

HISTORY 227: HISTORY OF RACE AND ETHNICITY IN THE UNITED STATES, Fall
2015

SYLLABUS
(Double-sided copy)

This course examines race and ethnicity as evolving aspects of life with a focus, though not exclusive, on the United States. It does not detail the history of every ethnic group. Instead, it presents a narrative about what race and ethnicity has meant from the colonial period to the present, and how society has been shaped by the evolving past. Examples are drawn from the experience of some groups in order to suggest general patterns and significant issues for study. The objective of the course, then, is to enrich our understanding of how critical aspects of today's complex society developed. The lectures, readings, discussions, and assignments are meant to supply students with opportunities to apply their analytical skills to the study of history, and to provide a safe and respectful space to interrogate race and ethnicity systematically and thoughtfully.

Organization: Class meetings center on lectures and presentations, discussion, and audiovisual material. Course content focuses on scheduled topics and refers to assigned texts. Topics provide chronological and thematic continuity but are not always synchronized with readings.

Evaluation: Grades are based on the following:

An in-class midterm essay exam = 25 percent

A second in-class midterm with short answers and multiple choice questions = 25 percent

A 10-page term paper = 30 percent

A final take-home exam = 20 percent

Detail on the writing assignment will be provided later in a separate document.

I don't curve grades.

Paper topics cannot be changed after October 20. Missed exams cannot be made up.

DUE DATES:

Midterm 1 – October 15

Midterm 2 – November 12

Final decision on paper topic –
October 20

Term paper – December 15

Final exam – December 18

Attendance: Attendance is required to protect the interests of students who diligently come to class and help create a community by their presence. It rests on the idea of a classroom as a social entity and education as a commitment. Anyone can have up to 8 unexcused absences (i.e., one month of classes) without penalty. Students who belong to teams, or are involved with University-sponsored activities

that may occasionally take them away from class, should provide a schedule of their absences to their professors. Those otherwise missing more than 8 class sessions cannot earn more than a C in the course. As per university regulations, there is no penalty for religious observances.

Accessibility. Students with a disability should contact the professor as soon as possible to arrange for alternative testing accommodations or any other special needs.

Classroom policies. The more controversial a subject, the more we need to respect one another's viewpoints. Class discussions can be lively and intense, but they must be diplomatic. Thoughtfully assess an idea; don't attack the person expressing it. Please turn off cell phones, pagers, and other noisemakers while in class. Laptops can be useful adjuncts to learning, but unfortunately, they can also be a distraction in the classroom setting. You are therefore requested not to use laptops and smartphones in class for any purpose other than taking notes.

Required readings:

Books:

Rebecca Scott and Jean Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation*

Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America*

(Books are at A Room of One's Own bookstore, 315 W. Gorham St.)

Articles and chapters: (in the order we'll be reading them)

Joseph Graves, *The Race Myth* (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), ch. 1

Michael Omi & Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), ch. 1

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, excerpt

David Mandell, "Shifting Boundaries of Race and Ethnicity: Indian-Black Intermarriage in Southern New England" *Journal of American History* (September 1998)

Virginia laws on slavery, from Virtual Jamestown,

<http://www.virtualjamestown.org/laws1.html>

Elizabeth Ashbridge narrative, from National Humanities Center Toolbox

Library: Primary Resources in U.S. History and Literature

Christopher J. Smith, "Black and Irish on the Riverine Frontiers," *Southern Cultures* 17 (Spring 2011)

Robert G. Lee, *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), ch. 1

Contact with professor: I have an office in the History Department and another in Afro-American Studies. The Afro-American Studies Department office is located on the 4th floor in Helen C. White Hall. I'll be using that one for office hours for this

class. Office hours are 11 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays and Thursdays, or by appointment. Due to staff shortages, e-mail is better for communicating with me than leaving phone messages. My e-mail address is bplummer@wisc.edu. There is a class list. You are automatically subscribed to it if you are registered. The list address is history227-1-f15@lists.wisc.edu. Students should feel free to use the list to communicate with one another and share information about the course.

