The primordial task of a capable professor is to teach his students to recognize that there are uncomfortable facts, by which I mean facts that are unpleasant to the personal opinion of an individual. Indeed, there are facts that are extremely unpleasant for every opinion, including mine.

Max Weber, 1918

This course is a comparative sociohistorical inquiry into the bases and mechanisms of racial domination as a “denegated form of ethnicity” anchored in culturally salient (putative) physical differences. It is organized in three parts.

First, we examine the epistemological obstacles that stand in the way of an adequate understanding of “race” as a principle of social vision and division (including the confusion and conflation of folk with analytical notions, the uncontrolled universalization U.S. national experience, and the hold of the logic of the trial) and review fundamental concepts put forth by the main contending theoretical traditions.

Second, we probe the peculiar social (il)logic and implications of “race” as a form of classification — a manner of dividing and ranking human beings and groups with (overt or covert) reference to their biological makeup. We contrast and compare the bases, structure, and implications of the racial taxonomies evolved by different societies with an eye towards understanding how these both reflect and predetermine patterns of group relations and regimes of domination.

Third, we consider the conversation of classification into stratification, that is, how various societies have drawn, enforced, conjoined or dissolved ethnoracial boundaries, focusing on five elementary forms of racial domination: categorization (prejudice, stigma, implicit bias), discrimination (differential treatment based on imputed group membership), segregation (differential allocation in physical and social space), ghettoization (the forced development of parallel institutions), and violence (ranging from interpersonal intimidation and aggression, to lynching and pogroms, and climaxing with racial warfare and extermination).

Readings include a wide range of sociological, historical, and anthropological studies of ethnoracial vision and division, accommodation, and conflict in Latin America, Asia, Western Europe, the United States, and Africa from medieval times to the present. They are geared toward helping us uncover the social mechanisms that lead to the rise, reproduction, and transformation of ethnoracial inequality, wherever and whenever it is found. This course is problem-oriented, not group-oriented; its purpose is neither to celebrate nor to denigrate the experiences of this or that particular category but to explain and understand them in generic sociological terms.
Requirements: This class is designed for sociology majors and others who have had prior exposure to sociology and kindred disciplines (at least two courses). It is not an easy class; it demands serious work (reading, thinking, writing): you are to do the readings before class and attend every lecture, as each builds and extends onto the others. You need to take extensive notes on both the readings and lectures to assimilate the materials we will cover. (You will be instructed as to reading and note-taking techniques.)

Most importantly, you must be prepared to approach the subject matter, readings, lectures, and class discussion with a wide open mind and with the firm intention to learn to think about things that may seem familiar in novel and sometimes startling ways. You must be willing to consider new ideas that may unsettle you, facts that may disturb or offend you, and subject your (pre)conceptions and personal experiences to the disciplined scrutiny of critical reasoning and systematic empirical observation.

Readings: Required books are available from the usual bookstores. All readings are on reserve at the undergraduate library and on line on the course page on bcourses.

Grading: your course grade will come in equal proportions from two exercises that are to be done and turned in ON TIME (no makeup or extension of any sort will be allowed):

1. An open-book mid-term provisionally scheduled for week 9, combining in-class exam and take-home essay; it will cover the first 8 weeks of the course.
2. A final exam taking place on the appointed day, covering the entire course but with special emphasis on weeks 6 through 14.

Required books


I. WALKING THROUGH LAND MINES, FUMBLING FOR CONCEPTS (weeks 1-2)
(29 August-5 September)


Background

Recommended

II. CATEGORIZATION: THE SOCIAL (IL)LOGIC OF RACIAL CLASSIFICATION
(weeks 3-4) (10 Sept-19 September)

Degler, Neither Black nor White, chapters 1-2 and 5, pp. 1-92, 205-263. Emphasize chapter 5.

Background


Recommended


III. PREJUDICE, STIGMA, IMPLICIT BIAS (weeks 5-6)  
(24 Sept-3 October)


Recommended


**IV. DISCRIMINATION (weeks 7-8)**
*(8 October-17 October)*


**Recommended**

**MIDTERM TUESDAY 22 OCTOBER IN CLASS &AT HOME**

**V. SEGREGATION (weeks 9, 10)**
*(22 October-31 October)*

Massey and Denton, American Apartheid, pp. 1-16, 60-114.

Recommended

VI. SECLUSION: CAMPS, GHETTOS, RESERVATIONS (weeks 11-12)
(5-14 November)

Recommended

VII. EXCLUSIONARY VIOLENCE: POGROMS TOextermination (weeks 13-14)
(19 November-5 December)

**Recommended**

**To go further**

**FINAL EXAM WEEK OF 16-20 DECEMBER**