

University of Louisville

**COMM 301-53
RACE AND ETHNICITY IN THE MEDIA**

**SUMMER 2016
Online Course**

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Media messages are part of a cultural discourse we use to build our self-identities and our notions of race and ethnicity. Along with parallel social institutions like family, school, and religion, the media have become over the years an important social and cultural educator. They provide images, narratives, stories, and myths we rely on to inform us about other genders, races, classes, sexual orientations, and geographic regions.

In this course we will analyze the role the mass media (both entertainment and news) play in shaping, reflecting and challenging the social construction of race and ethnicity in modern society. We will examine a variety of critical approaches and methods in media analysis in light of our discussion of how race and ethnicity are represented: political economy of media production (who owns the media? Who is behind media texts? What institutional characteristics and limitations underlie the production of these texts?); textual analysis (what and how meanings are encoded in media texts? What and how stylistic conventions are used in the encoding process? How do meanings convey ideological positions?); and audience reception (how do consumers read media messages? What factors inform how audiences receive and interact with texts? Are audiences resistant to encoded meanings in media texts?).

Race is not simply a reference to physical attributes, but it's a cultural and social process that operates in larger system of relations and power. Race in this class will go beyond the representation of African Americans or Hispanics in the media. We will look at other important ethnic groups such as Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Arab Americans. Our discussion will also include other minorities based on their sexual orientation and physical ability.

Learning goals:

- Become familiar with social science and humanities perspectives on ethnicity, race and the media;
- Develop a more sophisticated understanding of the media culture by analyzing various processes: production, textual analysis, and reception

- Improve critical skills when analyzing media messages and develop a greater ability to participate in constructive dialogues over the relationship between the media, race, and ethnicity;
- develop an understanding of the connections between race, ethnicity and other areas of social life –religion, gender, power, class, and culture.

REQUIRED READINGS

-All the readings for this course will be put online. Check the schedule at the end of the syllabus for a more detailed list of the readings. THERE IS NO TEXTBOOK ASSIGNED FOR THIS COURSE.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Nakamura, Lisa. (2013). *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*.
- Healey, Joseph. (2011). *Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Class: The Sociology of Group Conflict and Change*. New York: Sage Publications.
- Luther, Catherine; Lepre, Carolyn, and Clark Naeemah. (2011). *Diversity in U.S. Mass Media*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Downing, John and Husband, Charles. (2005). *Representing Race: Racisms, Ethnicity and the Media*. New York: Sage Publications.
- Hylton, Kevin, "Race" and Sport: Critical Race Theory, 2008
- Millard, Ann and Chapa, Jorge. (2004). *Apple Pie & Enchiladas: Latino Newcomers in the Rural Midwest*. University of Texas Press.
- Wilson, Clint, Gutierrez, Felix, and Chao, Lena. (2003). *Racism, Sexism, and the Media: The Rise of Class Communication in Multicultural America*. New York: Sage Publications.
- Gandy, Oscar. (1998). *Communication and Race: A Structural Perspective*. London: Arnold Publishers.
- Healey, Joseph (1997). *Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the United States*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Biagi, Shirley and Kern-Foxworth, Marilyn. (Eds.). (1997). *Facing Difference: Race, Gender, and the Mass Media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

ASSIGNMENTS

- **Exams:** There will be two examinations in this course. Both will cover readings, lectures, videos, and forum discussions. You will be provided a study guide before each exam covering mostly the assigned readings. Questions in the exams will be drawn only from this study guide. Exams will consist of short definitions, multiple choice, and essays.

- **Writing Assignments:** These will consist of video analyses and short reflections on the assigned readings. Occasionally, I will suggest a case study related to a given topic in our readings. We will attempt answers to various questions and discuss them in forum discussions. In my experience teaching topics courses, I've found this exercise to be quite helpful for students to apply what otherwise might remain abstract theoretical thoughts on a particular issue.
- **Final Project:** Each student will choose a topic that will allow them to observe and analyze the representation of race and ethnicity in a medium or a genre of your choice. (Medium: print -newspapers or magazines; television, film, music or the Internet; genre: sitcoms, series, reality tv, music videos, etc.) Possible topics could include: a minority/ethnic group portrayal in a television series, or in the news; the portrayal of race or gender in magazine advertisements; or the remedy to negative portrayals of race and ethnicity in alternative media online (blog, twitter feed, Facebook page, YouTube channel, etc.) You will receive a handout with more detailed instructions on how to choose your topics.

The final project consists of three equally important layers:

Proposal: This assignment requires you to conduct a preliminary research on the topic you've chosen and write a proposal in which you highlight a thesis statement, relevance to the topic of the class, expected methodology of research, and a short account of your preliminary findings on the topic at hand.

Research paper: You will write a 10-12-page paper in which you explore and analyze the topic you have chosen. Your reflections should be based on reliable academic sources like the ones that were assigned in this class. The proposal you will write for this paper should help you better define your focus and locate relevant resources for your research.

Presentation: Your findings and reflections on the topic will be formally presented to the entire class at the end of the semester. You will get a handout to help you with the structure of this presentation.

