

AFA 4135/SYA 4930: Theories of Black America (Science, Technology & Race)

Spring 2024

Instructor: Kevin C. Winstead, Ph.D.

Location: WEIM 1094

Meeting Times: M,W,F | Period 5 (11:45 AM - 12:35 PM)

Instructor information

Instructor

Kevin C. Winstead

Email

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Office location & hours

1012 Turlington Hall
2:00 pm-3:00 pm Tues Thurs
<https://cal.com/kcwins>

Description

“Examines specific historical and contemporary construction of race, within the prevailing scientific theories and ideologies in order to determine the role played by "race" in scientific and technological culture”

This course takes a critical look at the ways race and gender shape the uses and design of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Beginning from the understanding that ICTs have become part of our social infrastructure, the readings for this course have been selected to encourage reflection on how information technologies are mediated by culture; that is, how everyday digital interactions are configured or approached by racial groups, with men, and with women.

Using prominent texts of Black Information Technology, this course strengthens analytical skills by asking you to interrogate the assumptions behind technology’s promises of efficiency, progress, and post-racialism – what are the norms and values embodied within the artifacts we use every day?

Although the readings and our discussions will focus mainly on the Internet, it is important to remember that information technology is much more than simply the assemblage of hardware, software, practices, and people that make up our experience of the Internet.

Objectives

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and analyze the key elements, biases, and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

These general education objectives will be accomplished by:

1. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of racialized groups with technology, including their social, cultural, political, and economic relationships and the ways in which they use technology for joy and resistance.
2. Examine the cultural construction of race in science, technology, and in everyday life.
3. Critically review the literature concerning debates of race, technology, and science
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the major shifts in research approaches to technology, science & identity over time.
5. Examine how science/tech/engineering construct racial difference and how the existence of racial difference influenced the construction of scientific knowledge. The technology of race.
6. Plan, research, and complete a substantive project that contributes to a comparative analysis of some aspect of social movement media, grounded in a concrete movement case and linked to the social movement studies literature. Final projects may take the form of a paper and / or a research tool.

General Information

Class Format and Expectations

The class will be a combination of semi-structured lectures, discussions based on the assigned readings, and learning activities. Dialogue is my preferred mode of instruction, so interactions (class or online) between you, me, and your classmates are the key to getting a good grade.

As a student in this class, you are expected to:

- Bring an open mind and critical perspective to the course materials and class discussions (ASK QUESTIONS)
- Be thoughtful and Civil to classmates and instructor.
- Attend Class: Attendance is not optional
- read the assigned readings BEFORE class, not during
- Food is permitted. Bring snacks if needed.
- Turn in all assignments
- Check SLACK/CANVAS/PERUSALL regularly.
- post required feedback to the class SLACK by the agreed-upon deadline
- Complete assignments in a timely fashion

Accessibility and Special Needs

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Please note that I am a mandated reporter and am legally obligated to report any sexual violence reported to me. The University of Florida offers confidential support for sexual or relationship violence: <https://police.ufl.edu/divisions/behavioral-services/office-of-victim-services/resources-for-victims/>

University of Florida 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 (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) 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.

UF Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website.

University Police Department: Visit U.F. Police Department website or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

U.F. Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-

733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road,

Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the U.F. Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: Contact the U.F. Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via email at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.

On-Line Students Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.

Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 302 Tigert Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://gatorevals.aa.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://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/>.

Student Assignments & Grading

Reading Discussion Leader	20%
Portfolio – Reading Reflections and Responses	40%
Perusall Reading & Annotations	30%
SLACK Discussion Responses	10%

Requirements and Evaluation

Please note that we will NOT have weekly course meetings in this class. We will have optional office hours where you can join me to ask questions or clarifications related to any assignments, readings, etc. I have recorded all my lectures and posted them on Canvas (Or SLACK). You will need to do the following things each week in this order:

1. Complete the reading assignment and notes for the week on Perusall;
2. Watch the lecture(s) posted for the week;
3. Participate in the weekly discussions on Slack;
4. Submit any paper assignments/portfolios/homework (if due).

Discussion Leader PowerPoint & Discussion Questions

You are required to lead a discussion on a reading of your choice. There are multiple aspects to this assignment:

1. You must produce a PowerPoint summarizing the article's key arguments, concepts, and debates. The presentation must include background information about the author and the context within which the article is written.
2. You must provide an analysis of the arguments made in your assigned reading.
3. You must also provide at least THREE discussion questions (see below) with your analysis.
 - a. Post your analysis and discussion questions to the Slack Channel of the assigned week for the appropriate reading.
 - b. Your discussion question can/should be based on current (or recently completed) readings.