Why an ethnic studies requirement? (This section is based on the University's statement on ethnic studies.) Ethnic studies courses are conscious of how society has valued certain histories and discounted others. They illuminate how these differences have promoted disparities in contemporary American life. Ethnic studies courses aim to apply critical thinking skills, and encourage students to harbor a healthy skepticism towards knowledge claims about race and ethnicity, whether in the form of media, political, or popular representations. As part of this process, the ethnic studies requirement should challenge students to question their own assumptions and preconceived notions on these topics.

Awareness of self is linked with awareness of and empathy towards the perspectives of others. Ethnic Studies courses give students an opportunity to think about identity issues, including their own identity, as well as the connections they might have to people "outside" their focused social circle.

Ethnic Studies courses endeavor to be relevant to students' lives outside the classroom by enhancing students' ability to effectively and respectfully participate in a multicultural society. This participation can include being able to discuss race and ethnicity with a colleague or friend, for example, or recognizing inequities that may occur in interpersonal or institutional contexts.

New History resource:

The History Lab: New this semester, the History Lab is a resource center where experts (PhD students) will assist you with your history papers. No matter your stage in the writing process—choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, revising your drafts—the History Lab staff is here, along with your professors and teaching assistants, to help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. Sign up for a one-on-one consultation online: <http://go.wisc.edu/hlab>

For History majors:

The goal of the history major is to offer students the knowledge and skills they need to gain a critical perspective on the past. Students will learn to define important historical questions, analyze relevant evidence with rigor and creativity, and present convincing arguments and conclusions based on original research in a manner that contributes to academic and public discussions. In History, as in other humanistic disciplines, students will practice resourceful inquiry and careful

reading. They will advance their writing and public speaking skills to engage historical and contemporary issues.

To ensure that students gain exposure to some of the great diversity of topics, methodologies, and philosophical concerns that inform the study of history, the department requires a combination of courses that offers breadth, depth, and variety of exposition. Through those courses, students should develop:

1. Broad acquaintance with several geographic areas of the world and with both the pre-modern and modern eras.
2. Familiarity with the range of sources and modes through which historical information can be found and expressed. Sources may include textual, oral, physical, and visual materials. The data within them may be qualitative or quantitative, and they may be available in printed, digital, or other formats. Modes of expression may include textbooks, monographs, scholarly articles, essays, literary works, or digital presentations.
3. In-depth understanding of a topic of their choice through original or creative research.
4. The ability to identify the skills developed in the history major and to articulate the applicability of those skills to a variety of endeavors and career paths beyond the professional practice of history.

Skills Developed in the Major:

Define Important Historical questions

1. Pose a historical question and explain its academic and public implications.
2. Using appropriate research procedures and aids, find the secondary resources in history and other disciplines available to answer a historical question.
3. Evaluate the evidentiary and theoretical bases of pertinent historical conversations in order to highlight opportunities for further investigation.

Collect and Analyze Evidence

1. Identify the range and limitations of primary sources available to engage the historical problem under investigation.
2. Examine the context in which sources were created, search for chronological and other relationships among them, and assess the sources in light of that knowledge.
3. Employ and, if necessary, modify appropriate theoretical frameworks to examine sources and develop arguments.

Present Original Conclusions

1. Present original and coherent findings through clearly written, persuasive arguments and narratives.
2. Orally convey persuasive arguments, whether in formal presentations or informal discussions.

3. Use appropriate presentation formats and platforms to share information with academic and public audiences.

Contribute to Ongoing Discussions

1. Extend insights from research to analysis of other historical problems.
2. Demonstrate the relevance of a historical perspective to contemporary issues.
3. Recognize, challenge, and avoid false analogies, overgeneralizations, anachronisms, and other logical fallacies.

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COURSE CALENDAR

WEEK 1

Sept. 3 – Introduction to the course

Reading: Joseph L. Graves, *The Race Myth*, ch. 1

Question: Why does race, though deemed false as a biological concept, remain a potent factor in American life?

WEEK 2

Sept. 8 – Thinking about race

Reading: *Roots Too*, Intro and ch. 1 through p. 43

Sept. 10 – Thinking about ethnicity

Reading: Omi & Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, ch. 1; *Roots Two*, ch. 2 p. 43 to the end

Question: What is the difference between “race” and “ethnicity?”