- **Class Discussion:** I rely on you to comment and reflect on the readings assigned for this class. There will be a few quizzes throughout the session and I hope they will only help guide your reading of the material; not force you to fulfill this basic of requirements. As part of this rubric, you will need to post at least **ONE** comment every week. Your weekly comment should be at least 150 words and should elaborate on the materials assigned for that week and postings by your colleagues in the class. Remember that for this assignment you will be graded on the quality; not simply the frequency of your posts. We will have many ways to interact, and all of them depend on having read the assigned articles. It is your responsibility to show me that you are ready and have thought carefully about the

topic at hand. In a course about race and ethnicity, it is particularly important that everyone is ready to share his/her own thoughts and interpretations, but also willing to listen respectfully to other people's opinions. While disagreements are allowed and can actually enrich a conversation, these should always remain within the boundaries of respect, correctness, and decency.

Your final course grade will be determined this way:

❖ Two exams:	
-Exam 1:	20%
-Exam 2:	20%
❖ Participation assignments:	20%
-Forum discussions	
-Quizzes	
• Writing Assignments:	20%
❖ Final project:	20%
Total:	100%

COURSE FORMAT

In addition to ppt presentations, this course will rely primarily on discussion and analysis. You are absolutely required to complete the assigned readings each week and be prepared to critique and talk about things that you might have taken for granted up till now. We will use video and audio clips to illustrate various topics and work as a basis for forum discussion.

Structure of the course on Blackboard

Here is what you need to look for in Blackboard:

- **Announcements:** there will be frequent announcements for due date reminders, learning units' outlines, and other important messages. Please read the first announcements on the welcoming page of COMM301 carefully when you log in.
- **Course documents:** Each week on Blackboard in *course documents* you will find that week's unit material including PowerPoint presentations, articles, videos, quizzes and external links for further examples. Once you have read the readings assigned for each week, review their content along with the Powerpoint presentation. Some of the external links I include as part of a week's material are often required readings as well. I will let you know in my weekly emails.

-Quizzes: Under some weeks' unit there will be a quiz. You will have until Sunday of that week to complete it. The quiz will be available on Monday, but you need to remember that once you open it you must finish it within 10 minutes. These will be available under "assignments".

- **Assignments: Here you will find your video analysis assignment, readings reflection assignment, the final project assignment, quizzes, and exam study guides and exams.**
- **Videos: You will receive an announcement every time there is a video screening. You will receive a link that will enable you to watch critical documentaries Online. I expect you to take notes while watching these videos because I consider them as important as the readings assigned in this course.**
- **Discussion Board: Each week I will be leading the discussion with a question or a comment related to an article and/or the assigned readings. You will find this under a special theme heading under "discussion board".**
- **Communication: If you have any questions about the course, assignments or any concerns about your performance at any given time, do not hesitate to contact me. I will be commenting on your weekly discussions from time to time. Please do not expect me to be available at all times during the day. I can't respond to all your posts, but I will engage the discussion as a whole and send you weekly emails about the week before.**

DEADLINES

I have been trained as a journalist working with constant deadlines; I'll expect the same from you. Deadlines are listed on the course schedule and on each assignment. Work handed in after that deadline -- without prior approval -- will automatically lose 10 points (on a scale of 100) for each 24 hours it is late. The best strategies for avoiding the late penalty are to finish a day before the actual deadline, and to keep backup copies of all work in progress. Putting off your work until the last minute may seem exhilarating or romantic, but after the first two times, the stress it creates tends to take the fun out of learning.

PROFESSIONALISM

By "professionalism," I mean that in my courses I am trying to create a professional environment. That means, among other things, that we respect each of our colleagues in the classroom, the work we do is neat enough to be presented to an outside audience, we each carry an attitude of integrity in our work, and we are willing to offer and receive criticism constructively. Discussions in a course like COMM 301 will reveal value systems, ideological convictions, and personal beliefs. I therefore expect each and

every one of you to be respectful of other opinions and come to class with an open mind. This will allow for a more productive learning environment. It also means that missing a forum discussion is like missing a day of work.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

In academia, plagiarism reached near-epidemic proportions a few years ago, causing anguish for the students who were caught and for the faculty who saw no option but to take harsh measures. I'm assuming none of you will take unethical shortcuts in your work. In case you're unsure about what constitutes academic misconduct, here are the rules.

All work must be your own, and your work alone. You must accurately quote and represent all sources in your writing. Inventing sources or lifting material from the Web and presenting it as if you had conducted your own interviews, collaborating on a story with a student in another section, or coaxing/paying another student to produce your own assignment are examples of academic dishonesty in COMM 301.

You can expect that any form of academic dishonesty in COMM 301 will result in an F – either for the assignment or for the entire course, depending on the severity of the misconduct. If you have questions or are unsure about a particular practice, please talk to me before you turn in your assignment.

ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

I am an associate professor and chair of the Media Studies Department at the University of Colorado Boulder. I'm also the associate director of the Center for Media, Religion and Culture. My research is situated at the crossroad of important contemporary issues such as identity, religion, and the role of media in shaping and reflecting modern religious identities among Muslims in the Middle East and in diaspora. My work on diasporic media, popular culture, and religious identity has appeared in various international publications such as *Javnost*, *International Communication Gazette*, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *Nations and Nationalism*, *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research*, and *Media Development* and in many book volumes.

Before joining CU, I spent three years as an assistant professor at an American university in Switzerland. Before enrolling in graduate school at Indiana University-Bloomington where I obtained my MA and PhD, I worked in radio as copy editor. I am also a freelance writer. My articles have appeared in the *Guardian*, *Salon Magazine*, *Forbes Magazine*, the *Huffington Post*, *Open Democracy*, *Geo* (French), and *Religion Dispatches*.

I lived in Louisville, KY for two years (2005-2007) and I taught in the department of communication at UofL. I'm familiar with the university system there and I'm still in touch with a lot of my students with whom I shared wonderful learning moments.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I teach with a strong belief in a personal philosophy that is always amenable to change and progress. From the long version, here is a short excerpt.

Learning is an individual experience and any reliance on external motivation should be complementary, never compulsory. I refuse to lead you by the hand because that will only rob you of the joy of learning. I only set rules to chart a path we should enjoy discovering together. I do not believe teaching is about exerting authority because I think, at this (st)age, you should be your own guiding voice of discipline. I will work with you to help you grow in and out of the classroom, and your challenge is to believe that growth is possible and desirable. There is nothing more gratifying for both the teacher and the student. I will simply not nudge you, but I will certainly try to convince you to take pleasure at learning. Your motivation is my biggest challenge.

Put lightly, we will have fun learning together!

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Note that this is a “tentative” schedule. I will make changes as I read your forum discussion to see what other arguments or topics I need to introduce. I will let you know of any changes through e-mails.

Week 1

Introduction to the Study of Race and Ethnicity

May 31-June 5

Read: “A Cultural Studies Approach to Gender, Race and Class in Media”; Douglas Kellner, “Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture”; Adorno and Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception”

Due: *Forum Discussion due by Sunday June 5 by midnight*

Week 2

Race, Ethnicity and Media Production: Who owns the media and with what effect on content?

June 6-12

Political Economy of the Media

Read in DH:

-Croteau and Hoynes, “The New Media Giants: Changing Industry Structure”;
-Rich, “Naked Capitalists”.

Video: Riggs, "Color Adjustments"

Due: ***Forum Discussion due by Sunday June 12 by midnight***

Week 3

The Historical Roots of Race and Ethnicity representation in the Media

June 13-19

Read:

- Lipsitz, "The Meaning of Memory: Family, Class and Ethnicity in Early Network Television";
- Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes".
- Kern-Foxworth, "Ads Pose Dilemma for Black Women"

Due:

- Readings Reflection Assignment due by Sunday June 19 by midnight**
- ***Forum Discussion due by Sunday June 19***

Week 4

June 20-26

The Social Construction of Race

Textual Analysis

Read:

- Griffin, "At Last ...?: Michelle Obama, Beyoncé, Race & History"
- Zook, "The Fox Network and the Revolution in Black Television";
- Ghosh, "Con-fusing Exotica: Producing India in US advertising"

Forum Discussion due by Sunday June 26

Project Proposal due by Sunday June June 26 by midnight

Week 5

June 27-July 3

Video: "Edward Said on Orientalism"

Read: TBA

Exam 1 due by Sunday July 3 by midnight.

Week 6

Media and African American Representation:

July 4- 10

Read: “King Kong and the White Woman”;
-The Fox Network and the Revolution in Black Television”
-Gray, “Recovered, Reinvented, Reimagined: *Treme*,
Television Studies and Writing New Orleans”

Forum Discussion due by Sunday July 10

***Due: Video Analysis Assignment due by Sunday July 10
by midnight***

Week 7

July 11-17

Race and ethnicity in the Newsmedia

Read: Campbell, “A myth of Difference: Racial
Stereotypes and the News” in *Race, Myth and the News*
Case Study Discussion
-Reeves and Campbell, “Coloring the Crack Crisis” in
Media Studies Journal
Video: Bell Hooks: Cultural Criticism and Transformation.
Part II

Forum Discussion due by Sunday July 17 by midnight

Week 8

July 18-24

Ethnic Media and Diaspora

Hispanics, Arabs, and Asians in the Media

Content Analysis

Read: Larmer, “Hispanics are Hop, Hot and Making
History” in *Newsweek*;
- Barreiro, “Understanding Ugly Betty: Negotiating Race in
a Culturally-Mixed Text.”

Forum Discussion due by Sunday July 24 by midnight

Week 9

July 25- July 31

Ethnic Media Cont'd

Read: “Ethnic media, community media and participatory
culture”;
-Imagining the Homeland: The Internet and Diasporic
Discourse of Nationalism”

**-Final Project Paper due by Sunday July 31 by
midnight**
-Final Project Presentations due this week

Week 10

Course Wrap up

Aug. 1-7

Exam 2 due by Sunday Aug. 7 by Midnight