SYA 3700: Sociology of Race and Racism
University of Florida
Spring 2023

Meeting time Tuesdays, 11:45 AM -1:40 PM; Thursdays, 12:50 PM - 1:40 PM

Place: Weil 0238

Instructor: AJ Alvero, aalvero@ufl.edu

Office/Hours: T/Th, 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM / Turlington Hall 3353

Course website: https://elearning.ufl.edu (Canvas)

Overview:

Human societies have always had systems of labels, categories, and hierarchies that relate to an individual's heritage. These labels have been used in reference to one's culture, legal status (ie. citizenship), language, and physical presentation; sometimes these differences are even imagined or presumed given some other piece of information about a person. In modern times, these categories are usually called "race" and/or "ethnicity". This class provides a sociological overview of these fundamental concepts from a particularly modern perspective. Specifically, we will complement foundational readings and theories about race and society with current issues regarding modern digital infrastructure. This includes issues pertaining to race and the internet, modern genetic testing technology, and the increased use of AI in important social processes. Beyond the basic questions about what race "is" and "does", we will also learn about the implicit and explicit ways that racism (ideologies of racial hierarchies) structure society and organizations. Students interested in race and ethnicity along with the ways that modern technology shapes this particular dimension of society (and is shaped by it) will find this class useful and interesting.

Course Objectives

After taking this class, students will be able to:

-- Analyze, critique and interpret sociological scientific literature

-- Effectively communicate the interplay between race/ethnicity and society

-- Identify, explain and apply basic issues and debates the relationships between modern digital technology and race/ethnicity

Readings:

Book: Benjamin, Ruha. *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. John Wiley & Sons, 2019.

With the exception of physical copies of the book, all of the reading materials for the class will be made available as PDFs on Canvas. I will scan PDFs of the readings from the book in a timely manner. The readings comprise a mix of academic articles presenting theories and/or empirical evidence for social patterning by race/racism; popular media in the form of blog-posts, op-eds, and newspaper articles; and some forms of interactive media and visual representations of race and racism.

The course materials will therefore prepare students to engage with difficult conversations about race and racism, primarily in the US context.

General Expectations

Come on time, attend every class, complete all readings, share in the presentation of specific readings, submit every written assignment on time, and participate actively throughout the class sessions. Class discussions and activities will assume that students completed the assigned readings.

Assignments

Bi-weekly writing assignments and a small group project.

<u>**Bi-weekly assignments:**</u>

Bi-weekly written work (5 in total) due every other Friday for most of the term. Each writing assignment can focus on two or more readings for the respective week(s). Readings must be from the current and/or previous week. Each written piece should be 3-4 pages, double spaced. If you include any references outside the class syllabus, please include the full reference in Chicago format on a separate page; references to the readings on the syllabus do not require a full reference/citation. The writing assignments will be graded based on completion; following the format described below; engagement with the course materials; and the depth of the writing.

- **60% of the words: Engaging the primary argument(s) or point(s) from the readings.** This can take several different forms: agreeing or disagreeing with the main argument/point/finding/etc. and explaining why; comparing and contrasting

the key ideas relative to other/prior readings; etc. Importantly, this also includes defining what the primary ideas/arguments are.
- **40% of the words: Extending the argument(s) or point(s) from the readings**. This is your chance to consider the implications of the readings in other contexts. This can be done by connecting the readings key ideas with your own experiences with race/racism, other sociological studies, other trends in race/racism in the US, etc. This will require some independent research but is an opportunity to make the readings relevant to your ideas and interests in the ways we identify ethnoracially.

Due dates for writing assignments:
09/03
09/17
10/01
10/15
10/29

Late policy: Aside from any approved extensions by me, assignments must be submitted by each date at 11:59PM. Assignments submitted after will be docked 10% for each late day (excluding weekends) up to 50%.

In other words, since each assignment is due on [Sunday] night, you will have until the following [Sunday] night to submit the assignment for partial credit.

If you ever foresee any issue or obstacle towards submitting your assignment on time, your default move should always be to contact me.

Final project:

In lieu of a final paper, we will instead have research poster presentations that will be presented during the final class sessions. The final project will be done in groups of two. Each project will comprise independent research on an issue, study, or theory related to the class. Topics will be selected by students and approved by me several weeks before the presentations.

There are two primary deliverables for this final project:

1. The actual research poster (including a short in-class presentation)
2. A written report providing additional information, details, and reference list

To ensure that each member of each group contributes equally to the project, there will be several check-in assignments leading up to the final submissions. These check in assignments will also require students to connect their final project to weekly readings. This will also break up the final assignment into smaller, more manageable chunks that

students will be able to piece together for the final submission. More details about this will be discussed in class.

The poster will be made digitally so we can present them in class. I am agnostic about which software to use, but I do prefer that the format of the poster is simple and follows the style described here: https://convention.apa.org/blog/rethinking-the-science-poster

The content of the posters should reflect original, independent research that accomplishes the following:

- Identify an issue related to race/racism: could be something specific, like a high profile court case, or some kind of norm shift, such as the increased presence of racially biased technology
- Connect an issue to readings/class: how might the issue be framed/understood through the lens of what everyone in the class has read?
- Describe the stakes and outcomes: who stands to gain/lose what? How do these relate to equity and what could be changed?
- Key takeaways and looking ahead: who/what/when/where/why might this issue manifest elsewhere

Students will be given **five minutes** to present their posters. The brief report will provide additional details as well as references/citations and should be 3 pages, double spaced. More details will be discussed in class, and any other questions about the final project should be directed to me.

