

CES 101.03
Introduction to Comparative Ethnic Studies
Fall 2014
TODD 320
T/Th 1:25 - 2:40

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office hours:
W 2:00 - 4:00
and by appointment

Course texts

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists* (4th edition).

David R. Roediger, *How Race Survived U.S. History: From Settlement and Slavery to the Obama Phenomenon*.

We will also read and view various handouts, films, and Web sites, and we will follow current events. You are responsible for keeping up with these as they pertain to assignments.

Catalogue course description

Comparative issues in Asian American, African American, Chicana/o, and Native American cultures in the United States.

Course objective

This course is only an introduction. In fifteen weeks we can only be introduced to the various stories and concerns of racially marginalized peoples in the United States. Who are these peoples? How do they differ from and resemble each other? How do they differ from and resemble Euro-Americans? How have differences and similarities changed? And what further changes might we expect in our future? We will examine stories of immigration, enslavement, removal, and exclusion. We will study the ways in which, for example, exclusion has manifested, and continues to manifest, as denial of equal educational opportunities to young people of color.

But this is not a course in suffering and whining. Nor is it a course in “political correctness.” This course does not exist to claim that all white people are racists, or even that any individual white is racist. Blame is cheap and easy. But we must also realize that people of color are still burdened by the histories of their marginalizations, that, for example, young black men are vastly overrepresented in prisons today as an effect of slavery, or that racially charged immigration policies are an effect of past marginalizations of Latino and Asian labor. We will learn some ways in which institutions—especially government, business, healthcare, and education—marginalize people of color, and we will examine ways in which these marginalized resist and establish their own cultures.

Even today most U.S. schools teach a narrowly Western, northern European, white curriculum. Texas and Arizona schools are only extreme examples, where the histories of the marginalized have been effectively banished so that white heritage alone will be privileged. Elsewhere, however, “diversity” in the curriculum means only an “add-on” devoted to, for example, indigenous cultures on Columbus Day and black culture in Black History Month: time and space set aside for “special” stories of slavery and Indian massacres, told emphatically in past tense to emphasize their pastness, implying that today “we” (i.e., white people) would never

think to engage in such practices. And yet people of color are still systematically excluded from equal access to equally good education and healthcare. And our media are saturated with the perspectives of the dominant culture—white culture. The few people of color who appear regularly in the media, such as Oprah Winfrey, willingly assimilate within a narrow range of opportunities, accepting the world on white terms. On rare occasions when anti-assimilationist people of color appear in the media, they are condemned as “troublemakers.” Lest you doubt this, consider that “success” for blacks, Asian Americans, Latinos, and indigenous is confined to a range so narrow and predictable that it creates stereotypes: black basketball players and Asian American mathematicians are familiar, while black neurosurgeons and Asian American artists are not.

One of our required texts is written by a person who, coming from a marginalized community, rejects “top-down” dominant history. Our other text is written by a white historian who rejects the top-down perspective that would have come easily to a white man in his position.

Course requirements

Attendance: Attendance is required. I will not take daily attendance. However, on randomly selected days—not announced in advance—I will ask you to respond to a simple Reading Question (see below) drawn from the reading assigned for that day. If you are absent, or if you arrive too late to hear the Reading Question, or if you failed to read the assigned text, then you will count as absent. If, for any reason (except for absences excused in advance, in writing), you miss ten percent of Reading Questions, then you will lose a half-letter of your course grade. Twenty percent equals a full letter, and so on. This is not negotiable, and I will take no pity on excuses offered late in the semester.

Participation: You will be expected to participate. If we have a large class, I may not get to know you all by name, and so let me know that you have participated so that you may receive credit for it. Participation takes many forms—aside from comments in class, there are letters to editors, posts on policy and civil-rights Web sites, membership in activist justice-seeking groups, even presentation of your research at conferences—but some form of it is required.

Reading Question: At the beginnings of several class meetings this semester—no fewer than ten, nor more than twenty—I will ask you a Reading Question, drawn from assignments due on that day. The question will be simple and direct, and if you have read the assigned text you will provide a correct answer. To get credit, write your name clearly at the top of your sheet of paper, and write your one-sentence answer clearly. I will keep these during the semester.

Presentations: You will lead class in discussion of two assigned readings. If our class is large, I may ask you to present with a classmate. Text Presentations involve merely leading a discussion of an assigned text. Ask about authors’ arguments and evidence. Offer your own observations—your ideas, not your opinions. You may use media or slides, but use these to illustrate your argument, not to replace it. Prepare to present for roughly ten to fifteen minutes—no fewer than ten, or your grade will be affected. (These instructions will change if our class is large and you present with a classmate. I will then write and distribute new instructions.)

Midterm and Final Exam: Both the midterm and final exam will be relatively short, asking a few objective questions and requiring two or three brief essays.

