

Sociology 345 (Winter 2004)
Toward Understanding Contemporary American Race Relations
Mon/Wed 12-1:20, 276 Education
Professor Mia Tuan

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*"Not everything that is faced can be changed,
but nothing can be changed until it is faced" -- James Baldwin*

Now more than ever we are in need of people who have invested the time and energy to develop thoughtfulness and sensitivity when it comes to issues of race. We need people who can speak intelligently about racial issues, who know the facts (or can be honest when they don't), and are able to juggle the complicated factors informing such issues. But equally important, we need people who understand first hand just how hard it is to engage with others around race and have developed the stamina and understanding to hang in there even during difficult times. The purpose of this course is to support individuals in developing these complimentary strengths by providing a comprehensive "taste" of the race relations field and ample opportunities to engage with one another around race.

While our focus rests squarely in developing an understanding of contemporary American race relations, it is not possible to talk about the present without also acknowledging the past and roles played by earlier social and historical factors. As such, I take a developmental approach to the study of race and racism, looking at how we have learned to "do" race and how easily this learning has been used to justify racial inequality and prejudice.

My approach is decidedly multiracial; demographic projections make clear the limitations of a strictly black-white paradigm. Nevertheless, I avoid the "racial group of the week" method in favor of "theme specific" readings. My approach is also process oriented – I place a high premium on paying attention to *how* people learn to engage with new information and people. Lastly, my approach is decidedly personal – you will notice that many of the assigned readings are first person accounts of the authors as "racialized" actors.

Operating Assumptions

1. There is no such thing as a "pure" race. All racial categories are socially constructed and have less to do with biology than you might think – social, political, and economic factors are amazingly salient in determining the permeability and configuration of these boundaries. Rather than fixed or static then, racial categories are dynamic (see Fig 1).

2. We learn how to “do” race. That is, we learn the rules surrounding race, the meanings associated with each race, what boundaries are salient, etc.
3. Whites and people of color typically undergo very different processes in learning how to “do” race.
4. Racism involves more than just prejudiced attitudes. It is a *system* involving both individual and institutional acts, can be both intentional as well as unintended, and is pernicious because it develops a life of its own even beyond the group who first established the power dynamic.
5. Our race relations history can best be described as involving both progress and setbacks: “*two steps forward, one step back. Three steps forward, two back...*” It is not either/or. A balanced perspective is the hardest to maintain but necessary for long-term racial healing.

Course Format and Requirements

Required Texts (available on reserve at Knight Library):

- A reader available at the UO Bookstore
- Joel Perlmann and Mary Waters. The New Race Question

You will have 2 paper assignments throughout the quarter as well as weekly **thought memos** that you will turn in every Monday. **No late memos will be accepted.** For the paper assignments you will be given a list of essay questions from which you will choose one and write a paper of roughly 5 pages in length. Your final assignment will be in the form of an oral examination and will consist of a guided conversation with either Maria or me; it will encompass the entire quarter’s readings. Your final grade will be based on the following:

2 papers (first worth 20%, second worth 25%) -----	45%
Weekly memos -----	10%
Class/Home Group Attendance and Participation -----	15%
Oral Final Exam-----	30%

My **Late Paper Policy** is this: I am sympathetic to the fact that we all get pressed for time. So, you all have one late paper *credit* you can redeem for a little extra time (which you and I will negotiate). Liken it to the game, Monopoly’s, “free pass out of jail.” Use it wisely! If you decide to cash it in with the first paper and find yourself needing to turn in the second one late, you will be penalized.

During a typical week, we will have lecture and general class discussions on Mondays and Wednesdays. Fridays, in contrast, will be reserved for discussions of a more personal nature. Your Friday “home” group serves as a “steam vent,” a more intimate place to share your reactions to the class and reflect on your own evolving racial identity. Each group will be led by a **group process facilitator** who has unique

skills and interest in facilitating dialogues about race. **They are not TA's** – don't go to them with questions about the content of the material – those questions should be raised with Maria or me. Their job is to facilitate personal reflection, and to help you process what the readings and class discussions mean for you in your developing understanding of race. To reach any of the facilitators:

Robert Romero	rromero1@law.uoregon.edu
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Class Participation and Discussion Guidelines

This class may be one of the most difficult you will take during your undergraduate experience, not because my tests or grading policy are unusually formidable, but because we'll be talking about a topic rarely broached outside of the safety of our immediate circle of friends and family, if at all. We don't leave our racial identities at the classroom door; we wear them on our faces and, for some, close to our hearts. It's no wonder, therefore, that "academic" discussions about race can be filled with emotion and volatility. Clearly, to talk openly about race and racism means being willing to take risks. And yet, for meaningful learning to take place, we have to communicate with one another and share our conceptions and misconceptions about the role race plays in society and in our lives.

