

NCLC 475/595: Critical Race Studies

3 credits
5 Krug Hall
Monday 4:30-7:10 PM

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This course engages students in a sociohistorical, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic examination of the forms and impacts of racism, as well as movements for racial justice, in the United States with an emphasis on a critical race studies framework. Using an integrative and interdisciplinary approach, the course draws on intersecting and divergent knowledge, both from a variety of scholarly disciplines and from the oral and written histories of racial justice activists and movements. Students will draw on the most contemporary theoretical frameworks including critical race theory and intersectionality theory in order to examine the structural roots of racism and the implicit and explicit ways in which racism manifests today.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students who take this course will:

1. Develop and be able to articulate a complex understanding of structural racism and its relationship with other forms of structural injustice in the U.S. through a critical race theory lens;
2. Apply contemporary theory and other forms of knowledge about racism to reach a deeper understanding of how structural racism impacts the lives of individuals and communities;
3. Strengthen their knowledge about the history of racial justice movements; and
4. Apply theoretical and practical understandings of racism and racial justice to contemporary manifestations of racism in order to help create a more racially just society.

Required Texts

Books

Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, Critical Race Theory, (2d Ed.) (New York: NYU Press, 2012)

Articles

All other assigned readings will be made available on our course's Blackboard site.

Learning Activities (Assignments)

Narrative Assignment: (300 points)

Due: February 13th (Uploaded on Blackboard before or the top of class)

Using one or more of the theories explored in class (i.e., critical race theory, feminist theory, critical white studies, narrative analysis), you will write an 8-10 paged essay (double-spaced) that explores where you fit in a racist structure. The assignment is comprised of two parts.

Part I: Reflections on your experience and role in racism. Begin by reflecting briefly on how or whether you experience racism. Then address the following questions, at minimum:

1. How do you in/advertently perpetuate racism?
2. How do you benefit from racism?
3. How do you work to dismantle racism?

We realize that these are *relative* questions that ask you to consider your *relative* experience. You should expect to think through these questions intersectionally. How do your various and intersecting identities (e.g., education level, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, region of residence, national identity, religious or faith identity, etc.) influence the extent of the racism you experience or perpetuate? If you identify as a Person of Color, you might consider internalized racism or how your access to relative privilege within communities of color, if relevant to your life, informs your experiences.

You may think to some extent in terms of micro-aggressions, but the goal is to locate yourself within the bigger picture of structural racism, which will require an accounting of positionality and participation in macro-aggressions. So beyond interpersonal interactions, you should consider how you help to perpetuate racism at the structural level, whether actively or inactively. Consider, for example, your habits of consumption, your inclusion or omission of various groups of color in your racial justice views or work, the holes in your intersectional understandings and advocacy, and so on.

Part II: Analysis of the assignment that answers the question:

How does the process of constructing your own narrative of complicity with racism help you better understand the endemic nature of racism?

Your essay will be graded based upon the extent to which you:

- (1) Appropriately apply concepts and theoretical frameworks discussed in class;
- (2) Reflect on your experiences with specificity and detail;
- (3) Make clear connections between the theories and your experiences; and
- (4) Craft a well-written, well-organized essay.

Media Assignment: (300 points)**Due: Staggered between Week 5 and Week 12**

Based on our readings and discussions you will work as an individual or in a group to examine and re-create a piece of media coverage using a Critical Race Theory Framework. If CRT encourages us to look beyond the surface to understand how racism functions within institutions, organizes us politically, economically and socially, then how does it inform the way that media is produced? Moreover, if we had the opportunity to tell the same story, how would we do it using a CRT framework that is accessible to mainstream audiences and is ultimately empowering in that it informs the viewer what role they play as well. Each group will be expected to present their media piece to the class and then to engage in a ten-minute discussion where the group must remain in character. The due date will be staggered and students are expected to present their findings between Week 5 and Week 12.

