SC 594: Race in the Americas
Boston College
Spring 2012
Mondays 10-12:30 (McGuinn 400)

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Office Hours: Fridays 11am-12pm, or set up by email
Course Website: on Blackboard

Course Description
Race has been important in constructing national identity and individual identities and life chances throughout Latin America, though in ways different from those with which many US students will be familiar. This course focuses on two central themes of race in Latin America: 1) the socially and culturally constructed rather than “natural” nature of race, and 2) the realities of racial inequality. We cover the ambiguity about race in Latin America (including silence, euphemism, “whitening,” color terminology, the weak black power movement, and the nationalization of Afro-derived culture). Then, we examine the overwhelming evidence of socio-economic inequalities based on skin color. We will also compare these processes to those occurring in the United States.

Required Materials


4. Each student will review one book for the class. You will find your name next to that book in the schedule below. **It is your responsibility to secure a copy of the book you will review – either through the library or by purchasing a copy online. Do not wait until the last minute to obtain your book!**

All other readings will be available on the course web site.

Optional Reading:
If you are new to the study of race and ethnicity, it may benefit you to read the following text. We will read a couple of chapters from this book (which are posted on blackboard). I did not request this book at the BC bookstore, so you will need to order it online.


Assignments and Assessment
Weekly memos on required readings: (20%)
Over the course of the semester, students will write brief analytical memos on the readings each week. Students should submit at least 10 memos. These memos should not be simple summaries of the readings. Instead, I will supply a list of questions each week, and you should focus your memo on answering ONE of those questions. They should have, at a minimum, a basic argument regarding the
readings supported with evidence. Memos should be between 300-500 words. Be prepared to discuss the memos in class.

**Lead Discussant (25%)**
Each student will be required to act as lead discussant for one week’s readings. This should not be a summary of the readings, but a synthesis and analysis of them in relation to each other, as well as in relation to topics from past weeks. You can also suggest future avenues for research, or discuss the readings in relation to your own work and experiences. Your discussion will occupy the first 30 minutes of class. At the end of your discussion, suggest you should have at least 3 well-crafted discussion questions for the class.

**Book review (15%)**
Each student will give a brief (10-15 minute) review of one book related to the course. These books will not be read by the entire class, so the review should give the class a good overview of the main topics or arguments, its contribution to the field, and how it relates to other course topics and readings. **It is your responsibility to secure a copy of the book you will review – either through the library or by purchasing a copy online. Do not wait until the last minute to obtain your book!**

**Research Paper (Graduate Students) (40%)**
Graduate students will write a research paper of roughly 20 pages. The term paper may be: (1) a literature review of a specific topic within the sociology of culture, (2) a proposal for a future research, such as a master’s paper, article, dissertation chapter; or (3) a small-scale study, which could become an article manuscript. Students should decide which type of paper they are writing and turn in a short description of their proposed papers in Week 4. A proposal is due by Friday of week 5 (10% of grade). The final paper is due by Friday, December 16th. (35% of grade).

**Final Exam (Undergraduates) (40%)**
Undergraduate students will take an in-class final exam. This will be a blue-book style essay exam, covering the entire semester.

**Grading:**
- Lead Discussant: 25 pts
- Weekly Memos (10 at 2pts each): 20 pts
- Book Review: 15 pts
- Exam/Paper: 40 pts
- TOTAL: 100 pts

**Course Policies:**
1. Late work will not be accepted. Please do not contact me requesting an extension.
2. Make up will not be allowed for any activities.
3. Exams will be administered only on the scheduled date.
4. No extra credit will be assigned to make up for missed work. Do not ask me for extra credit. Exceptions to these policies will only be made in the case of a DOCUMENTED illness or family emergency. If you have a legitimate need (a medical emergency or death in the family) for an extension or alternate exam date, you should contact me by email as soon as possible and a scan of you documentation (a dated hospital admittance form) should be attached to the email when you
contact me. I cannot grant extensions for students that do not provide documentation within 2 weeks of the emergency.

5. **I do not negotiate grades.** If you feel I have incorrectly graded your work or have not entered your points correctly (it happens), please contact me with your concern as soon as possible. However, if you contact me simply to bargain for a higher grade than you have earned in the class, I WILL DEDUCT POINTS from your overall grade.

6. **When calculating the final grade, I round up if to the nearest whole percentage.** For example, if you have an 89.5, this will become a 90% final grade. Again, please do not ask me to adjust your grades.

7. **If you have a learning disability and need special accommodations, you must contact me BEFORE the assignment or exam in question.** Do not wait until an exam has begun to contact me to request extra time.