Your personal input and feedback is crucial to the success of this class and the richness of your experience in it. Thus, we will be encouraging you to step outside of your comfort zone both intellectually and interpersonally. From previous experience, I have found that the most successful classes are the ones where **YOU** believe that your risk taking will be respected and honored by others. My job is to set up conditions for a supportive climate, but ultimately the biggest responsibility falls upon each of your shoulders. How successful this class is will largely depend on how effective we are in staying open and engaged with one another, especially during tough times. We don't have to agree with each other or "convert" others to our way of thinking. We do, however, have an opportunity to be curious about why others think the way they do. My wish for each of you is to give yourself permission to step up, take a risk, and be surprised by others. Maybe you'll even surprise yourself.

So for the next 10 weeks we will be an intentional community of sorts, representing diverse experiences, opinions, and identities. To promote an open and respectful climate, we have set up a number of guidelines for class and home group participation:

1. Strive to be patient with one another. Remember that you are all coming from different starting points and are at different stages in your own racial awareness.

Some of you have been thinking about these issues all of your lives while others are getting your first conscious exposure in this class.

2. Try not to assume that you know where people stand on an issue just because of their race. Many other important factors (gender, class, life experiences, region where they grew up, etc.) have shaped who they are and how they think.
3. Moralizing and lecturing probably won't get you very far. If your goal is to get somebody to truly consider a new idea, honestly ask yourself what approach would best serve you?
4. It's important that each of you have the opportunity to express yourself without interruption. Respect each other's right to speak your peace -- you'll get your turn to respond.
5. Talking about race can be exhausting and depressing. Pull back when you need to replenish and take stock, but do remember to step back in. I offer you the following to keep in mind and heart: "*We are the ones we've been waiting for*" (hymn from *Sweet Honey in the Rock*).

Class Schedule

PART ONE: ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION

Week 1 (Jan 5,7): Talking About Race (and Why It's So Hard)

- Dalton, Racial Healing
- Tatum, "Talking About Race, Learning about Racism"
- Blauner: Racial Oppression in America
- ***in class video: Skin Deep***

Week 2 (Jan 12, 14): Race as a Social Construction

- Spickard, "The Illogic of American Racial Categories"
- Farley, "Racial Identities in 2000," in Perlmann & Waters book, pp33-61
- Skerry, "Multiracialism and the Administrative State" in P/W book, pp327-339
- Ayers, "Racing in America"
- ***in class video: Race, Power of an Illusion: Part I***
- ***optional: Anderson, "Couting by Race: Antebellum Legacy" in P/W book***

Week 3 (Jan 19, 21): "Us v Them" Thinking & Race As One Way of Doing the "Us/Them" Dance

- Allport, The Nature of Prejudice, ch2-3 (NOTE: published in 1954 so the language is dated)
- "American Beats Kwan" (1 page)
- Kang, "Asians in U.S. Still Seen as Foreigners" (1 page)
- Madrid, "Missing People and Others"

- *in class video: A Class Divided*

Week 4 (Jan 26, 28): Seeing & Experiencing the World Through “Race Tinted” Glasses

- Kimmel, “Toward a Pedagogy of the Oppressor, This Breeze at My Back”
- McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”
- Bain, “Walking While Black”
- Dorris, “Mixed Blood”
- *in class video: Race: An Illusion, Part III*

1st Paper Assignment Handed Out on Monday the 26th

PART TWO: ON THE COMPLEXITY OF RACE RELATIONS TODAY

Week 5 (Feb 2, 4): At the Intersections of Race and Class -- Introduction

- Glasser, “Civil Rights and Civil Liberties”
- *in class video: 14 Up in America*

1st Paper Due in Class on Wednesday the 4th

Week 6 (Feb 9, 11): At the Intersections of Race and Class – Legacies

- Bobo, “The Color Line, the Dilemma, and the Dream”
- Feagin, “The Continuing Significance of Race”
- Oliver & Shapiro: Black Wealth, White Wealth
- *In class video: True Colors*
- *guest speakers: Bahati Ansari and Anselmo Villanueva*

Week 7 (Feb 16, 18): At the Intersections of Race and Class

- Raspberry, “Heed Warning of Social Problems” (1 page article)
- Rubin, Families on the Fault Line, ch2,9,10
- Tuan, “On Asian American Ice Queens and Multigeneration Asian Ethnicity”
- *guest speaker: Greg Rikhoff*

Week 8 (Feb 23, 25): Moving Way Beyond Black and White

- “America 2000: A Map of the Mix” (1 page chart)
- Fan, “Latino, Asian Growth Surge Continues”
- Martinez, “Seeing More Than Black & White”
- Tilove, “Are Whites Ready to be a Minority?”
- Edmonston, Lee, & Passel, “Recent Trends in Inter-marriage and Immigration...” pp227-255
- *guest speakers: Marion Malcolm and Jose Alonso*

