SOC 476: RACE AND SOCIAL THEORY

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

A recent sociology book claimed that “there has never been a comprehensive and systematic theory of race” (Emirbayer and Desmond 2015, p. 1). On various grounds, this assertion has been justly criticized and challenged. For our purposes, it also points to the fact that scholars carry, endorse, and privilege different sorts of approaches to theory, whether explicitly or not. These orientations influence what and how we theorize, whether we strive for theoretical comprehensiveness, whether we adopt comparative or relational lenses, and whether we anchor our theorizing on disciplinarily or interdisciplinarily grounds, among other things. As we engage in and work to produce “race theory,” we would be well served to reflect on such issues across various thematic concerns and (intra)disciplinary vantage points. With this in mind, this course stages an exploration of contemporary theorizing on race/coloniality. Our collective task is not only to understand and assess competing theoretical claims about “race” but also to reflect on how these claims are made as well as their epistemological and ontological underpinnings.

Our class will take place in the midst of a global pandemic. We are all living with incredible uncertainty and anxiety, in which we must make our health and wellbeing a priority.

As you know, the first four weeks of class—at a minimum—will take place virtually via Zoom. This is a major transition that will require patience and adjustment. Throughout the course we will check in and recalibrate the syllabus and expectations as we deem necessary. I would appreciate any feedback or suggestions you may have as we proceed.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: The State of Sociological Race Theory (April 7)


**Week 2: Du Boisian Sociology (April 14)**


**Week 3: Critical Theories of Race/Racial Domination (April 21)**


**Week 4: Settler Colonialism (April 28)**

Week 5: Intersectionality (May 5)


Week 6: Racial Organizations (May 12)


Week 7: Race and Space (May 19)


Week 8: Race and Time (May 26)


Week 9: Transnational and Global Race (June 2)

REQUIRED BOOKS


Books are available for purchase at Northwestern bookstore. Cheaper options may be found online. Books will also be on reserve at the library.

GRADED ITEMS

**Weekly Post (20%):** Every Monday, no later than 5pm, participants are to post a brief reflection on assigned readings. Your post should be roughly between 400-600 words. The only exception is on the day that you will present. Your reflections are not summaries. Use them as a space to identify that you think are the major theoretical contributions and limitations. Identify any items that you would like to discuss or have clarified.

**Presentation and Discussion Facilitator (20%):** In pairs, participants will present on the readings and facilitate discussion once during the term. The objective is to identify key points, make linkages with prior weeks, and to generate several generative questions.

**Peer Feedback (20%):** Each student will give thorough feedback to another participant in the course on a paper (not limited to final paper).

**Final Paper (40%):** At the end of the term, you will submit via email a term paper (20 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman). The topic will be of your choosing, but in consultation with instructor. **Due: Monday, June 10.**

OTHER ISSUES

**Recording:** Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact [AccessibleNU](http://accessiblenu). Unauthorized use of classroom
recordings—including distributing or posting them—is also prohibited. Under the University’s Copyright Policy, faculty own the copyright to instructional materials—including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

**Intellectual honesty:** This course follows Northwestern’s code of academic conduct. As required, any incidents of plagiarism or academic misconduct will be immediately reported. Visit: [www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html).

**Accommodations:** I urge any students with disabilities or in need of accommodations to connect with Accessible NU. For more information visit: [www.northwestern.edu/accessiblenu/](http://www.northwestern.edu/accessiblenu/). I also ask that students inform me as early as possible about their needs.

In addition, students can find useful resources for safety and security, academic support, and mental and physical health and well-being at the NUhelp [website](http://www.northwestern.edu/nuhelp/) and [app](http://www.northwestern.edu/nuhelp/).

*Syllabus subject to change. Students will be alerted to any changes in advance.*