In terms of what we understand as “race relations” in the history of the United States, we could tell narratives of progress marked by the end of formal slavery, highlighted by the civil rights movement, and concluded with the advent of color-blindness. However, we do not need to look far or probe deeply to see that so-called “race relations,” marked by racial inequalities and injustices, remain a great social, political, and economic problem in this country. Why do racial inequalities continue to be a perpetual problem when decades of efforts have ostensibly attempted to improve social conditions? How do we understand and explain the persistence of overt and covert racism, prejudice and discrimination when we have social policies like affirmative action and laws against hate crimes that are supposed to function as remedies for and protections against negative racial relations?

To begin exploring these questions, we will first examine how the notion of race and racist ideologies emerged and co-evolved. We will then begin to investigate patterns and trends in the history of racial relations in the United States. We will examine how systemic inequality is rooted in and supported by racial ideologies and various social, political, and economic structures and institutions. Giving texture and voice to the experience of race in America, we will explore the complexities of how race is lived through its articulation with other forms of dominance (such as gender and class) as well as within the binary and along the hyphen of the schematic black-white axis. Finally, we will look at several responses to the persistence of racial antagonisms to understand how we can imagine and enact futures that are built upon greater respect for every person’s dignity and humanity.

Note: Since this course will involve openly discussing issues that may arouse many emotions, including discomfort and even anger, please be intellectually, mentally and emotionally prepared to:

1) reflect upon and interrogate your own assumptions and belief systems
2) have others respectfully examine and critique your comments and
3) respectfully analyze and consider others’ comments.

Course Requirements:
25% Class attendance and participation
20% 2 3-4 page essays (10% each) due February 5 and April 8
20% Midterm on February 28
35% Final exam scheduled for May 12, 9 AM

Class attendance and participation
This course will be conducted partially like a lecture course and partially like a discussion section. The discussion portion of our classes will be your opportunity to raise questions, wrestle with ideas, share your insights and reflections on the material, and engage with your classmates in an intellectual and respectful dialogue about course topics. Since we will not always have time for everyone’s comments and contributions during class, you will jot down a couple thoughts about the readings and the class during each course meeting and hand them in at the end of class. I welcome feedback on the lectures and classroom discussions and can meet with you to discuss issues further and to recommend readings.
To facilitate the discussion portion of class, 3-4 students will post questions and comments on the WebCT discussion board by 8 PM the day before class. These questions may be used to guide discussion in class. I will let you know at the beginning of the semester for which 2 classes you will be asked to post questions and comments.

**Essays**
You will write two short papers responding to specific issues by drawing upon relevant readings. A week before the due date, I will distribute the writing assignment. The first essay will be collected on February 5 and the second one will be collected on April 8.

**Midterm**
The midterm will be a take-home exam on the material we have covered in the course up until that point. Exam questions will be distributed in class on February 21 and your work will be collected in class on February 28.

**Final exam**
The final exam on May 12 will be a series of essays. Part of the exam will be take-home and the other part will be completed in class on the day of the final. You will be given guidelines to help you prepare for the exam.

*Your thoughtful engagement and diligence is at the heart of your individual learning experience and our work together throughout the semester.*

**Academic integrity:**
Needless to say, all academic (and general) integrity rules apply to all of your work. For information on Boston College’s Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy, please see: http://www.bc.edu/integrity

**Readings:** Required texts are available at the bookstore and on reserve at O’Neill. All other readings will be available online or distributed in class.

**Required Texts:**


Course Objectives*:

In exploring racial relations, we will:

1. Address perennial questions in intellectual debates related to issues of intergroup relations (including intergroup hostilities, prejudices, biases, and group identification), social justice and inequalities, and the formation of social and political communities.

2. Explore the causes and dynamics of human behavior and social problems, such as racial relations and its relationships to poverty, crime, health, economy, politics, institutions, individual behavior, and communities.

3. Attempt to understand the world from perspectives other than our own, examine constructions of identity and difference, and assess historical developments of race and social systems that reinforce differences.

4. Address issues of cultural diversity by examining racial relations through the intellectual work of persons of diverse backgrounds and perspectives and by expanding our discussion of racial relations through recognizing its variegated manifestations and its complex and multiple intersections with other domains of power.

In drawing upon various methodologies, we will:

1. Pursue a historical view of knowledge by looking at the historical construction of race, racial discourse and ideologies of racism and colorblindness. We will also lend particular attention to exploring historical migration patterns, effects of policies, and the development of structural inequalities.

2. Explore social science methodologies like the utilization and application of demographic material, social and political theory, statistical methods, observations of behavioral trends, historical and social analyses of contexts and structures, narratives and various qualitative methods. These methods allow us to examine discursive controversies and see how human behavior and our social worlds articulate with the political economy, current scientific knowledge, etc.

In developing personal academic skills and examining moral values, we will:

1. Use writing as a medium through which we draw connections, organize and express ideas cogently and coherently. Writing assignments include written exams, short papers, and in-class reflections.

2. Reflect on values and commitments that offer meaning and direction to our lives, like values of community, self knowledge, history, culture, and morality. In particular, we will examine our belief systems and our judgments and interactions with each other in order to promote social justice, awareness, and humanity.

*Fulfilling these objectives contributes to satisfying the Cultural Diversity and Social Science core requirements.

Course Outline

I. INTRODUCTION: Setting the scene for dialogue and moving beyond ignorance

The ongoing problem of race and racism in the U.S.

January 15 (T)

- Feagin Introduction
- Feagin Chapter 1 “Systemic Racism: A Comprehensive Perspective”
How do we talk constructively about race and racism?

