New York University
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication
MCC-GE 2XXX The Racial Web

Course Description
Internet apologists once heralded the world wide web as a space that would liberate the voice of the racial other, democratize news media flows, expand public discourse about race, and buttress political participation among people of color. As internet technology and its users who co-create cyberspace have matured over the past decade, what do we make of the web’s promises? Has the web expanded the spaces for racial discourse? Has it transformed traditionally racial others into opinion elites who can influence racial discourse beyond that of the traditional news media elites? Has this discourse and those who produce it generated one or more viable counter-publics able to influence the racial agenda and how we frame racial issues? Does the web afford racial minorities greater social and economic mobility? And has this led to any tangible form of political activism that has produced results furthering the cause of civil rights? Can we locate sites of racial disadvantage, exclusion, segregation and disparate treatment in online environments?

These are the questions addressed in this course as we examine the sources, content, and flow of racial discourse on the web, as well as a broader variety of issues related to race and digital technology. Central themes of racial formation and critical race theory, coupled with foundational concepts from graph theory and social network analysis guide our exploration into the multifaceted ways in which race gets produced and reproduced in cyberspace.

Learner Objectives:

1. Students will be able to articulate the relationship between digital race discourse and tangible outcomes related to racial identity, racial politics, and racial inequality.

2. Students will be able to identify prominent sources of digital race discourse and demonstrate how such discourse flows and circulates within one or more networks and online spaces.

3. Students will be able to identify online correlates of “offline” racial identities, social structures, dynamics and politics.

4. Students will be able to articulate a working understanding of normative democratic theory, critical race theory, social network theory, and public sphere theory and their relationship to each other.

5. Students will be able to collect, analyze, interpret and present core data used in social network analyses.

Required Texts:
Books


Articles/Book Excerpts


**Assignments & Learning Activities**

*Cybertyping Project & Presentation*

Students will identify a prominent example of cybertyping in a specific online environment. This may include sites in which specific forms of racial stereotyping, identity tourism, or racial exclusion or disparate treatment is demonstrated. Students will submit a 4-6 double-spaced page paper detailing and analyzing their example, and will be responsible for doing a five-minute, in-class presentation based on their chosen example.

*Digital Segregations Project & Presentation*

Students will identify a significant example of racial segregation as it exists in an online context. This may be accomplished by observing/demonstrating racial segregation in one’s own, or generally within a particular social network or space. Students will submit a 4-6 double-spaced page paper detailing and analyzing the nature of the segregation as well as specifying the potential implications and outcomes of such segregation. Students will also be responsible for doing a five-minute, in-class presentation based on their chosen example.

*Social Networks/Social Capital Project & Presentation*

Students will identify five prominent internet sites (of differing types, i.e., news, blog, social network site, etc.). For each site, students will submit a 4-6 double-spaced page paper identifying and describing the various forms of social capital that can/may be derived from usage of the site. Students will be expected to argue their criteria of social capital and connect each aspect of social capital they identify with said criteria. Students will also be responsible for doing a five-minute, in-class presentation based on their chosen examples.

*Final Exam*

Students will complete a final exam covering potentially all lecture, reading, and discussion material covered throughout the course.

*Final Paper*

Students will submit a thesis-driven paper defending a position about a contemporary issue related to race, the internet and/or digital media. Students are free to choose their
desired topic, though each will be approved by the professor. The papers will be graded based on the quality of the students’ argument(s), the relevance/connection to issues of race and digital media, and the facility with which race and digital media concepts, ideas and data are used. The final paper will be 1,000-1,250 words in length.

Assessment Criteria & Evaluation

All assignments will be graded on a categorical basis of sufficient (S) or insufficient (I). Final grades will be determined by the proportion of (S) grades students receive on each of their assignments. Assignments receiving an (I) may be made up and completed a second time if the student wishes to earn an (S) designation for the assignment. All assignments are weighted equally, with the exception that no student will be able to pass the course without satisfactorily completing the final exam.

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>(S) on All Five Assignments (Including Final Exam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>(S) on four/five Assignments (Including Final Exam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>(S) on three/five Assignments (Including Final Exam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>(S) on two/five Assignments (Including Final Exam)</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>(S) only on Final Exam</td>
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Grade Appeals

Please allow two days to pass before you submit a grade appeal. This gives you time to reflect on my assessment. If you still want to appeal your grade, please submit a short but considered paragraph detailing your concerns. Based on this paragraph I will review the question and either augment your grade or refine my explanation for the lost points.

General Decorum

Slipping in late or leaving early, sleeping, text messaging, surfing the Internet, doing homework in class, eating, etc. are distracting and disrespectful to all participants in the course.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

“Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do…you violate the principle when you: cheat on an exam; submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home courses without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home that calls for independent work; or plagiarize. Plagiarism, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: copy verbatim from a book, article, or other media; download documents from the Internet; purchase documents; paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis, and/or conclusions…” (see [http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity))

Student Resources

- Henry and Lucy Moses Center for students with disabilities ([http://www.nyu.edu/csd/](http://www.nyu.edu/csd/))
- Writing Center: 269 Mercer Street, Room 233. Schedule an appointment online at [www.rich15.com/nyu/](http://www.rich15.com/nyu/) or just walk-in.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Foundations: Racial Formation Theory</td>
<td>Omi &amp; Winant</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Foundations: Public Sphere Theory and Principles of Social Networks</td>
<td>McKee</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Theorizing the Racial Web: The Digital Race Connection</td>
<td>Nakamura &amp; White: 1, 2, 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Theorizing The Racial Web: Cybertypes &amp; Racial Identity</td>
<td>Nakamura</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cybertyping Student Project Reports</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Digital Segregations I: Principle of Offline Segregation</td>
<td>Briggs; Lipsitz; Neely; McPherson</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Digital Segregations II: The New Digital Divide</td>
<td>Hargittai (all); DiMaggio, Nakamura &amp; White: 9, 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Digital Segregations Students Project Reports</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Social Networks &amp; Social Capital I: What Are They?</td>
<td>Shah et al.; Wellman et al.; and Lin</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Social Networks &amp; Social Capital I: Socialization, Jobs &amp; Facebook</td>
<td>Ellison et al.; Valenzuela et al.; Stanton-Salazar et. al; McDonald et al.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Social Networks &amp; Social Capital I: What Are They? Student Project Reports</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Social Networks, Discourse &amp; Influence: Black Twitter &amp; Race Blogs</td>
<td>Nakamura &amp; White: 11, TBD</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Digital Diaspora and the Performance of Digital Ancestry</td>
<td>Nakamura &amp; White: 12, TBD</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Webs of Discrimination in Digital Data</td>
<td>Nakamura &amp; White: 6, 13, 14</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Course Review &amp; Final Exam Preparation</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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