

Syllabus

Sociology of Race and Ethnicity, Soci273 Fall 2007

HWC 1701, Tuesday and Thursday 10-11:15 AM

Instructor Dr. Marshall Johnson 315 Sundquist Hall 394.8039 mjohnson@uwsuper.edu

Office Hours M 2-4, T 4-5, W 10-12, Friday by appointment.

Content

Common sense conforms to the way the world is organized around us. Everyone, it seems, is part of one classification or another and each classification is by nature essentially different. Racial, ethnic and nationalist thinking and action are taken for granted and yet are neither natural nor permanent. This class first examines what race and ethnicity are in 'common sense' and as seen through science. We then move from a false biology to the processes by which race and ethnicity are made socially real. The class will focus on the creation of race, ethnicity through the European transformations of economy from subsistence to capital, European transformations of the state from feudal to national, and the European conquest of the world. By understanding these categories as products of ongoing institutional arrangements that shape our daily activities and leave a mark inside the body, the class will lead to a consideration of how race, ethnicity and nationality are dimensions of inequality today.

Goals

By the end of this course, students will be able to

1. Reasonably evaluate the claim that races are sharply bounded biological categories.
2. Be able to explain the role of commodity economies in the production of race and ethnicity.
3. Explain the role of the nation-state in creating race, ethnicity and nationality.
4. Logically develop evidence that these categories were gradually produced through history.
5. Explain the practical resolution of the paradox of categorical inequality in democratic societies.
6. Explain why resistance to national oppression usually takes a national form.
7. Identify the dependence of categories on everyday practice.
8. Make reasoned predictions about the future of these categories

By the end of the course, students will be more disposed to

1. Critically examine (rather than accept as natural) claims about the social world.
2. Recognize their basic similarity to and empathize with those in other places and other times.
3. Take an informed responsibility for the social world.

To meet these larger goals, students will become familiar with key concepts developed in the social sciences to understand how social reality is constructed: the production of self in the world (dispositions, habitus, and representation) and the world in action (subsistence, institution, commodity, capital, nation state). Students will learn the leading theories accounting for the production of and conditions for the disappearance of race, ethnicity and national identity (naturalism, structural-constructivism, neo-liberalism).

The course is designed to link with courses in all disciplines in changing basic dispositions from an acceptance of the world of common sense to the disposition to question and to proceed from evidence with logic. In so doing, the basic skills of writing, discussion and problem solving should be strengthened

Methods

The course uses practical activities applying concepts and theories to case material. The methods attack the problem at the levels of academic knowledge and especially practical knowledge – the location where habits of doing and thinking race, ethnicity and nation place. Each of these methods requires attendance. Ungraded thought papers are required for each session to focus reading before class on key issues.

You will need content on Desire2Learn and the following text books:

Ronald Takaki *A Different Mirror*, Michael Fedo *The Lynchings in Duluth*, Textbooks and the readings for the day must be brought to each class.

Each class session will turn these texts into practical activity to achieve higher order understanding.

We will **assess** how we are doing on the concepts and the eight goals as we do daily classroom work. While daily assessment is not graded, exams are useful so that I can assign grades and so certify that you deserve the stock certificate of three credits of cultural capital. Most important, the exams are an assessment tool that allows you to practice and deepen your understanding of the insights that should be yours to keep when the class is finished. Exams are take home essays graded on use of concepts, theories, logic, evidence and clarity. A completed exam may, with instructor's consent, be revised after **grading**. A final grade is composed of Attendance: 10% Class Participation: 30% Exams One, Two and Three: 20% each

Topics – Skills, Concept and Evidence

1. Race and Nature, Words and Things

Skills: become aware of your assumptions and subject assumptions to evidence and logic. Distinguish between categories and things. Be able to explain and apply comparative logic.

Concept and evidence: understand taxonomic logic, be able to distinguish categorical and continuous difference, understand clinal and categorical distributions, grasp the evidentiary role of mitochondrial dna differences, develop an intuitive grasp of analysis of variance, understand the current scientific consensus regarding the reality of race as a natural category, and grasp the doctrine and practical logic of Essentialism. Be able to explain the scientific critique of race to someone who has not taken this course.

2. The Social Fabrication of Race and Ethnicity

Skills: recognize structural patterns, their global historical development, ability to recognize representation, and strengthen critical reading skills.

Concept and evidence: understand and apply the Thomas Theorem, become familiar with the transition from subsistence to market economies, understand capital, define and understand historical origins of the nation state and be able recognize the role of institutions in creating modern realities. Be able to frame the paradox of equality and slavery in America, identify the "giddy multitude", explain the legal institutionalization of race and slavery in what became the US, explain the role of tobacco and cotton as commodities in the hidden as well as open production of race, slavery, and "Indians."

3. Resolving the Paradox: Institutional Race and Racial Representation

Skills: develop ability to decode signs and narratives in representation, ability to relate evidence to conclusions, ability to differentiate competing explanations.

Concept and evidence: understand the concept of habitus and the difference between disposition and discourse, understand the racial signs and discourse justifying slavery, be familiar with the slave experience as living capital, grasp the effects of the peculiar end of slavery, understand the political economy of genocide against the original peoples of the US, and understand the significance of the treaty and reservation systems.

4. The Nation, Race and Ethnicity Under Colonialism

Skills: Be able to analyze accounting for contingency as well as lawful development, strengthen ability to differentiate power from truth, be able to step outside the state limits of vision. Develop the skills of skepticism and grasp the contrast with cynicism.

Concept and evidence: get a basic grasp of how the nation and state are fused under early capitalism, understand and support with case evidence the later uses of nationalism and race to support conquest, understand the colonial adoption of nationalism as a form of resistance, assess the nature of global inequality today as it is implicated in the tsunami disaster, apply the class concepts to the Algerian and Iraqi cases.

5. Jim Crow: Race through Law, Sexual Danger and Daily Practice

Skills: distinguish between practical logic and representation, ability to track institutional restructuring, strengthen ability to decode signs and narratives.

Concept and evidence: grasp how (non)whiteness was produced by comparing the rules for determining who is Black to the Irish path to becoming White, understand the role of the “defense of white womanhood” in producing differences among working class Americans, apply these findings to the 1920 lynchings in Duluth, strengthen understanding of how legal institutions and representation produce Jim Crow, grasp the role of the market economy and capital in segregation and the central point that we are made social in everyday practices.

6. Civil Rights: The Struggle Over Law

Skills: strengthen understanding of how social change is produced, strengthen ability to evaluate competing explanations, recognize the ways in which power relies on symbolic, inert and overt violence.

Concept and evidence: trace the development of resistance to Jim Crow in representations and institutions, understand the strategy and tactics of the post-WWII civil rights movement, and understand the current attempts to re-present Dr. King as a representation of individual virtue. Trace the parallel development of tribal resistance to the institutions of the reservation.

7. Class, Race and Neoliberal Globalization

Skills: apply institutional and representational skills to new materials and contexts, develop an understanding of structural change and contingency.

Concept and evidence: develop a basic understanding of globalization and its class, ethnic and racial consequences. Be able to explain the effects of deindustrialization on the development of race after the civil rights movement. Revisit the notion of the “Giddy Multitude” by considering specific institutions: funding of basic education, federal tax and spending policies, profits and wages, as well as social security and health.

Campus Policies <http://www.uwsuper.edu/provost/Welcome%20Week/StdInfo-SyllabusAtt.pdf>