January 17 (Th)
- hooks “Introduction: Race Talk”
- Tatum Chapter 1 “Defining Racism: ‘Can We Talk?’”

II. LOOKING BACK: The emergence and evolution of racial ideologies and racism in the U.S.

The making of American “races”

January 22 (T)
- Takaki Chapter 1 “A Different Mirror”

Crossing borders, creating boundaries

January 24 (Th)
- Takaki – you will be assigned and present in class 1 chapter from Part 2 “Borders”

January 29 (T) distribute paper 1 assignment
- Takaki – you will be assigned and present in class 1 chapter from Part 3 “Distances”

January 31 (Th)
- Takaki Chapter 14 “Through a Glass Darkly: Toward the Twenty-first Century”

The historical formation and permutations of racial ideologies and racism

February 5 (T) paper 1 due in class
- Feagin Chapter 2 “Slavery Unwilling to Die: The Historical Development of Systemic Racism”
- Feagin Chapter 3 “Racist Ideology as a Social Force”

Recommended:

III. UNDERSTANDING RACIAL FORMATIONS OF OUR PRESENT MOMENT: Institutions, politics, racial inequalities and injustices

An overview of persistent racial privileges, inequalities and injustices

February 7 (Th)
- WWR Introduction “Race Preferences and Race Privileges”
- WWR Chapter 1 “Of Fish and Water: Perspectives on Racism and Privilege”
Recommended:

February 12 (T)
- Feagin Chapter 5 “Racial Oppression in Everyday Practice”
- Feagin Chapter 7 “Systemic Racism: Other Americans of Color”

February 14 (Th)
- Feagin Chapter 6 “White Privileges and Black Burdens: The Continuing Impact of Oppression”

Recommended:

Poverty, the political economy and class politics
February 19 (T)
- WWR Chapter 2 “The Bankruptcy of Virtuous Markets: Racial Inequality, Poverty, and ‘Individual Failure’”

Recommended:
- hooks “Black on Black Pain: Class Cruelty”
- hooks “Marketing Blackness: Class and Commodification”

February 21 (Th) *distribute midterm assignment*
Recommended:

Crime, violence and justice
February 26 (T)
- WWR Chapter 4 “Been in the Pen So Long: Race, Crime, and Justice”

Policies, politics and the law
February 28 (Th) midterm due in class

March 11 (T)
- WWR Chapter 6 “Color-Blindness as Color Consciousness: Voting Rights and Political Equality”

Recommended:

March 13 (Th)

Recommended:
Education and persistent inequalities
March 18 (T)
• WWR Chapter 3 “Keeping Blacks in Their Place: Race, Education, and Testing”

Gender politics
March 25 (T)
• hooks “Challenging Sexism in Black Life,” “The Integrity of Black Womanhood”

IV. LIVING RACIAL REALITIES: Experiences, attitudes and identities

Racisms, discrimination and prejudice
March 27 (Th)

Recommended:
  o Feagin Chapter 4 “Contemporary Racial Attitudes and Images: White Americans”

Racial consciousnesses
April 1 (T) distribute paper 2 assignment

Recommended:
Identity formations
April 3 (Th)
• Tatum – you will be assigned 1 chapter from Part 2 “Understanding Blackness in a White Context”
• Tatum – you will be assigned 1 chapter from Part 3 “Understanding Whiteness in a White Context”

Recommended:
  o hooks “Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination”
  o hooks “Black Beauty and Black Power: Internalized Racism”

April 8 (T) paper 2 due in class
• Tatum – you will be assigned 1 chapter from Part 4 “Beyond Black and White”

April 10 (Th)

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V. MOVING FORWARD: (Re)Imagining and (re)building community

Addressing racism meaningfully
April 15 (T)
• hooks “Beyond Black Rage: Ending Racism”
• Yamamoto Chapter 1 “‘Can We Get Along?’: Justice Grievances among Communities of Color”
• Yamamoto Chapter 2 “‘When Sorry Isn’t Enough’: A Worldwide Trend of Race Apologies”

Practicing racial justice and healing
April 17 (Th)
• Yamamoto Chapter 7 “Interracial Healing: Multidisciplinary Approaches”
• Yamamoto Chapter 8 “Facing History, Facing Ourselves: Interracial Justice”

Recommended:
  o Yamamoto Chapter 5 “‘Who’s Hurting Whom?’: Reframing Racial Group Agency and Responsibility”
  o Yamamoto Chapter 6 “Race Praxis: A Developing Theory of Racial Justice Practice”
  o Yamamoto Chapter 10 “The Hat Shop Controversy: African Americans and Asian Americans in Los Angeles”
  o Feagin Chapter 8 “Antiracist Strategies and Solutions”
Facing racism and sexism
April 22 (T)
- hooks “Feminism: It’s a Black Thing”
- hooks “Revolutionary Feminism: An Anti-racist Agenda”
- hooks “Where is the Love: Political Bonding Between Black and White Women”

Acknowledging histories and reclaiming identities
April 24 (Th)
- hooks “Black Identity: Liberating Subjectivity”
- hooks “Overcoming White Supremacy: A Comment”
- hooks “Loving Blackness as Political Resistance”

  Recommended:

Building solidarity and community
April 29 (T)
- hooks “Beyond Black Only: Bonding Beyond Race”
- hooks “Keeping a Legacy of Shared Struggle”
- hooks “Beloved Community: A World Without Racism”

Moving forward with action and dialogue
May 1 (Th)
- WWR Conclusion “Facing Up to Race”
- Tatum Part 5, Chapter 10 “Embracing a Cross-Racial Dialogue”

9 AM Monday, May 12 Final Exam