New York University
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication
Race and Media
Graduate Seminar

Short Course Description

This course focuses on the ways that media have shaped public discourse about race and racism both within and beyond the confines of the United States. The course considers a variety of media – television sitcoms and drama, television and print news, film, popular music, the internet and others – for the purpose of investigating how media have and continue to variably influence the public’s “racial agenda,” and the general content, tone and tenor of racial conversation in the public sphere.

Long Course Description

The racial and ethnic diversity of the United States – from Europeans’ first encounter with Native Americans, through colonialism and American slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights era and beyond – has made the issue of race one of the United States’ principal sites of conflict and conversation. For many years, scholarship on race and media has focused on a myriad of theories and issues surrounding representation, concerned with the presence or lack of people of color in media of all kinds, and the stereotypical ways they are portrayed when they are present. But this is only one part of the story. While this course highlights many of these issues, it focuses on the ways that media can and have shaped public discourse about race and racism both within and beyond the confines of the United States. The course considers a variety of media – television sitcoms and drama, television and print news, film, popular music, the internet and others – for the purpose of investigating how media have and continue to variably influence the public’s “racial agenda,” and the general content, tone and tenor of racial conversation in the public sphere.

Learner Objectives

- Identify the modes through which media and popular culture shape concepts of race
- Characterize the genealogy of how communication and media studies theories have analyzed race
- Describe the relationship of the representation of race in the media and popular culture to the discourse of race relations
- Analyze the role played by racially coded cultural forms such as hip-hop in the discourse of race in the United States
- Critique traditional concepts of racial representation and engage with how changing media forms and modes of cultural production have created new forms of racial discourse
**Required Texts**


**Assignments/Learning Activities**

*Reading Summaries (30% of Final Grade)*

Students are required to complete a 2-page summary of all reading assigned for a given class. Each summary should include, in narrative form, a: statement/description of the author’s thesis/primary argument(s) in a given reading segment; a description, in the students’ own words, of the major concepts central to the authors’ thesis/primary arguments, along with the student’s explanation of what those major terms mean in the context of the reading segment; and an assessment/evaluation of the author’s thesis/arguments. These may include descriptions of questions the author has left unaddressed or unanswered, general criticisms of the author’s arguments, or reactions (positive, negative or otherwise) to the specific evidence-examples-data the author uses to substantiate his or her claims. In the case that a specific reading assignment includes multiple chapters, students should present a synthesis of the all the material covered in the manner stated above.

*Reaction Papers (20% of Final Grade)*

At various times throughout the semester, students will be required to not only provide written summaries of assigned reading, but respond to specific questions provided by the professor. These questions will also be based, in part, on assigned readings and should be 350 to 500 words in length.

*Final Research Paper (40% of Final Grade)*

Each student will be responsible for completing a research paper on some topic related to race and media. The paper should be 20-25 pages in length and should include a clear statement/overview of the topic, a review of relevant literature and analysis that is conducted in line with widely used research methods in the area of media and communication studies.
Final Essay (10% of Final Grade)
Each student will be responsible for producing an individual essay in the form of an extended editorial. Students should choose a contemporary racial controversy related to the intersections of race and media, choose a recent example that represents the nature of that controversy, choose, state and defend a position related to the controversy. The length of the paper should be between 1,200-1500 words.

Evaluation Rubric

A= Excellent
This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

B= Good
This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

C= Average
This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

D= Unsatisfactory
This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.

F= Failed
This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments

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)

**Student Resources**

- Henry and Lucy Moses Center for students with disabilities (http://www.nyu.edu/csd/)
- Writing Center: 269 Mercer Street, Room 233. Schedule an appointment online at www.rich15.com/nyu/ or just walk-in.
Course Outline

Week 1  “New” Racism & the Colorblind Ideology
Reading: Bonilla-Silva – Chapters 1-3

Week 2  Racial Narratives & Normative Whiteness
Reading: Bonilla-Silva – Chapters 4-6

Week 3  Racial Stratification in the U.S. & Latin America
Reading: Bonilla-Silva – Chapters 7-8

Week 4  Racial Narratives & Journalistic Routines
Reading: Campbell et al. Part 1.; Larson, Part 2

Week 5  Framing Racial Disaster
Reading: Campbell et al. Part 2

Week 6  Campaign News, Racial Framing & the 2008 Presidential Election
Reading: Campbell et al. Part 3; McIlwain & Caliendo, Chapters 4 & 7

Week 8  Representation: Racial Minorities in Film & Entertainment Television
Reading: Larson, Part 1

Week 9  Representation: Racial Minorities in Film & Entertainment Television
Reading: Larson, Part 1, cont.

Week 10  Industrializing Social Consciousness
Reading: Hamlet and Coleman, Chapters 1-6

Week 11  Racial Identification, Black Ideology and Black Power
Reading: Hamlet and Coleman, Chapters 7-13

Week 12  Race, Cinema and Sexuality
Reading: Hamlet and Coleman, Chapters 14-17

Week 13  Hip-Hop Cultural, Corporate Resistance & the Popular
Basu et al., Chapters 1-7

Week 14  Race, Hip Hop and Global Transformation
Basu et al. Chapters 8-15