To complete this assignment:

1. Choose a timely and relevant media piece. This can be in audio, radio, or print form. It does *not* have to be explicitly about racial justice (i.e., police brutality, penal system, racial controversy). Since race permeates all aspects of society, you are free to choose any media piece you think stands to benefit from a critical analysis.
2. You must analyze the media piece you chose in a 500-word essay. Explain why you chose it, why it is relevant for analytical scrutiny, and what problems you see with it.
3. You must then produce your own media story using a CRT framework to narrate the same events. If you chose an audio piece, you must produce an audio story; if you chose a visual piece, you must produce a visual story; if you chose a print piece, you must produce a print story; if you choose a poem, you must produce a poem; if you choose a song, you must produce a song; and if you choose a piece of visual or performing arts you must produce a piece of visual or performing arts. Remember for this assignment that your audience is a *mainstream* one that is unfamiliar with a CRT framework and thus would not understand academic jargon. Your job is to communicate these ideas in an accessible way that does not alienate the viewer but helps them to understand the problem and, ideally, empowers them to see themselves as part of the solution.
 - a. Audio and visual pieces should be no longer than 2 minutes each
 - b. A print piece should be no longer than 750 words
4. Your group will then present your final product to the class- if it is in print, you will email it before class or display it on the screen and allow everyone to read it. Once you present your piece, you will take questions from the audience and remain in journalistic character- namely a journalist with a CRT framework.

Racial Justice Project (300 points)

Working in groups, you will prepare and deliver a 22-minute presentation in which you apply a critical race lens to a topic or issue chosen from the list of topics below. Drawing on critical race theory you will provide an overview of the topic or issue and propose a set of actions crafted to respond to racism related to it at the structural level. You may choose to look at your topic or issue broadly or to focus in more closely. For example, if your group is working on racism in the

media, you might choose to look at that topic broadly across media or to tighten your focus onto racism in television or commercials or film.

Your imagined audience is a group of fellow activists or change agents. We don't need you to repeat definitions that we all already know; just focus on sharing your plan of action and how you got there.

You *must* draw explicitly on course readings and concepts in your presentation. This is your final opportunity to *demonstrate to us that you have learned major concepts and ideas related to critical race studies*. You also *must* go beyond readings assigned in the course and draw on *at least 10 sources, at least five of which must be scholarly sources*. (Note that a Google search will not be sufficient for this. This will require the use of research databases. Be sure to cite sources within your presentation and to provide a list of references to the instructors.) It is your group's job to develop expertise on your issue or topic by reading as deeply as possible and using what you read to help you frame your presentation.

You also *must* reach out to local activists or activist organizations as one of the "sources" for your study.

Your presentation should include the following components:

- (1) A synthesis of how we might understand your issue or topic through a critical race studies lens: for example, how do we see racism as endemic in relation to your issue or topic?
- (2) An examination of power and oppression related to your issue or topic: Who, specifically, is racism related to your issue or topic targeting? Who is benefiting or profiting or gaining power
- (3) At least one example of intersectional analysis related to your issue or topic: For example, how does patriarchy or ableism or heterosexism or economic injustice or Christian hegemony intersect with or complicate racism relative to your issue or topic?
- (4) An overview of at least two activists or organizations working on *structural* racism related to your issue or topic: What are they doing? What sort of progress have they made, if any?
- (5) A proposal for an action or set of actions that would address racism related to your issue or topic at a *structural* level. What would need to change in order to disrupt or even eliminate that racism? (Note that, in keeping with the commitments of critical race theory, we will be looking especially for your group's understanding of differences between interpersonal and structural change, between attempts at racial harmony and attempts at racial justice here.)
- (6) A group "manifesto" related to your issue or topic. (We will talk more about what this means during class.)

We expect you also to incorporate some sort of media into your presentation, which should include PowerPoint or some other presentation software and at least a couple of the following: *short* video clips, photographs, statistical charts, or conceptual charts. Finally, we expect you to incorporate interactive components into your presentation. Do not speak at your classmates for 25 minutes.

Also be sure to assign a timekeeper. We will cut you off at 25 minutes.

On the day of your presentation you will turn in via Blackboard your presentation materials (e.g., PowerPoint file), your list of references, a two-page informal synthesis of the major points of your presentation, and a copy of your manifesto.

Here is a list of topics. It might change.

- The media
- Consumerism
- Racism in the queer community and queer movements
- Reproductive Justice
- Public health
- Affirmative Action policies
- Early childhood development
- Addiction and addiction treatment
- Employment discrimination
- Housing discrimination and redlining
- International trade agreements
- The “model minority” myth
- International development and “aid”
- Migrant labor
- Food justice
- Water justice
- Gentrification and “urban renewal”
- Wage theft
- Cultural appropriation
- Special education
- Environmental (in)justice
- Warfare

Your project will be graded based upon the extent to which your group demonstrates the following:

- (1) You recognize the distinctions between individual, institutional, and structural racism, and what it means to address a racial injustice at the structural and institutional levels through a critical race theory lens;
- (2) You understand the intersectional nature of racism and racial justice;
- (3) You took the time to thoroughly explore existing knowledge about your topic through scholarly sources, popular sources, and activist communities;
- (4) You can distinguish between mitigative and transformative approaches to racial justice; and

- (5) You incorporate the local community, and particularly racially marginalized people, as equal partners in your plan (which requires talking with them so they can describe their needs rather than assuming you know their needs).

