Racial and Ethnic Relations Seminar

SYD 6706/LAS 6938

Fall 2017

Thursday Periods 9-11 (4:05-7:05)
Turlington 2303

Dr. Nicholas Vargas
Nicholas.Vargas@ufl.edu
Office Hrs (Be sure to Schedule an Appointment): Wednesdays 9am-11am
360 Grinter Hall

Description:

Race has been conceptualized as an idea, identity, ideology, a schema, performance, skin color, biological distinction, demographic characteristic, status-based characteristic, social construction, hierarchical classification system, structure, political project, myth, and others. In this course we will probe definitions of race and racism, and consider the multitude and divergent ways that sociologists challenge and conceptualize some of these notions. We will consider theories of race and racial stratification and explore their potential transformations over time. We will discuss historical and contemporary forms of racial progress and racist progress in the United States at both macro and micro-levels of analysis. We will consider how spaces become imbued with racial meaning, whether and how racial boundaries become rigid or malleable, and how racial domination operates as an organizing feature of U.S. society.

Course Goals:

- Learn foundational and dominant frames for the study of race and ethnicity in sociology
- Assess different methods and approaches used in the study of race and ethnicity
- Examine the cues and mechanisms that shape racialization in the U.S.
- Consider if/how different racialized groups have shaped and been shaped by the U.S. system of racial hierarchy
Assignments and Evaluation:

Grades will be based on 100 points and divided as follows:

- (15 points) Class Participation
- (12 points) Discussion Facilitations
- (33 points) 4 Reaction papers (6 points each) + 6 Weekly Notes (1.5 points each)
- (40 points) Research Paper/Proposal

100 total points

Attendance: Because this is a discussion based seminar, attendance is mandatory. In graduate seminars we must rely on one another to attend class and be prepared for discussion each day. An unexcused absence will result in a final grade reduction of 10 points (1 full letter grade). Excused absences are permitted only in very extreme circumstances, and with proper documentation detailing said circumstance.

Participation in Class Discussions

This course is organized as a seminar. Seminars are most useful and enjoyable when everyone attends class prepared having read ALL assigned readings. Informed questions, comments, and critiques about each assigned reading are expected of all students. This format allows for a deep and critical exploration of ideas. Commentary that does not illustrate knowledge of the assigned readings will not earn points.

Weekly Notes (6)

For 6 classes, students will write at least 1 full page of single spaced notes that cover all of the day’s assigned readings. These notes are informal. There is no correct format or style, but they should incorporate independent thoughts, critiques, and commentary. It is expected that you will develop a style that best allows you to organize your thoughts. The following are some guidelines adopted from Jusionyte (2015) to help get you started:

- Write down the main points, new concepts, important quotes or phrases you would like to remember from the readings, and explain them in your own words;
- If you are puzzled by the text (or its parts) or would like to know more about a certain subject, write down your questions;
- You can list the arguments you disagree with and why;
- Use the material from the text to reflect on your research subject or on another topic that is of interest to you;
- Compare and contrast the text with other readings assigned for the class.

Reading notes are due on Canvas by the start of class each week. You should also bring a print copy to class. You will receive credit if you complete the assignment in a timely manner and engage with all assigned texts.

Reaction Papers: (4)

Students will complete four weekly reaction papers (3-4 pages each) as careful reflections of the week’s readings. Guidelines for these papers are adapted from White (2016) and Embrick (2014). An ideal reaction paper references most/all of the required readings. The paper may take the form of a critique, an insight provoked by the readings that is distinct from the readings’ findings, or some combination of critique and insight. Critiques should not focus primarily on the writing or style, but rather, on the
substantive arguments, soundness of the methodology, and the veracity/robustness of the evidence provided to reach the author's conclusions. Critiques that emphasize errors of omission (i.e., “Author did not focus on "X" topic”) should be careful to consider the relevance of any omitted measure given the paper's stated objectives as well as the length limits of journal articles. A stronger critique of omission would argue that in accordance with previous scholarship on omitted topic “X” (cite sources, detail findings), the author would have likely reached alternative “Y” conclusion.

A strong reaction paper demonstrates a close understanding of the readings and some careful original thinking. The reaction paper does not summarize the arguments and findings of the designated papers and spends little time reporting the papers’ results. Instead, the paper assumes the reader understands all the key results and emphasizes the development of an original argument. Papers will be evaluated according to the strength of the argument and supporting analysis. Reaction papers are limited to 3-4 double-spaced pages. Anything in excess of four pages will not be read. There is no need for a title page. A list of references is necessary for cited references that do not appear on this syllabus (inclusion of external peer-reviewed sources encouraged).

Facilitating Discussions

Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to facilitate class discussions. You will sign up for these days the first day of class. Discussion facilitators are entirely responsible for planning and leading an informed discussion of the readings. This is best accomplished when discussion facilitators provide a list of discussion questions on Canvas several days in advance so that others can consider said questions when reading the material. On some days, there will be two facilitators. On these days you may work in collaboration or independently--each taking charge of specific readings.

Research Paper:

At the beginning of the final class meeting of the semester (at 4:05 p.m. that day), a final paper related to the sociology of race and ethnicity will be due. This paper can be either (1) a work of original empirical social scientific research; or (2) an empirical research proposal. Students must clear their topic with me in person by the end of Week 10. There is no formal page limit, but papers are typically between 16-25 pages in length. Empirical research proposals should specify the empirical object of study and indicate, with as much specificity as possible, how one would go about studying it, the kinds of sources to be used, the kinds of cases one would select, or the specific dataset and variables to be used, and, in general, how one would deploy ideas or methods covered in this course when addressing that empirical problem. The goal should be to have a project that will be ready for presentation at a conference, and/or a paper that will eventually be suitable for publication. This might also serve as the basis for an MA thesis, or a chapter of a dissertation.

Grading:

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Students Requiring Accommodations
Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Course Feedback
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/.

UF Honor Code
UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Aug 24: (Week 1) Introduction to the Course


Aug 31: (Week 2) Racial Formations


Sep 7: (Week 3) Constructing Identities, Classifications, and Meanings


Sep 14 (Week 4) Disentangling Race/Ethnicity Paradigms


Sep 21 (Week 5) (Re)Constructions of the U.S. Racial Hierarchy?


Sep 28 (Week 6) White Racism and White Antiracism


Oct 5 (Week 7) The Limited Bounds of Whiteness


Oct 12: (Week 8) Racial Ideologies


Oct 19: (Week 9) Interlocked Webs of Racial Segregation and Stratification


Oct 26: (Week 10) Race and Education


Nov 2: (Week 11) CLASS CANCELED (AHS Conference)

Nov 9: (Week 12) The Injustice System


Nov 16: (Week 13) Race and Space


Nov 23: (Week 14) THANKSGIVING BREAK

Nov 30: (Week 15) Pathways Forward in Academia and Beyond: Theory, Coalitions, and Policies