Grades

Attendance and participation	20 percent (but see note on Attendance above)
Presentations	10 percent (5 percent each)

Midterm	30 percent
Final Exam	40 percent

Course policies and community standards

Ideally, each class meeting will be a lively, student-directed and student-centered discussion of our course material. Short of that ideal, you will still come to class prepared to discuss readings assigned for that day. I hope we will model a good community, driven by shared concerns and goals even when we disagree. To do well, please note the following guidelines:

1) For all reading assignments, be sure to read authors' explanatory footnotes and to scan their sources. *Bring the assigned reading to class.*

2) Extra credit opportunities exist. For example, this semester the Fine Arts museum will host an exhibit of the art of Roger Shimomura, who was imprisoned during World War II, along with 120,000 other Japanese Americans, in an American concentration camp; and during the semester several events related to that history will take place. I will announce opportunities as they come to my attention. Generally, however, you are responsible for keeping up with events on campus and in the area and letting me and your classmates know about them in advance, so that you may write a one-page analysis of them for extra credit.

3) Do not read outside material in class, and turn off phones and all other media devices unless you can show that you are using them for note-taking. This is an issue of common courtesy. If you find your phone or laptop more absorbing than class, simply stay away.

4) I will be very disappointed if, at some time during the semester, you do not find extremely distasteful or disagreeable a comment made by me or a classmate. Argue—defend your position, demonstrating your knowledge of history. But do so respectfully. Name-calling is not educational. Neither is hate speech—which will not be tolerated.

5) The best way to show your respect is by listening. Cultivate good listening skills, if you have not done so already. And ask questions.

6) Consider others' views. Reflect on your own social location and your privileges.

7) Learn a historically informed definition of racism—Ruth Wilson Gilmore's definition at the end of this syllabus is a good place to start—and challenge all racist discourse.

8) Reflect your own grasp of history and social relations by respecting shy and quiet classmates, and by deferring to the experiences of people of color.

9) Finally, understand and consider the rage of people who are victims of systematic injustice. James Baldwin wrote that people of color have an obligation to feel and express rage over this nation's history of racism. If injustice does not fill you with rage, then you should ask yourself why.

Note on language: In our readings and discussions you may encounter words or phrases that will be, to some sensibilities, coarse or vulgar or racist. By themselves, no "mere" words are offensive. What makes a word vulgar or racist is its usage by a particular speaker in a particular context. White men such as Glenn Beck complain that, for example, they are not allowed to say the "n" word without being labeled racist while black men use it among themselves all the time. To "earn" the right to that word, Beck must first endure five hundred years of racism. When you see and hear such words, consider their context. Who speaks them? Why? And to whom?

Academic integrity: “Cheating of any kind will result in your failing the course. See the WSU Standards for Student Conduct WAC 504-26-010 (3). You should read and familiarize yourself with these definitions and standards.”

Students With Disabilities: “Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit or call the Access Center (Washington Building 217; 509-335-3417) to schedule an appointment with an Access Advisor. All accommodations MUST be approved through the Access Center.”

Safety and Emergency Notification: “Washington State University is committed to enhancing the safety of the students, faculty, staff, and visitors. It is highly recommended that you review the Campus Safety Plan (<http://safetyplan.wsu.edu/>) and visit the Office of Emergency Management web site (<http://oem.wsu.edu/>) for a comprehensive listing of university policies, procedures, statistics, and information related to campus safety, emergency management, and the health and welfare of the campus community.”

Schedule

Please note: Assignments are subject to change. You are responsible for keeping up with changes. Texts are identified by their authors.

Aug 26: Course and community introductions.

Aug 28: Continue introductions. Come to class prepared to discuss a current news event. Video.

Sept 2: Bonilla-Silva, chapter 1.

Sept 4: Roediger, Introduction. “Race” and “Racism.”

Sept 9: Roediger, chapter 1.

Sept 11: Roediger, pp 30-51.

Sept 16: Roediger, pp 51-63.

Sept 18: Roediger, pp 64-81.

Sept 23: Roediger, pp 82-98.

Sept 25: Roediger, pp 99-119.

Sept 30: Roediger, pp 119-135.

Oct 2: Roediger, pp 136-153.

Oct 7: Roediger, pp 153-173.

Oct 9: Roediger, pp 173-196.

Oct 14: Roediger, pp 196-230.

Oct 16: Bonilla-Silva, pp 25-51.

Oct 21: Bonilla-Silva, pp 51-72.

Oct 23: Bonilla-Silva, pp 73-90.

Oct 28: Bonilla-Silva, pp 91-121.

Oct 30: Bonilla-Silva, chapter 5.

Nov 4: Bonilla-Silva, chapter 6.

Nov 6: TBA.

Nov 11: NO CLASS.

Nov 13: Bonilla-Silva, chapter 7.

Nov 18: Bonilla-Silva, chapter 8.

Nov 20: Bonilla-Silva, chapter 9.

Nov 25 and 27: NO CLASS.

Dec 2: Bonilla-Silva, pp 255-269.

Dec 4: Bonilla-Silva, pp 269 through chapter 11.

Dec 9: Finish presentations.

Dec 11: Finish presentations.

Dec 18: Final Exam, 1:00 PM. Details to be announced.

A useful definition of racism

Racism, specifically, is the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death.

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2005. 28.

Some useful terms

White privilege	“The new Jim Crow”
Marginalization	Institutional racism/personal prejudice
Racialization	Dominant narrative
Uneven development	Underdevelopment
Neoliberalism	Social Darwinism
Top-down/bottom-up history	Resistance
Multiculturalism	Diversity
Freedom and rights discourse	Social justice discourse
Environmental racism	Colorblind racism
Divide-and-conquer	Difference
Culturalism	Colonization
Identity politics	Scientific racism