

HIST/CLS 468: Popular Culture in Multi-racial America

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Class: T Th 11-12:15
Office hours: Th 2-4

Course Description:

This course explores how popular culture over the past 170 years has been a location for racialization (that is, the formation of race identities and ideas) and exploitation as well as for community formation, the creation of new ideas and cultural formations, and resistance. The explosion of forms of media and leisure activities since about 1870 (popular theater and fiction, movies, radio, records, television, etc) means that popular culture increasingly defines people's daily routines, their ways of socializing and the ways they see the world and become who they are. Who we are as people can not entirely be separated from the media and products we use daily. In addition, virtually everyone participates in popular culture, unlike government politics or high finance or foreign policy, so when we study popular culture in history we study lots of people, not just elites. By looking closely at old popular culture forms and phenomenon we can see the traces of how people formed and challenged social hierarchies, especially race, class, gender and sexual hierarchies, and hopefully better understand the world we inherited.

This is not a lecture class! Your participation will be required on a daily basis, as we discuss readings or popular culture examples in class. Occasionally, I'll talk for part of a session to set up themes or theories, but you will also be asked to contribute ideas, research findings, and responses to others.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is required because so much of this course happens in class; each unexcused absence over two will lower your final semester grade by one third of a letter grade.

Required Texts

note: books are available on reserve at College Library and for purchase at the Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative at 426 W. Gilman Street. Turn right on Gilman from State when walking toward the capitol.

Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles' Little Manila*

Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles*

Suzanne Smith, *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit*

Marie "Keta" Miranda, *Homegirls in the Public Sphere*

A required Course Packet, available on line through ereserves at College Library OR in hard copy at Student Print in the Memorial Union. To access ereserves: Login to MyUW portal: <http://my.wisc.edu/>. Click on your **Academic** tab. Note that in your list of current courses, those with library reserves available contain a link for "**library/reserve**". Click that link to go to your reserves.

Course Requirements:

1. Participation (10%)

You will be assigned a letter grade for your participation, based on the quality and quantity of your participation in small and large class discussions.

2. E-mail assignments (10%)

You will be asked to contribute thoughts or questions or other information related to the readings to the class email list on a regular (weekly at least) basis. You will receive the assignments via the email list. You must complete all of these very brief, ungraded assignments in order to receive full credit.

3. Position Paper (15%)

This paper will ask you to take a position on a question emerging from Part 1, Unit 1. 3 pages.

4. Toys Я Us Field Research Paper (20%)

This is a paper on the ways that commodities construct and/or challenge race and gender hierarchies in our society. It will utilize analytical frameworks learned from our readings to design and conduct a focused field research project at Toys Я Us. Results will be analyzed in a written paper, 4-5 pages.

5. Paper on Part 2 (20%)

This paper will ask you to deepen your engagement with the readings in Part 2 of the course. You will have some choice on what to write about. 5-6 pages

6. Project on Part 3 (25%)

This project, based on your own research, will explore a historical or contemporary instance in which popular culture was part of a social movement, or participated in the “public sphere”. Topic and format are determined by you according to your interests, in consultation with me. It can be a paper (if so, 7-8 pages) or some other medium such as video, website, performance, etc.

Course Schedule

(note: complete readings before class. Please bring relevant readings to class.)

Part 1: Foundations

Unit One: Race as Performance

Week 1: *How is Race Performance?*

T 9/5 Introductions

Th 9/7 Handout—Obadike; Kelley.

Week 2: *Love and Theft: Racialization in the era of Commercialized Recreation*

T 9/12 Roediger, “White Skins, Black Masks” Packet

Th 9/14 Sotiropoulos “Vaudeville Stages and Black Bohemia” and “Coda: Hokum Redux” Packet

Week 3: *Occupying Contradictions and Contradictory Occupations*

T 9/19 Kasson, “American Indian Performers in the Wild West” Packet

Th 9/21 Garcia, “Just Put on that Padua Hills Smile” Packet

Unit Two: Race as Commodity

Week 4: *How is Race a Commodity?*

T 9/26 **DUE: Position Paper**

reading: please look at these two websites:

<http://obadike.tripod.com/ebay.html>

<http://www.rent-a-negro.com/>

Th 9/28 Beltrán, “Dolores Del Rio, the 1st ‘Latin Invasion,’ & Hollywood’s Transition to Sound” Packet;
Ruiz, “Starstruck” Packet

Week 5: *Toys and Race Learning*

T 10/3 Chin, "Ethnically Correct Dolls: Toying With the Race Industry" Packet;

Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* excerpt, Packet

Th 10/5 Negrón-Muntaner, "Barbies Hair: Selling Out Puerto Rican Identity in the Global Market"

Packet.