Grading

A 93+, A- 90-92, B+ 88-89, B 83-87, B- 80-82, C+ 78-79, C 73-77, C- 70-72, D+ 68-69, D 63-67, D- 60-62, F 59 and lower

Evaluation

Bi-weekly writing assignments: 50%

Final project: 35%

Attendance and Participation: 15%

Attendance

As noted above, attendance and participation is worth 15% of your final grade. Missing class due to illness, emergencies, etc. is permitted **as long as you contact me ahead**

of time. Student-athletes competing as part of official university activities are also excused but likewise must coordinate with me ahead of time.

For more information see [UF's Attendance Policies](#).

Academic Integrity

UF students are bound by [The Honor Pledge](#):

"We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty 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](#) specifies specific behaviors which violate this code along with respective sanctions.

Academic Accommodations

"Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the [Disability Resource Center](#) (352-392-8565) 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.

Student Evaluation and Feedback

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

Course Schedule (readings will be discussed in order presented on syllabus)
* Bi-weekly writing assignment due on respective Sunday

Note: Some of the course materials will cover sensitive and politically charged topics.

Week 1 (Aug 24) and Week 2* (Aug 29 & Aug 31)
- ***No office hours on Aug 31***
- Race After Technology: Preface, Introduction
- Tanya Golash-Boza: A Critical and Comprehensive Sociological Theory of Race and Racism
- WEB DuBois: The Study of the Negro Problems

Week 3 (Sept 5 & 7)
- Axios: "U.S. government considers changing how it asks about Latinos' race" ion
- Dina Okamoto & G. Cristina Mora: Panethnicity
- Nikki Khanna: Multiracial Americans: Racial identity choices and implications for the collection of race data

Week 4* (Sept 12 & 14)
- Ann Morning: And you thought we had moved beyond all that: biological race returns to the social sciences
- Robbee Wedow, Daphne O Martschenko, & Sam Trejo: Scientists must consider the risk of racist misappropriation of research
- David Gillborn: Softly, softly: genetics, intelligence and the hidden racism of the new geneism

Week 5 (Sept 19 & 21)
- Joy Buolamwini & Timnit Gebru: Gender Shades: Intersectional Accuracy Disparities in Commercial Gender Classification
- Race after Technology: pages 56-78
- NYT Opinion: Artificial Intelligence's White Guy Problem

Week 6* (Sept 26 & 28)
- Education Week: The Evolution of the Anti-CRT Movement: A Timeline
- Grace Kao & Jennifer Thompson: Racial and Ethnic Stratification in Educational Achievement and Attainment
- SCOTUS Blog Opinion: Supreme Court strikes down affirmative action programs in college admissions

Week 7 (Oct 3 & 5)
- *Note: no classes October 6th & 7th for homecoming.*
- Latanya Sweeney: Discrimination in Online Ad Delivery: Google ads, black names and white names, racial discrimination, and click advertising
- NYT Opinion: We Need Laws to Take On Racism and Sexism in Hiring Technology

- Sareeta Amrute: Bored Techies Being Casually Racist: Race as Algorithm

Week 8* (Oct 10 & 12)
- Ian Kennedy et al.: Racialized Discourse in Seattle Rental Ad Texts
- Kailey White, Forrest Stuart, & Shannon L. Morrissey: Whose Lives Matter? Race, Space, and the Devaluation of Homicide Victims in Minority Communities
- NPR: Interactive Redlining Map Zooms In On America's History Of Discrimination

Week 9 (Oct 17 & 19)
- Race after Technology: 85-100
- Koenecke et al.: Racial disparities in automated speech recognition
- The Guardian: The AI startup erasing call center worker accents: is it fighting bias – or perpetuating it?

Week 10* (Oct 24 & 26)
- Bryce Dietrich & Melissa Sands: Seeing racial avoidance on New York City streets
- Eduardo Bonilla-Silva: The Linguistics of Color Blind Racism: How to Talk Nasty about Blacks without Sounding "Racist"
- Race After Technology: 105-137

Week 11 (Oct 31 & Nov 2)
- Victory Ray: A Theory of Racialized Organizations
- Hajar Yazdiha: Racialized Organizations in Racialized Space: How Socio-spatial Divisions Activate Symbolic Boundaries in a Charter School and a Public School
- Eduardo Bonilla-Silva: Racism without Racists Chapter 2 ("The Central Frames of Color-Blind Racism")

Week 12 (Nov 7 & 9)
- *Note: No class November 10 for Veterans Day (observed)*
- Sabrina Razack & Janelle Joseph: Misogynoir in women's sport media: race, nation, and diaspora in the representation of Naomi Osaka
- Chris Knoester & Carter Rockhill: Multiculturalism and Antiracism in Sports? U.S. Public Opinions about Native American Team Names and Mascots and the Use of Hijabs in Sports
- The Ringer: The Legacy of Linsanity, 10 Years Later

Week 13 (Nov 14 & 16)
- Ziad Obermeyer et al.: Dissecting racial bias in an algorithm used to manage the health of populations

- Ayah Nuriddin, Graham Mooney, & Alexandre I R White: Reckoning with histories of medical racism and violence in the USA
- Race After Technology: 145-163

Week 14 (Nov 21)
- *Note: No class on November 23 for Thanksgiving*
- Race after Technology: 167-196
- Osagie K. Obasogie: Do Blind People See Race? Social, Legal, and Theoretical Considerations
- MIT Technology Review: How our data encodes systematic racism

Week 15 (Nov 28 & 30)
- Tuesday: Course wrap up and looking ahead. Class time to work on final projects, I will be present to help.
- **Research poster presentations begin Thurs, Nov. 30**
- **Research project reports due**

Week 16 (Dec 5)
- **Research poster presentations**
- **Final day of class: Tues, December 5**

I reserve the right to make small, reasonable alterations to the syllabus as we progress through the semester. Making changes to a course in this way is a common practice and will be communicated to students in a timely manner.