discussion Board in the thread entitled **Questions, Comments and Concerns Regarding Course Syllabus**. This thread can also be found in the Discussion Board Section of Blackboard.

Section 2: Race: Social Construct or Biological Reality?

Module 2 (12/24 - 12/26/14):

- What is race?
- What is Blackness? Whiteness?
- Racial formation
- Racial identity development
- The origins of racism

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- Readings:** Omi & Winant, "Racial Formations" (Bb)
Jackson & Weidman, "The Origins of Scientific Racism" (Bb)
- Viewings:** "War on the Weak: Eugenics in America" (YouTube)

WebQuest Assignment #1 due (12/27/14)

Section 3: Racism and White Privilege

Module 3 (12/26 - 12/28/14):

- Defining racism
- Defining white supremacy
- Understanding racism
- Understanding white privilege
- Color-blind racism
- The "new racism"

- Readings:** Tatum, "Defining Racism: 'Can We Talk?'" (Bb)
Wise, "The Oprah Effect: Black Successes, White Denial and the Reality of Racism" (Bb)
McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (Bb)
Wise, "Explaining Your White Privilege (Or Your Defense Mechanism is Showing)" (Bb)

- Viewings:** Wise, "The Pathology of Privilege: Racism, White Denial and the Costs of Inequality" (Vimeo.com)

Writing Assignment #1 due (1/1/15)

Section 4: Class and Socioeconomic Status

Module 4 (12/29 - 12/31/14):

- Class and economic distribution in America
- "Poor Shaming"

- Readings:** Mantsios, "Class in America: 2009" (Bb)
Solomon, "Food Stamps, Poor-Shaming and the Very Scary 2012 Farm Bill" (Bb)

- Viewings:** "Wealth Inequality in America" (YouTube)

Section 5: Gender and Sexuality

Module 5 (12/31/14 - 1/2/15):

- What is gender? Sexuality?
- Defining patriarchy and sexism
- Understanding male privilege
- Gender/sexual socialization and scripting
- Intersectionality of oppression

- Readings:** Hackman, "Sexism" (Bb)
Lorber, "Night to His Day" (Bb)
Hubbard, "The Social Construction of Sexuality" (Bb)

Section 6: Intersecting Oppressions and Social Life

Module 6 (1/2 - 1/4/15)

- Race, gender and sexuality in the media
- Racial-sexual media representations

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Readings: Bogle, “Black Beginnings: From Uncle Tom’s Cabin to the Birth of a Nation” (Bb)
Viewings: Marlon Riggs, “Ethnic Notions,” 1987 (YouTube and Cheng Library)
“Scrub Me Mama with a Boogie Beat,” Universal Pictures, 1941 (YouTube)

Writing Assignment #2 due (1/6/15)

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Module 7 (1/5 - 1/7/15)

- Race, gender and education
- American curriculum reform
- Race, gender and the criminal justice system

Readings: Gettleman, “The Segregated Classrooms of a Proudly Diverse School” (Bb)
Hoover, “Race and Family Income of Students Influence Guidance Counselors’ Advice, Study Finds” (Bb)
“Philadelphia adopting ‘doomsday’ school-slashing plan despite \$400 million prison project” (Bb)
Alexander, “The New Jim Crow” (Bb)
Wise, “Rationalizing Racial Oppression: How the Right Misuses Crime Data to Justify Unequal Policing” (Bb)

Viewings: “University of Dayton Speaker Series 2012-13, Michelle Alexander, J.D. - The New Jim Crow”(YouTube)

Module 8 (1/8 - 1/10/15):

- Racism and housing
- Racism, sexism and heterosexism in the workplace

Readings: Turner & Herbig, “Closing Doors on Americans’ Housing Choices” (Bb)
Wise, “Excuses, Excuses: How the Right Rationalizes Racial Inequality (Part III: Housing)” (Bb)
Francis, “Employers’ Replies to Racial Names” (Bb)
Burns & Krehely, “Gay and Transgender People Face High Rates of Workplace Discrimination and Harassment” (Bb)
Chang, “Bias Persists Against Women of Science, Study Finds” (Bb)

WebQuest Assignment #2 due (1/11/15)

Section 7: Race and Racism in a “Post-Racial” American society

- **Module 9 (1/10 - 1/11/15)**
- Life in “Post-Racial” America
- Race and Racism in the age of Obama
- Directions for the future

Readings: Coates, “Fear of a Black President” (Bb)
Comrie, “Immigration Reform in the US: Taking Racism Out of the Closet” (Bb)