WEEK 3

Sept. 15 – Origins of racial thought in the Americas

Reading: Virginia laws on slavery, from Virtual Jamestown

Sept. 17 – Creating racial slavery

Reading: Virginia laws on slavery, from Virtual Jamestown

Question: What was the relationship between race and slavery in 17th century Virginia and how and why did a full-blown system of slavery evolve?

WEEK 4

Sept. 22 – Race and ethnicity in the colonial crucible

Reading: Mandell, “Shifting Boundaries of Race and Ethnicity: Indian-Black Intermarriage in Southern New England”

Sept. 24 – What was an American?

Reading: Mandell, “Shifting Boundaries of Race and Ethnicity: Indian-Black Intermarriage in Southern New England”

Question: What factors helped determine the status of racial and ethnic groups in colonial and revolutionary America?

Plummer

WEEK 5

Sept. 29 – Racial slavery

Reading: excerpt from Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*

Oct. 1 – The age of Atlantic revolutions, I

Reading: Elizabeth Ashbridge narrative; *Freedom Papers*, Prologue and ch. 1

Question: How do you explain the contradictions in U.S. revolutionary thought regarding freedom?

WEEK 6

Oct. 6 – The age of Atlantic revolutions, II

Reading: *Freedom Papers*, chs. 2-3

Oct. 8 – “Tri-racial isolates”

Reading: *Freedom Papers*, chs. 4-5

Question: How did revolutionary upheavals in the western hemisphere, the Louisiana Purchase, conquest and removal of Native Americans, and slavery affect the formation of ethnic groups?

WEEK 7

Oct. 13 – Midterm review

Reading: no assignment

Oct. 15 – MIDTERM 1

Reading: no assignment

WEEK 8

Oct. 20 – Labor and ethnicity in the 19th century

Reading: Smith, “Black and on the Riverine Frontiers;” *Roots Too*, ch. 3 to p. 150

Oct. 22 – Labor and race in the 19th century

Reading: Lee, *Orientalism*, ch. 1

Question: How did the presence of slavery, and later, institutionalized racism, influence how immigrants and ethnically marginal groups acculturated to American life?

WEEK 9

Oct. 27 – America’s empire

Reading: *Freedom Papers*, 6-7

Oct. 29 – Sociobiology and its challengers

Reading: *Freedom Papers*, chs. 8-9 and epilog

Question: How and why did challenges to sociobiology arise?

Plummer

WEEK 10

Nov. 3 – World War I and pluralism

Reading: *Roots Too*, ch. 3, p. 150 to the end.

Nov. 5 – Race and ethnicity in the Jazz Age

Reading: *Roots Too*, ch. 4

Question: How did what Jacobson calls the Ellis Island story help shape contemporary definitions of Americanism?

WEEK 11

Nov. 10 – Midterm review

Reading: No assignment

Nov. 12 – MIDTERM 2

Reading: No assignment

WEEK 12

Nov. 17 - Migration, immigration, and social science

Reading: *Roots Too*, ch. 5

Nov. 19 – “War without mercy”

Reading: *Roots Too*, ch. 6 to p. 269

Question: What impact did World War II have on race and ethnic relations in the United States?

WEEK 13

Nov. 24 – The decline of ethnic identification and the rise of civil rights

Reading: no assignment

Nov. 26 – THANKSGIVING DAY

Reading: no assignment

WEEK 14

Dec. 1 – Assimilation

Reading: *Roots Too*, ch. 6, p. 269 to the end

Dec. 3 – The ethnic revival

Reading: *Roots Too*, ch. 7 p. 312-336

Question:

Why and how did the celebration of ethnicity become popular in the 1970s? In what ways has popular culture both affirmed and challenged conventional thinking about race and ethnicity?

WEEK 15

Dec. 8 – Affirmative action: who gets what?

Reading: *Roots Too*, ch. 7, pp. 312-364.

Dec. 10 – Immigration debates

Reading: *Roots Too*, ch. 7, p. 364 to the end and Coda

Question: What does the historical study of race and ethnicity reveal about current controversies regarding entitlements?

WEEK 16

Dec. 15 Summary and conclusions

Reading: no assignment

FINAL EXAM- Final exam is take-home, distributed in class on Dec. 15 and due on Dec. 18 at 7:30 p.m.