8. **Finally, a word on cheating. I strictly follow the BC code of academic integrity regarding cheating and I will report any violation.** If you copy text from any source (including the internet), you will receive a zero on the exam or assignment. Please remember that rewording someone else’s thoughts must also be cited as if you were quoting that material. For example, if you use an internet source that reviews a course reading without citing the internet source, you are passing that information off as your own work. This is plagiarism and it will earn you a zero on the assignment.
Schedule of Weekly Readings

Week 1 (1/23): Introduction

VIDEO: Race: The Power of an Illusion, parts 2 & 3
VIDEO: Bus 174

Week 2 (1/30): The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity


READING QUESTIONS (Pick one to answer in your weekly memo):

1. Each reading this week presents a different view on race and ethnicity. Which do you find most useful and why? Use examples to explain why you think one perspective is especially helpful for understanding race.
2. What is the difference between asserted and ascribed racial identity? Give examples.
3. What is the difference between a racial category and a racial group? Give examples.
4. Some argue that race is a social status, but others argue that race is a way of interpreting reality. What do you think?
5. What does it mean to say that race is socially constructed? How so? If race is socially created, can we eliminate it by not discussing it and analyzing it in classes like this?

Week 3 (2/6): Race in the US and Latin America DISCUSSANT:


Loveman, Mara. 2009. 'Whiteness in Latin America: measurement and meaning in national censuses (1850-1950).' Journal de la société des américanistes 95(95-2).


READING QUESTIONS (Pick one to answer in your memo):
1. Based on this week’s readings, what are some similarities and differences in race in the United States and in Latin America? What differences do you think are most important and why?

**Week 4 (2/13): Categories and Boundaries DISCUSSANT:**


READING QUESTIONS (Pick one to answer in your memo):

1. What do national categorizations schemas (i.e. racial and ethnic census categories) have to do with individual identification?
2. What is more important to racial identification, the substance of racial identities, or the boundaries of those identities?
3. How has the category of white changed over time in Puerto Rico? How has it changed in the US? How are the boundaries of whiteness defined in the US?
4. Discuss anything else you found interesting about the readings.

**Week 5 (2/20): Categories and Boundaries on the US-Mexico Border DISCUSSANT:**


Grad students: A proposal for your final paper is due today.

READING QUESTIONS (Pick one to answer in your memo):

1. Do any of last week’s readings seem especially relevant *Crossing Borders*?
2. Discuss anything you found interesting about the book.
**Week 6 (2/27): Race, Nation, and Politics DISCUSSANT:**


**READING QUESTIONS (Pick one to answer in your memo):**

1. How do national governments in Latin America work to define blackness? Does this differ across countries?
2. Explain the concepts of mestizaje and whitening. You should define the concepts, explain how they have been used in Latin America, provide examples, and how the two concepts are related?
3. Discuss the role of the State in constructing racial classifications and groups (in the US or Latin America).
4. Discuss anything else you found interesting about the readings.

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**Week 7 (3/12): Vertical Inequality DISCUSSANT:**


READING QUESTIONS (Pick one to answer in your memo):

1. Discuss anything else you found interesting about the readings.

**Week 8 (3/19): Vertical Inequality DISCUSSANT:**

Stocker, Karen. Intro, Ch 3-6 (or full book)

READING QUESTIONS (Pick one to answer in your memo):

1. Relate the experiences of Native Americans in Costa Rica with the experiences of other groups that we have covered in class.
2. Discuss anything else you found interesting about the readings.

**Week 9 (3/26): Horizontal Inequality DISCUSSANT:**


READING QUESTIONS (Pick one to answer in your memo):

1. Discuss the difference between horizontal and vertical inequality. Do these two dimensions of inequality operate the same in the US and in Latin America?
2. Discuss anything else you found interesting about the readings.

**Week 10 (4/2): Race, Talk, and Interaction DISCUSSANT:**


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READING QUESTIONS (Pick one to answer in your memo):

1. Use Sheriff’s chapters on racial talk and silence in Brazil to compare and contrast the concept of race in the US with that of Brazil.
2. Discuss the role of interaction in creating race.
3. Discuss anything else you found interesting about the readings.

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**Week 11 (4/9): Race and Women DISCUSSANT:**


Candelario. 2007. “Black Women are Confusing but the Hair Lets you Know” in *Black Behind the Ears*.


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READING QUESTIONS (Pick one to answer in your memo):

1. Compare and contrast how women is Goldstein’s reading and women in Burdick’s reading deal with the stereotypes of blackness. Be sure to first describe how women of color are seen in Latin America according to class readings.
2. Relate what Telles says about intermarriage in Brazil with what Goldstein and Burdick say about female beauty and skin color in Brazil.
3. Discuss anything else you found interesting about the readings.

**Week 12 (4/16): Culture and Racial Identity DISCUSSANT:**


**READING QUESTIONS** (Pick one to answer in your memo):

1. Discuss anything else you found interesting about the readings.

**Week 13 (4/23): Latin Americans in the United States DISCUSSANT:**

Wade, Peter, 2009. section from Ch 6 of Race and Sex in Latin America


READING QUESTIONS (Pick one to answer in your memo):

1. Describe how racial identities change over time for immigrants.
2. Are racial identities and categories in the US becoming more like those in Latin America?
3. Discuss anything else you found interesting about the readings.

Week 14 (4/30): Social Movements DISCUSSANT:

Wade, Peter, 1997. Race and Ethnicity in Latin America. Ch. 6


You final paper is due by Monday May 7th.

READING QUESTIONS (Pick one to answer in your memo):

1. How is globalization influencing racial identities?
2. Discuss anything else you found interesting about the readings.