Participation (100):

Students are expected to participate in every class. That means coming to class on time, completing the readings, and participating in the discussions. Productive participation means being mindful of not taking up too much space, so remember more is not always better. Sometimes just asking the right questions can be the most productive contribution you can make. Inserting yourself and reflecting on your own experiences can also be very productive. You do not need to have a mastery of the academic discourse in order to contribute to a generative discussion.

For undergraduate students: In addition to class participation, undergraduate students are expected to keep a reading journal where they respond to the weekly guiding questions that will be posted on Blackboard. The reading journals will be checked off by the instructor each week and will be collected at the end of the semester for more thorough evaluation.

Grading

A = 940-1000	A- = 900-939	
B+ = 870-899	B = 830-869	B- = 800-829
C+ = 770-799	C = 730-779	C- = 700-729
D = 600-699	F = 599 or lower	

Tentative Class Schedule

Date	Topic(s)	Readings & Assignments
1/23	Introductions of course and each other – Introduction to Critical Race Theory	What does it take to get a police officer punished for killing an unarmed black man? Trayvon Martin the Irony of American Justice University offers racist course on ‘the problem of Whiteness’ 10 Signs of Institutionalized Racism
1/30	Introduction to Critical Race Theory Storytelling Intersectionality Critical White Studies	CRT Reader Sections I-IV
2/6	Critiques and Responses	CRT Reader Sections V-VIII

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CRT Today - Future of CRT 	
2/13	<p>The socioeconomics of racism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The invention and modification of whiteness 	<p>Harris, Cheryl I. "Whiteness as Property." <i>Harvard Law Review</i> 106, no. 8 (1993): 1707-791.</p> <p>Coates, Ta-Nehisi, The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration, THE ATLANTIC</p> <p>The Ever-Growing Gap (IPS Report on wealth inequality)</p> <p>Lipsitz, "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness"</p>
2/20	<p>Racism and racial hegemony in the justice and penal systems</p>	<p>Alexander, Michelle, <i>The New Jim Crow</i>, Ch. 1 & 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ch. 2: The Lockdown - Ch. 5: The New Jim Crow <p>Greenwald, Glenn, The FBI's anticipatory persecution of Muslims to criminalize speech</p> <p>Disrupting Islamophobia: Teaching the Social Construction of Terrorism in the Mass Media</p> <p>Mass Incarceration Since 1492</p> <p>Punishing Pregnancy: Race, Incarceration and the Shackling of Pregnant Prisoners, 100 Cal. L. Rev. 1239 (2012)</p>
2/27	<p>Anti-blackness, indigeneity, and settler colonialism</p>	<p>Sexton, Jared: Tracking the Figure of the Unsovereign, Critical Sociology</p> <p>Mamdani, Mahmood, <i>Define and Conquer</i>, Introduction and Chapter 1</p> <p>Iyko Day. "Being or Nothingness: Indigeneity, Antiracism, and Settler Colonial Critique." <i>Critical Ethnic Studies</i> 1, no. 2 (2015): 102-21.</p> <p>Jackson, Shona N., Humanity beyond the Regime of Labor: Antiracism, Indigeneity,</p>

		and the Legacies of Colonialism in the Caribbean, Decolonization Palestinians Join Standing Rock Sioux To Protest Dakota Access Pipeline
3/6	Racism and Immigration	How a Clinton Era Law Is Still Criminalizing Immigrants Today Felons Among Us: Criminalizing Undocumented Immigrants From the Oppressed to the Terrorist: Muslim And Women in the Crosshairs of Intersectionality, Sa Salaita: "Beyond Orientalism and Islamophobia: 9/11, Anti-Arab Racism, and the Mythos of National Pride" Gerken: "Exclusionary Acts: A Brief History of US Immigration Laws"
3/13	SPRING BREAK	
3/20	Racism and racial hegemony in academia	Book Review: White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations Clardy, "Amazing Grace: Examining One Women's Induction into the Academy" (narrative) López, "Speaking Frankly, Documenting Struggle: Chicanas/Latinas in Academia"
3/27	Racism and racial hegemony in sports	Moorehead "Racism, Exploitation, and Profits: The Real March Madness" The Portrayal of Black Masculinity in the NFL: Critical Race Theory and the Images of Black Males , Drew Brown Strong "Trademarking Racism" Racism in Sports: A Question of Ethics Transitions to the Top, Transitions to the Top,