NOTE: TRIP TO TOYS Я US MUST HAPPEN BY THIS CLASS SESSION!!

Part 2: Geographies

Unit Three: Communities in formation; communities in conflict

Week 6: *How Do Ethnically-based Communities Form?*

T 10/10 España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity* SKIM pp 1-50; READ pp. 51-72.

Th 10/12 **DUE: 'Toys Я Us' Paper.** No new reading.

Week 7: *Youth Culture, Style and Conflict*

T 10/17 España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity* pp. 73-104;

Streible, "Race and the Reception of Jack Johnson Films" Packet

Th 10/19 España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity* pp. 105-164.

Week 8 *Multi-racial and Heterogenous Urban Spaces*

T 10/24 Cosgrove "The Zoot Suit and Style Warfare" Packet

Kelley, "The Riddle of the Zoot" Packet

Unit Four: Suburbanization and the New Geography of Race

Th 10/26: *How did Suburbanization affect Racialization?*

Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, pp. 1-64

Week 9: *Racialized Spaces—the City and the Television*

T 10/31 Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, pp. 106-144;

Lim, "Contested Beauty: Asian American Beauty Culture during the Cold War" Packet.

Th 11/2 Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight* pp. 145-184.

Week 10: *Who We Become in Racialized Space and the Difference it Makes*

T 11/7 Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight* pp. 185-242.

Part 3: Movements

Unit Five: Civil Rights, Nationalism and Popular Cultures

Th 11/9: *Post-WWII Multiracial Spaces and Emerging Identities*

Garcia, "Memories of El Monte: Dance Halls and Youth Culture..." Packet

Week 11: *How did Popular Culture Institutions Intersect with Civil Rights Movements?*

T 11/14 Smith, *Dancing in the Street*, pp. 54-93;

Ward, "A Dixie Dilemma" and "Conclusion" Packet.

Th 11/16 **DUE: Paper on Part 2.** No reading.

Week 12: *Art and Social Transformation I*

T 11/21 Smith, *Dancing in the Street*, pp. 94-180.

Th 11/23 Smith, *Dancing in the Street*, pp. 181-246.

Week 13: *Art and Social Transformation II*

T 11/28 Broyles-González, “El Teatro Campesino & the Mexican Popular Performance Tradition” Packet

Unit Six: Contemporary ‘Grassroots’ Popular Culture

Th 11/30: *How Do ‘Grassroots’ Popular Cultures Intervene in the Public Sphere?*

note: Class Visit by artists Sha Cage and eg bailey (probably) on this day!

Miranda, *Homegirls in the Public Sphere* pp. 1-48;

Habell-Pallán, “‘No Cultural Icon’: Marisela Norte and Spoken Word”

Week 14: *Voice and Visibility*

T 12/5 Miranda, *Homegirls in the Public Sphere* pp. 49-104;

Rose, “All Aboard the Night Train” Packet

Th 12/7 Miranda, *Homegirls in the Public Sphere* pp. 105-153;

Kitwana, “Introduction” and “The New Black Youth Culture” Packet

Week 15: *How is Race Performance, Remix*

T 12/12 Muñoz, “Pedro Zamora’s ‘Real World’ of Counterpublicity” Packet

Th 12/14 Last Class! No new reading.

Project on Part 3 Due 12/18 at 2:30 pm in my office (Humanities 5113) or mailbox ((Humanities #5002, 5th floor, by elevator in corner nearest Memorial Library). You may turn your paper in earlier, but not later, than this date and time.