The Anthropology of Race  
CULANTH 208FS  
Fall 2021

This course is framed by a simple contradiction. Race is real, yet it is a myth. Racial categories are very real social and cultural phenomena. They are rooted in history and culturally constructed through laws, the media, and various institutions. These categories are reproduced, subverted, and sometimes changed by people through socialization, media consumption, interaction, dialogue, protest, and political participation.

Yet, what makes race real, animates it with so much power, and fosters its tenacious hold on much of the Western world’s collective psyche? It is the fact that people largely believe that race has something to do with nature, biology, or rational science. Ironically, biology and so-called natural sciences provide the best evidence that there is no valid basis to organize people by racial categories.

In this course, we will focus on the discipline of anthropology and its role in shaping the cultural politics of race. We will explore both the historical construction of race and its contemporary manifestation as a crucial aspect of American culture and an integral component of people’s identity. We will also explore how people experience race in different parts of the world.

At the conclusion of this course, you should be able to critique contemporary ideas of biological notions of race, explain how race is socially constructed through laws, media, and popular culture, and understand that patterns of human diversity do not fit neatly into categories of race. Finally, you will begin to understand why race remains a powerful force in contemporary society.


**Course Requirements:** You will be required to take three exams over the course of the semester. The exams will involve a take home essay and an in-class multiple choice/short answer tests.

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If you consistently come prepared and participate in class, you will get a bonus point (i.e. B+ to A-). Notice: The only way you can get a letter grade increase is if you consistently come to class and participate.

Course Protocol

Attendance: Students are advised not to miss class -- this is a personal responsibility. Roll will occasionally be taken to help me determine who earns a bonus point (I will tell you now, I usually take attendance on those days when not many people show up for class). Lecture materials are also covered in the exams. However, good attendance alone does not guarantee a bonus point.

Reading Assignments: Reading assignments are to be completed and ready for discussion the day of class. Please keep in mind that I have selected readings that build on each other.

Discussions and Activities: We will be discussing and exploring politically charged and highly emotional content. Scholars and intellectuals have produced volumes of grounded and empirical research on race, which will be the basis of our discussion. On the other hand, each member of the class will have personal experiences, family histories, and political commitments formed by race and racism that need to be respected and embraced. Personal experience can inform but not drive the discussion – the plural of anecdote is not data. I am committed to ensuring that our classroom space is a safe learning environment where different perspectives are respected and challenged, embraced and critiqued.

Community Standard: Duke has a community standard, which I expect every student to adhere. Your writing must be your own prose, and you must properly cite your ideas and quote other scholars directly when you employ their ideas. Talking about and editing each other’s essays is fine and encouraged. However, you must adhere to the community standard and not collaborate or work together on the essays, unless explicitly stated in the essay prompt. Plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Writing Assignments: This course requires a number of written assignments designed to develop critical reading and writing, as well as enhance one’s analytical skills. I will evaluate your essays based on critical analysis, close reading of the texts, and synthesis of information. I will be looking specifically at how you synthesize the films, lectures, and discussions in class as you creatively connect that material with the texts. In short, your essays should creatively bring it all together.

Syllabus and Sakai: The reading assignments may change and the syllabus of record will always be posted on Sakai. Any changes will be announced in class and on the announcements on Sakai.

Accommodations: Duke University is committed to providing equal access to students with documented disabilities. Students with disabilities may contact the Student Disability Access Office (SDAO) to ensure your access to this course and to the program. There you can engage in a confidential conversation about the process for requesting reasonable accommodations both in the classroom and in clinical settings. Students are encouraged to register with the SDAO as soon as they begin the program. Please note that accommodations are not provided retroactively. More information can be found online at access.duke.edu or by contacting SDAO at 919-668-1267, SDAO@duke.edu.

Attendance Policy Related to COVID Symptoms, Exposure, or Infection: Student health, safety, and well-being are the university’s top priorities. Please do not come to class if you have symptoms related to COVID-19, have had a known exposure to COVID-19, or have tested positive for COVID-19. If any of these situations apply to you, you must follow university guidance related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and current health and safety protocols. If you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, contact student health. 919-681-9355.
Tuesday August 23: First day of class

The Myth of Race: Keeping it Real

Thursday, August 26:
Screening of Race: The Power of an Illusion Vol. 1

Tuesday, August 30:
Chapter 1: How Biology Refutes Our Racial Myths


(Sorting Activity 1, bring your own laptop)

Thursday, September 2:

David Berreby (2018) Why Do We See So Many Things as “Us vs. Them” Nationalgeographic.com, April


(Sorting Activity 2)

Tuesday, September 7:
National Human Genome Research Institute. Our Molecular Selves


