

*****This syllabus is tentative and subject to change. It is offered for purely informational purposes*****

Graduate Liberal Studies, Wesleyan University
Race and the Formation of the Modern World
Demetrius L. Eudell
Spring 2016

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Class Location: TBA
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Course Description

This course examines the idea of “Race” as a belief system specific to the epistemological field of Western culture. In this vein, it begins with the emergence of proto-forms of this concept in the Middle Ages and in its embryonic and partly religious form in the fifteenth century in the wake of the voyages of the Portuguese and the Spanish. The course analyzes the history of idea of “Race” in the context of colonialism, slavery, post-slavery hierarchy and in a transnational context. Rather than viewing “race” in the traditional liberal terms as an issue primarily of “race relations,” or as an epiphenomenon of an ostensibly more fundamental question of class, the course proposes to analyzing the belief system of race as a central mechanism instituting of Western societies, itself but one form of how human societies have organized and reproduced their cultural models.

Required Texts

Michelle Alexander, The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness
Bruce Baum, The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race: A Political History of Racial Identity
David Brion Davis, Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World
Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States
Miriam Eliav-Feldon et al, The Origins of Racism in the West
James R. Lehning, European Colonialism since 1700
Anthony Marx, Making Race and Nation: South Africa, U.S. and Brazil

Additional Required Readings

In addition to the above books, you are also responsible for shorter readings (book chapters, essays, articles) that can mostly be accessed electronically. A bibliography of these additional required readings follows the schedule of the course.

Course Organization and Evaluation

This class is organized as a seminar, and thus, each student is expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings. For each class, students are required to submit (via email) a three (3) page response paper by 6:00pm on the day before class. Each student will also be required to make at least two oral presentations that will serve to initiate and facilitate class discussion. A final essay of at least 15 pages, for which the instructions and guidelines will be distributed early in the course, is due during finals week.

Schedule of Course

Week 1: Introduction and Overview of the Course

Readings: Davis, Inhuman Bondage (Chapter 2)

Nicolas Dirks, “Castes of Mind”

Chris Smaje, Natural Hierarchies

Week 2: The Question of Race in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds

Readings: Baum, The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race (Intro and Chapter 1)
Eliav-Feldon et al, The Origins of Racism in the West (chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 7)

Week 3: Race in the Early Modern Worlds

Readings: Eliav-Feldon et al, The Origins of Racism in the West (Chapters 8-15)

Week 4: The Racial Foundations of the Americas

Readings: Davis, Inhuman Bondage (Chapters 3-4)
Dunbar-Ortiz, An Indigenous Peoples' History (Chapters 1-3)

Week 5: Inventing the Indian

Readings: Dunbar-Ortiz, An Indigenous Peoples History (Chapters 5-11)

Week 6: Early Modern Imperialism

Readings: Baum, The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race (Chapter 2)
Lehning, European Colonialism since 1700 (Chapters 1-3)

Week 7: Slavery in the United States

Readings: Davis, Inhuman Bondage (5, 6, 9, 10, 14)

Week 8: The Age of Revolution

Readings: Baum, The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race (Chapters 3-4)
Davis, Inhuman Bondage (Chapter 7-8)

Week 9: Imperialism, Part II

Readings: Lehning, European Colonialism since 1700 (Chapters 4-6)

Week 10: Transnational Racial System: Brazil, South Africa

Readings: Marx, Making Race and Nation (Part I and II)

Week 11: "The Color Line"

Readings: Baum, The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race (Chapter 5)
Marx, Making Race and Nation (Part III)

Week 12: The Prison Industrial Complex

Readings: Alexander, The New Jim Crow

Week 13: Race: Post-Colonial, Post-Apartheid

Readings: Baum, The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race (Chapters 6)
Stephen Ellis, The ANC in Exile
Claude Lausane, "The Obama Doctrine"
Lehning, European Colonialism since 1700 (Chapter 7)
Stephen W. Smith, "Mandela: Death of a Politician"

Final Essay due during Finals Week

Bibliography of Additional Required Readings

Nicolas B. Dirks, "Castes of Mind," Representations, No. 37, Special Issue: Imperial Fantasies and Postcolonial Histories (Winter, 1992): 56-78.

Stephen Ellis, External Mission: The ANC in Exile, 1960-1990 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 278-304.

Claude Lusane, "We Must Lead the World': The Obama Doctrine and the Rebranding of U.S. Hegemony," The Black Scholar, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring 2008): 34-43.

Chris Smaje, Natural Hierarchies: The Historical Sociology of Race and Caste (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 1-34.

Stephen W. Smith, "Mandela: Death of a Politician," London Review of Books, Vol. 36, No. 1 (9 January 2014): 17-19.