2nd Paper Assignment Handed Out on Monday the 23rd

Week 9 (Mar 1, 3): The New Race Question: The Multiracial Movement (all articles are in Perlmann/Waters book)

- Hochschild, "Multiple Racial Identifiers in the 2000 Census, and then What?" pp340-353
- Perlmann, "Census Bureau Long-Term Racial Projections..." pp215-225
- Goldstein and Morning, "Back in the Box" pp119-136
- Prewitt, "Race in the 2000 Census: A Turning Point" pp354-361
- ***Guest speaker: Ibrahim Hamide***

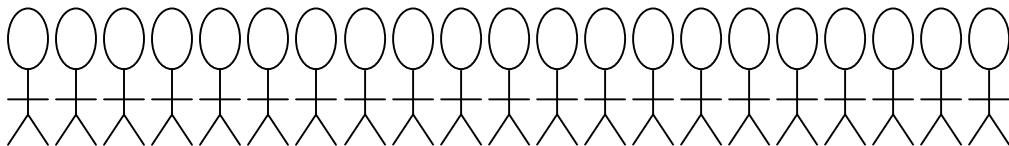
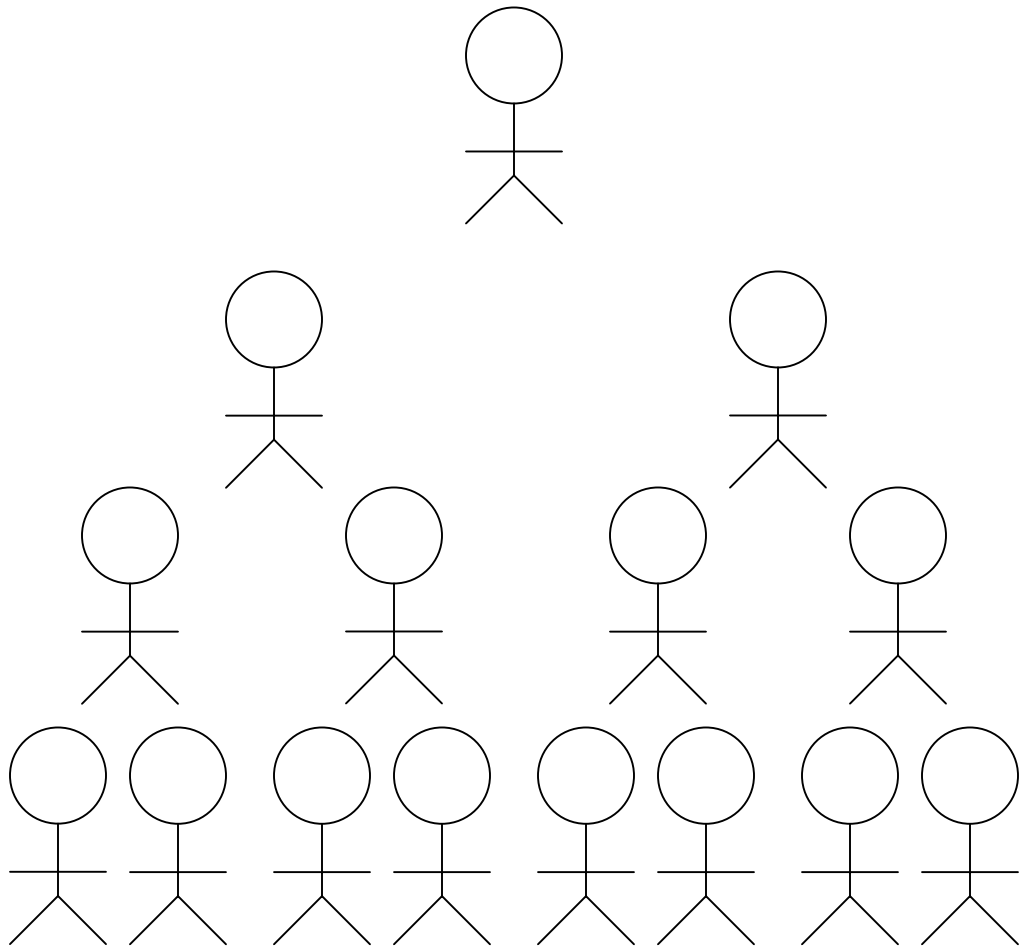
2nd Paper due on Wednesday the 3rd

Week 10 (Mar 8, 10): On Racial Healing

- hooks, "The Wisdom of Hopelessness"

Finals Week: Scheduling for oral exams will be made to accommodate everybody.

Figure 1



Just think, if you were to go back 20 generations, it took 1,046,576 people coming together just to make you. Do you really think that they were all the same race?