4/3	Racism and racial hegemony at school (and the school-to-prison pipeline)	<p>Kolhatkar “Preschool to Prison Pipeline”</p> <p>Mickelson, “When Are Racial Disparities in Education Racial Discrimination?”</p> <p>Dei “Rescuing Theory: Anti-Racism and Inclusive Education”</p> <p>Marable “Incarceration vs. Education: Reproducing Racism and Poverty in America”</p> <p>Wun, Connie, Unaccounted Foundations: Black Girls, Anti-Black Racism, and Punishment in Schools, CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY</p> <p>Goff et al., “The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children”</p>
4/10	Activism, Positionality, and Racial Justice Commitments	<p>Zamudio & Rios “From Traditional to Liberal Racism”</p> <p>Morton, The Irony of Service</p> <p>Illich, To Hell with Good Intentions</p>
4/17	Racism and Well-Being – health implications, etc.	<p>The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets</p> <p>NIH, Racism and Health</p> <p>A Question of Environmental Racism in Flint</p> <p>Why a housing scheme founded in racism is making a resurgence today</p>
4/24	Final Presentations	
5/1J	Final Presentations	

Policies and Information

1. Please arrive to class on time. Two tardies will be considered an absence for the purpose of participation grading.
2. Please attend class. Each member of the Community is allowed one absence, no questions asked. Because the class is built around interaction and dialogue, attendance by each

member of the Community is critical. So when you miss more than one class, your grade will be affected. An absence is excused when due to serious illness, religious observance, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, or compelling circumstances beyond your control. We reserve the right to request evidence when you will be absent for one of these reasons.

3. When you miss class, it is *your* responsibility to arrange to make up the day's work. You must approach us about the absence and inquire about ways of making it up.
4. Engaged and respectful dialogue is encouraged. Demeaning, intolerant, and/or disruptive behavior or responses at any time will affect your participation grade.
5. You are responsible for completing individual and group assignments on time (defined as turning in all assignments in person at the beginning of class). Assignments submitted late will lose one letter grade for each day they are past due, including Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
6. In compliance with a University-wide initiative, we will correspond electronically with students only through their GMU assigned email accounts. Please check your email account regularly for updates and important announcements; checking your email during University closings is especially important as we will alert you to schedule changes via email.
7. George Mason University has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental principles you must follow at all times are: 1) all work submitted must be your own; 2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and 3) if you are uncertain about citation rules or assignment guidelines, ask me for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. If you feel unusual pressure or anxiety about your grade in this or any other course, please let me know and also seek help from University resources. The University provides a range of services to help with test anxiety, writing skills, study skills, personal issues, and related concerns.
8. All papers must be typed, double spaced on 8.5" x 11" paper using 12 point Times New Roman font with 1" margins. Multiple pages *must be stapled before class*. Additionally, all papers and other assignments should be documented properly in accordance with an accepted citation manual (e.g. The Chicago Manual of Style, The APA Manual of Style, The MLA Style Manual).

GMU Student Resources

Social Action and Integrative Learning: This center is a central contact point at George Mason University for information on experiential learning, service learning, and leadership development. The Center's webpage provides exciting and useful material including the

Student Service Learning Handbook, information on writing learning objectives, instructions on completing a learning objectives contract, and lists of experiential learning opportunities.

New Century College On-Line Writing Guide—<http://classweb.gmu.edu/nccwg/index.html> This on-line guide is tailored specifically to New Century College students.

GMU Writing Center: Robinson A116; 993-1200; writingcenter.gmu.edu
<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

Office of Disability Services: Any student with documented learning disabilities or other conditions that may affect academic performance, should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 222; 993-2474) to determine the accommodations you might need; and 2) talk to me to discuss reasonable accommodations.
<http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc>

Student Technology Assistance and Resources (STAR) Center: Johnson Center 229; 993-8990;
<http://www.media.gmu.edu>