

**Sociology 315: Race and Ethnicity**  
**Spring 2006**  
**Tuesdays, 4:30-7:00**  
**Gasson 209**

**Instructor: Jeffrey Langstraat**  
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**Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:45-4:00; Thursdays, 2:45-3:30**

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**Course Description:**

Race and ethnicity are central facets in life in the contemporary United States. In this class we will be investigating these concepts as social categories. In other words, we will look at how the concepts of race and ethnicity are used in placing people in particular groups. These groups will be investigated from the perspectives of people both inside and outside the groups under consideration. Particular focus will be paid to issues of identity, culture, group definition, and institutional practices. While we will be concerned with racial/ethnic categories, we will also look at how each of these categories contains other social groupings (along lines of national origin, language, class, gender, sexuality,...).

This course will analyze both contemporary and historical constructions of race and ethnicity. Of central importance to all of our studies will be issues of power. It will, therefore, necessarily be a political class. This politics won't be in terms of liberal/conservative, Republican/Democrat, etc., but will instead ask questions of how power is distributed, and how the construction of race and ethnicity shape people's lives.

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**Some (not so random) thoughts on the structure of the class and classroom conduct:**

A primary goal of mine is preparing students for active citizenship in a multicultural society. This concept of citizenship is intimately tied to democracy, particularly participatory democracy. In such a framework, it is important to look at how and where democratic principles are put into practice, and where they are absent. My work as a sociologist has attuned me to areas where non-democratic practices are reproduced, and to looking at how this reproduction may be interrupted. Thus, my goal is to inject democratic practices into the classroom setting. Of course, the structure of the University places much of the power for structuring classes in the instructor's hands. In trying to create a democratic classroom, I intentionally give up some of this power (not all of it; I still have to grade papers and exams, determine the syllabus, etc.).

So, what is this democratic classroom under discussion? In short, it is based on the ideas of Jurgen Habermas, ideas that place democratic decision making in the context of discourse. We will discuss the concepts brought up in readings, but the content of the conversation will be determined by the class, not by the instructor. I will often bring in questions from the reading to start the class, but where the conversation goes from that point will be determined by all of you. This, of course, places responsibilities on you, the

class participants. The primary responsibility is that each of you *read the assigned reading for each class period and come to class ready to discuss it*. Active democratic citizenship requires participation! Your participation in the class will be considered as a part of your overall grade for the class (see below for grading criteria).

Since the class will be based in conversation, a few notes are in order. The first should go without saying, but experience has taught me it needs to be said: *Respect other members of the class*. It is perfectly acceptable to disagree with each other. Indeed, I hope we do disagree with each other; this leads to more interesting and fruitful discussion. However, disagreement is no reason to attack each other. We should be willing to debate ideas without insulting the holder of the idea. Therefore, *comments intended to insult or demean other class members will not be tolerated*. Likewise, *statements that are racist, sexist, homophobic and the like will also not be tolerated*. Please find ways that are not insulting or attacking to express yourself. Basic courtesy and good manners are expected.

As a part of courtesy and good manners, allowing others to speak, and listening to them are central. Please do not engage in private conversations while others are speaking. Also, make sure your cell phones and pagers are turned off when you come to class.

#### **Attendance:**

Finally, since the class is based in conversation and participation, *attendance is required*. If you must miss class, please let me know. *Students who miss more than 2 class periods will fail the class*. Exceptions to this (for major illness or similar problems) *may* be dealt with on an individual basis, but this is not guaranteed. In such cases, a doctor's note or similar documentation will be required. I have been taken advantage of in the past; therefore I will *not* be flexible on the two-absence rule. More than two absences *will* result in failure.

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**Academic Dishonesty:** I truly wish that this part of the syllabus were not necessary. However, the actions of some students make its inclusion a requirement. You can find the Boston College's Academic Integrity statement at this web site:

<http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity>

There are two basic rules you should follow to help you stay out of trouble. First, *cite all of the sources of information you use*. A guide to citations will be made available in class. Even simply forgetting to cite something is considered plagiarism. Second, *turn in your own work*. Do not turn in someone else's work as your own. It's that simple.

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#### **Rights of Students With Disabilities:**

If you are a student who has a disability (physical, learning, etc.), BC does have services available to assist you. Information on these services may be found at the Office for Disability Services:

<http://www.bc.edu/offices/odsd/services/disabilityservices/>

Please let me know if you have any special needs so that we can work together to help you succeed in the class.

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### **Class Readings**

There are seven books required for the class:

Anne Fadiman. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Girl, Her American Doctors, and the Clash of Cultures*. Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux.

Eva Garroutte. *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America*. University of California Press.

Paul Gilroy. *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*. Harvard University Press.