The Myth of Race: Sports vs. IQ

Thursday, September 9:

Chapter 6: Europeans, Not West Africans, Dominate the NBA


Knight Commission. *Achieving Racial Equity: In College Sports. A Report by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics*

Tuesday, September 13:


J. Entine (2000) *Taboo: Why Black Athletes Dominate Sports and Why We’re Afraid to Talk About It*
Chapter 3: By the Numbers
Chapter 15: The ‘Scheming, Flashy, Trickiness’ of Jews

Chapter 6: Life History Theory


Thursday, September 16:

EXAM #1

The Reality of Race: Capitalism + Democracy = Racism

Tuesday, September 21:

Screening of *Race: The Power of an Illusion Vol. 2*

Chapter 7: Race and Inequality: Race As a Social Invention to Achieve Certain Goals.

Thursday, September 23:

LD Baker (1998) *From Savage to Negro*
Chapter 1: History and Theory of a Racialized Worldview

Chapter 2: American Racism and the Uses of History § 2.8 The Dred Scot Case (39-44)

George Fredrickson (2002) *A Short History of Racism*
Chapter 2: The Rise of Modern Racism(s)

**The Reality of Race: Social Darwinism and the Science of White Supremacy**

Tuesday, September 28:

LD Baker (1998) *From Savage to Negro*
Chapter 2: The Ascension of Anthropology as Social Darwinism


Thursday, September 30:


Tuesday, October 5: FALL BREAK!!!

**Popular Culture, Entertainment, and Reproducing Stereotypes**

Thursday, October 7:

Screening of *Ethnic Notions*


LD Baker (1998) *From Savage to Negro*
Chapter 3: Anthropology in American Popular Culture
Tuesday, October 12:

Shoshi Parks These horrifying ‘human zoos’ delighted American audiences at the turn of the 20th century ‘Specimens’ were acquired from Africa, Asia, and the Americas by deceptive human traffickers


Ida B. Wells (1893) "To Tole With Watermelons," The Cleveland Gazette, July 22


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Immigration and the Assimilation of the Not Quite White

Thursday, October 14:


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Shifting a Paradigm, Shaping the Future

Tuesday, October 18:

LD Baker (1998) From Savage to Negro Chapter 4: Progressive-Era Reform Chapter 5: Rethinking Race
Thursday, October 21:


Franz Boas (1895) Human Faculty As Determined by Race. Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science 43:301-327


Tuesday, October 25

EXAM #2

Science, Law, and New Formations of Race

Thursday, October 28:

Screening of Race: The Power of an Illusion Vol. 3

LD Baker (1998) From Savage to Negro
Chapter 6: The New Negro
Chapter 7: Looking Behind the Veil
Chapter 8: Unraveling the Boasian Discourse

Zora Hurston (1929) Letter to Franz Boas. October 20
Franz Boas Professional Correspondence, American Philosophical Association

Tuesday, November 2:


TAKAO OZAWA v. U.S., 260 U.S. 178 (1922)

U.S. v. BHAGAT SINGH THIND, 261 U.S. 204 (1923)

Chapter 3: Ozawa and Thind

Law, Science, and the Conspiratorial Backlash

Thursday, November 4:

LD Baker (1998) From Savage to Negro
Chapter 9: Anthropology and the 14th Amendment

Effects of Segregation and the Consequences of Desegregation: a Social Science Statement, Brown V. Board of Education. Washington: U.S. Supreme Court, October Term.


George Lincoln Rockwell (1966) From Ivy Tower to Privy Wall: On the Art of Propaganda

The New Jim Crow

Tuesday, November 9:

Kids Who Die (YouTube Video) Published on Aug 5, 2015


Thursday, November 11:
Viewing of The 13th


White Privilege and Challenges of a “Post-Racial” Society

Tuesday, November 15:

Exercises: Where Race Lives: A Tale of Two Families
The Geography of Hope and Desperation in America:


Thursday, November 18:

Devah Pager and Bruce Western (2005) Race at Work: Realities of Race and Criminal Record in NYC Job Market. Also check out the comments in AC 360 Blog about Pager’s Study


Tuesday, November 23:


Please review, but not carefully read:

FISHER v. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN, U.S. 11-345 (2013)

Fisher vs. Texas Brief for Respondents (August 6, 2012) Brief for Petitioner (May 21, 2012)

Amicus Curiae

Brief in Support of Respondents – *The Ivy League and Six Additional Private Colleges and Universities*

Brief in Support of Petitioner - *Asian American Legal Foundation and the Judicial Education Project*

Thursday, November 25: HAPPY THANKSGIVING

Tuesday, November 29 Review Session

Thursday, December 2: LAST DAY OF CLASS

EXAM #3