ANTH 696c: Race and Everyday Practice
Professor Jennifer Roth-Gordon
University of Arizona
Fall, 2016

Course Information:

Class Time/Location: Wednesdays, 11:00-1:30
Haury 310

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Course Description:

How is it that bodies come to be “raced”? How do mundane practices such as brushing one’s teeth or eating white bread generate (and become infused with) ideas of racial difference that come to justify institutionalized racism, racial hierarchy, and white supremacy? This advanced graduate seminar investigates the construction of racial meaning through a focus on bodily practices, embodiment, and the reading of physical bodies. In particular, we seek to better understand how the well-known phenotypical markers most commonly attributed to race (such as skin color, eye shape, nose shape, lip shape, hair color and hair texture) cannot be interpreted without careful attention to bodily practices. In this class, we will bring quotidian examples from various historical contexts to bear on current events and popular culture. For instance, Ann Stoler suggests that when European children raised in the colonies acquired a tendency to rest on their haunches (instead of sitting on chairs), Europeans in the metropole actively worried about racial degeneration and their loss of whiteness. This simple act (a body at rest) threatened their racial status. Over a century later, after the recent Trayvon Martin killing, protestors carried Skittles and Ice Tea (signs of Trayvon’s innocence) and covered their heads with hoodies – a racial marker that dangerously signified blackness, violence, and criminality. Here it can be argued that a deceptively simple article of clothing played a role in the death of an innocent teenage boy. How and where, then, do we locate race, when it cannot be determined by ancestry nor skin color alone? How do we learn to “read” race off of bodies, bodies that are never without these racial markers?

Drawing from the fields of cultural anthropology, medical anthropology, linguistic anthropology, colonial studies, and history, this course investigates how social, political, economic, and historical factors shape both the physical body and the way that it is racially interpreted. This examination of race through the lens of the body allows us to address broader questions of citizenship, globalization, neoliberalism, consumption, and modernity. Readings are drawn from across the globe (including the U.S., the Americas, Asia, Australia, and Africa), and there is a particularly strong emphasis on whiteness studies. Students should have some previous familiarity with the study of race, and they
are encouraged to develop course papers from their own personal interests and research agendas (past, present, and future).

**Course Requirements:**

1 **Attendance and Participation:**

   In an upper-level seminar, it goes without saying that your active and informed participation is expected. As a courtesy, please let me know ahead of time if you will be late or unable to attend a session of class. Also, if, for whatever reason, you find it difficult to participate in class as often as you would like, please make efforts to contribute to the class in alternate ways, such as by contributing more frequently to the online discussion board. All students are asked to take an active role in working towards the success of this class. Auditing will only be permitted in exceptional cases. Frequent absences (over 2) will negatively impact a student’s grade and may constitute grounds for dismissal from the class.

2 **Online Discussion:**

   In order to make the most of our class time together, all students will be required to participate in an online discussion of the readings. Please try to skip no more than 2 weeks over the course of the semester. Each post should be at least two long paragraphs in length and should pertain to the readings for the week. You have several choices for the topic of your post: 1) draw on your own research experience 2) provide a contemporary example from the media (with links, if possible) 3) offer critical commentary or questions. Feel free to build on previous posts by your classmates! This is an especially good forum for students who have trouble speaking up in class and who prefer to more carefully craft their comments. Please allow enough time for thoughtful reflection of the readings! Posts may be submitted no later than Tuesday at 8 pm. All students will need to read the week’s posts prior to class.

   To access the discussion board: [http://d2l.arizona.edu](http://d2l.arizona.edu)
   To get help with the discussion board: [http://help.d2l.arizona.edu/forstudents.html](http://help.d2l.arizona.edu/forstudents.html)

3 **Mid-term Paper:**

   For your first paper, you will explore one of the main topics we have covered in a short paper of 8-10 pages. Drawing on your current research agenda is highly encouraged! You may also choose to present a more theoretical discussion of the readings. Please cite generously from class readings and feel free to consult with me before the paper deadline. Please submit an abstract for your mid-term paper (by email – no hard copies please) by September 21st. Your mid-term paper is due via email by October 21th.