Joanne Nagel. *Race, Ethnicity and Sexuality: Intimate Intersections, Forbidden Frontiers*. Oxford University Press (not on order at bookstore, please purchase through your favorite online bookseller)

David Niewert. *Strawberry Days: How Internment Destroyed a Japanese-American Community*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Michael Omi and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s*. Second edition. Routledge.

Vilma Santiago-Irizaray. *Medicalizing Ethnicity: The Construction of Latino Identity in a Psychiatric Setting*. Cornell University Press.

Other readings, as listed on the schedule, will be available on reserve at the O’Niell Library or on WebCT.

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### **Class Schedule**

The schedule is subject to change. If it does, I will notify the class via email and place a revised schedule on WebCT.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>
Jan 17	Course Introduction	
Jan 24	<i>Racial formation and the Racial State</i>	Omi/Winant: Intro, Parts I and II <b>Hand out Essay 1 Assignment</b> <b>Hand out Group Project Assignment</b>
Jan 31		<i>Bakke Decision</i> (WebCT) <i>University of Michigan Supreme Court Affirmative Action Decisions</i> (WebCT)

		Bowen and Bok: "The Shape of the River," Chapters 1-3 (on reserve at O'Neill Library)
Feb 7	<i>Social Movements</i>	Omi/Winant Part III Meyer and Minkoff: "Conceptualizing Political Opportunity" (WebCT) Jenkins, Jacobs and Agnone, "Political Opportunities and African-American Protest" (WebCT) Andrews: "Social Movements and Policy Implementation" (WebCT) Video: Eyes on the Prize <b>Essay 1 Due</b>
Feb 14	<i>Constructing Race Ethnicity at the Organizational Level</i>	Santiago-Irizarry: Intro and Chapters 1-3 <b>Handout Essay 2 Assignment</b>
Feb 21		Santiago-Irizarry: Chapters 4- conclusion
Feb 28	<i>Identity: Who is what and who decides? The case of Native America</i>	Garrouette
Mar 4-12	<b><i>Spring Break-No Classes</i></b>	
Mar 14	<i>Clashing cultures at the micro level</i>	Fadiman
Mar 21	<i>Intersecting, Co-Constitutive Systems</i>	Nagel: Intro and Chapters 1-4
Mar 28		Nagel: Chapters 5-Conclusion
Apr 4	<i>An historical episode and contemporary argument: Internment</i>	Niewert Korematsu (WebCT) <b>Essay 2 Due</b> <b>Hand out Essay 3 Assignment</b>
Apr 11	<i>Arab-Americans: Race, Immigration, Religion, and the "War on Terrorism"</i>	Merskin: "The Construction of Arabs as Enemies" (WebCT) Selections from Malkin: "In Defense of Internment" Howel and Shyrock: "Cracking Down on Diaspora" (WebCT) Gerges: "Islam and Muslims in the Mind of America" (WebCT) Shaheen: "Reel Bad Arabs" (WebCT) Malkin: "In Defense of Internment" Selections TBA
Apr 18	<i>Whiteness</i>	Readings: TBA
Apr 25	<i>Moving Beyond Race?</i>	Gilroy: Intro and Chapters 1-4
May 2		Gilroy: Chapters 5-9 Video (on reserve): Triumph of the

		Will <b>Essay 3 Due</b>
May 5-8	<i>Study Days-No Class</i>	
May 9-16	<i>Final Exams</i>	<b>Group Presentations and Final Papers Due</b> <b>Scheduled Finals Period: Tuesday May 9, 4:30-7:00</b>

### Assignments and Grading

Below is a list of the assignments and how much they're worth in determining your final grade:

Three essays @ 28% each	54%
Group Project	26%
Group Leader Essay	10%
Attendance/Participation	<u>10%</u>
	100%

The handout and due dates for each of the assignments is listed in the class schedule above.

Papers are due in class on the dates listed. If you turn in a paper late (including after class on the due date), one letter grade will be deducted for the first day, and one-third of a letter grade for every subsequent date.

All of the papers should be typed, double-spaced using a standard font and margins (don't go messing with the margins and font size to alter the number of pages....). All of your sources **must** be cited. A failure to cite your sources *is* academic dishonesty. Consider this your warning. Instances of academic dishonesty will result, *at a minimum*, in failure for the assignment. See the Boston College academic dishonesty policy above.

Papers will be graded on a letter basis. Those letters will be worth the following points when calculating grades:

A+	100	C+	78
A	97	C	75
A-	94	C-	72
B+	88	D+	68
B	85	D	65
B-	82	D-	62
		F	0

The final grading scale will be:

A	95-100%	C	73-76%
A-	90-94%	C-	70-72%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	83-86%	D	63-66%
B-	80-82%	D-	60-62%
C+	77-79%	F	59% or ↓