4 **Final Paper(s):**
A final paper of around 20 pages should address a different course theme than previously addressed in your mid-term. Please submit an abstract for your final paper no later than November 18th. Your final paper is due via email by December 9th. No incompletes, please! All students are advised to meet with me at least once during the semester to discuss your progress in the class.

**Grading:**

Attendance, Participation, Online Posts: 25%
Mid-term Paper: 25%
Final Paper: 50%

**Course Readings:**

All readings will be made available at the d2l class website. If you have trouble accessing the site for any reason, please email me. We will be reading several chapters from different texts used in the course. While I have made all of these chapters available on d2l, you are encouraged to purchase any books that would be especially useful for your research. (My favorites are noted with a *.)

**Class Schedule:**

*Week One: Introductions
August 24*

*Week Two: Rethinking Whiteness
August 31*


Good Appearances: Race, Language, and Citizenship (chapter 2).

Investing in Whiteness: Middle-Class Practices of Linguistic Discipline (chapter 3).

Avoiding Blackness: The Flip Side of Boa Aparência (chapter 5).

“Seeing” Race (conclusion).

*Week Three: White Things
September 7*


Introduction, xi-xxvii.
Living on White Bread: Class Considerations and the Refinement of Whiteness (chapter 2), 44-85.


Introduction: Bread and Power and Untouched by Human Hands: Dreams of Purity and Contagion (introduction and chapter 1), 1-50.

The Invention of Sliced Bread: Dreams of Control and Abundance (chapter 2), 51-72.

Week Four: Making Bodies Modern

September 14


The Lightness of Whitemen (chapter 3), 64-94.

Conclusion: Whitemen Beyond (chapter 6), 209-259.


Week Five: Consuming Race

September 21


Cleanliness and “Civilization”: Hygiene and Colonialism in Southern Africa (chapter 1), 17-34.

Manufacturing, the “African Market,” and the Postwar Boom (excerpt from chapter 4), 99-104.

Bodies and Things: Toiletries and Commodity Culture in Postwar Zimbabwe (excerpt from chapter 6), 166-192.


➔ Mid-term Paper Abstracts due – please send via email.

Week Six: The Cultural Politics of “Nature” and Racial Difference
September 28


Introduction, 1-7.

No Place for a White Man (chapter 3), 73-94.

Conclusion: Biology and Nation, 253-258.


Racial Degradation and Environmental Anxieties (chapter 4), 142-227.

Smokey Bear is a White Racist Pig (chapter 5), 184-227.


Week Seven: “Bourgeois Bodies and Racial Selves”
October 5


**Week Eight: Groomed to be Useful**

**October 12**


Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: Cultural Competence and the Dangers of Métissage (chapter 4), 79-111.

A Sentimental Education: Children on the Imperial Divide (chapter 5), 112-139.


The Great White Mother (chapter 3, excerpt), 111-148.

Groomed to Be Useful (chapter 6, excerpt), 229-251.

Maternalism in the Institutions (chapter 7, excerpt), 302-317.


**Week Nine: Connections**

**October 19**

*Mid-term Papers due via email by the end of the week.*

**Week Ten: Contamination and the Body Politic**

**October 26**

Introduction, 1-12.

“Only Man Is Vile” (chapter 3), 74-103.

Excremental Colonialism (chapter 4), 104-129.


Week Eleven: Health, Hygiene, and Hygienic Racism
November 2


Preparing for a Bacterial Invasion: Cholera and Inequality in Venezuela (chapter 1), 19-47.

Turning Chaos into Control: Initial Responses by Regional Institutions (chapter 5, excerpt), 112-119.


Week Twelve: “Soft” Eugenics and Better Breeding
November 9


*Week Thirteen: Racial Bodies and Daily Discipline*

**November 16**


→ **Final Paper Abstracts due – please send via email by the end of the week.**

*Thanksgiving: No class*

**November 23**
Week Fourteen: Racial Malleability
November 30


Week Fifteen: Concluding Thoughts
December 7

*Final papers due via email by the end of the week.*

Have a nice winter break!