Discussion Responses

You must also ANSWER your question using your experiences, knowledge of, or reactions to the subject matter of the reading.

Participation online can include:

- Posting questions or responding to other students' forum postings
- Providing examples and counter-examples
- Performing scholarly, constructive criticism of the assigned reading
- Proposing additional literature, websites or resources

- Sharing current news items and media reports that are relevant to class topics

The best comments will respond actively to the topic of discussion, or extend discussions from section or even lecture. Thread-jacking or trolling will not be tolerated and will result in a grade reduction.

Portfolio

Periodically, we will have portfolio check-ins. You will be required to respond to the three reading prompts. The prompts will require you to understand the arguments being made and their contribution to the field or society. Any assigned multimedia can be used to replace reading.

Portfolio Rubric

Category	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Argument (25%)	The paper presents a clear and well-developed argument that is original, complex, and nuanced. The argument is supported throughout the paper and shows a sophisticated understanding of the historical topic.	The paper presents a clear argument that is well-developed and mostly original. The argument is supported throughout the paper and shows a good understanding of the historical topic.	The paper presents an argument that is somewhat clear and developed. The argument may lack originality or nuance and may not be fully supported throughout the paper.	The paper presents an argument that is unclear or underdeveloped, lacking originality, nuance, or support throughout the paper.
Evidence and Sources (25%)	The paper provides substantial and relevant evidence from a variety of credible primary and secondary sources that effectively support the argument. The author demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the sources and their relevance to the argument.	The paper provides relevant evidence from primary and secondary sources that mostly support the argument. The author demonstrates a good understanding of the sources and their relevance to the argument.	The paper provides some evidence from primary and secondary sources that may not be fully relevant or effective in supporting the argument. The author may not fully demonstrate an understanding of the sources and their relevance to the argument.	The paper provides little or no evidence from primary and secondary sources or uses sources that are not credible or relevant to the argument. The author does not demonstrate an understanding of the sources and their relevance to the argument.
Citations (15%)	The paper uses proper citation style consistently and accurately throughout the paper, including both in-text citations and a works cited page. All sources are properly cited and referenced.	The paper uses proper citation style mostly consistently and accurately throughout the paper, including both in-text citations and a works cited page. Most sources are properly cited and referenced.	The paper may have some inconsistencies or inaccuracies in citation style or missing citations for some sources.	The paper has significant inconsistencies or inaccuracies in citation style or missing citations for many sources.
Organization (15%)	The paper has a clear and logical structure that is easy to follow and supports the	The paper has a mostly clear and logical structure that supports the	The paper has a somewhat unclear or illogical structure that does not fully support	The paper has an unclear or illogical structure that does not support the argument.

	argument. Each paragraph supports the thesis and follows a clear organizational pattern.	argument. Some paragraphs may not support the thesis or may lack a clear organizational pattern.	the argument. Paragraphs may not follow a clear organizational pattern or may not support the thesis.	Paragraphs do not follow a clear organizational pattern and do not support the thesis.
Clarity and Style (20%)	The paper is well-written, clear, and concise with a consistent and appropriate tone for the audience and purpose. The language is sophisticated and effective, and the paper has few or no errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.	The paper is mostly well-written, clear, and concise with an appropriate tone for the audience and purpose. The language is mostly effective, and the paper has minor errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.	The paper may have some clarity or style issues, including unclear or awkward phrasing, inappropriate tone, or numerous errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.	The paper has significant clarity or style issues, including unclear or awkward phrasing, inappropriate tone, or numerous errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Reading	Exercises
Week 1	Introduction to the Course		1) Syllabus Exam
	Jan 8 th		2) Perusall SignUp
	Jan 10 th	Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant. 2014. <i>Racial Formation in the United States</i> . 3rd ed. London, England: Routledge. (Introduction)	3) Slack SignUp
	Jan 12 th	<u>Brown, Melissa. "The Matrix of Domination and the Four Domains of Power." <i>Black Feminisms, 2020</i>, https://blackfeminisms.com/matrix/. Accessed 5 Jan. 2024.</u>	
Week 2	Culture of Technology		
	Jan 15 th	MLK Holiday	
	Jan 17 th	<u>Stepan, Nancy Leys, and Sander L. Gilman. "Appropriating the Idioms of Science: The Rejection of Scientific Racism." <i>The "Racial" Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future</i>, edited by Sandra Harding, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2007, pp. 170–188.</u>	
	Jan 19 th	Pacey, Arnold. "Technology: Practice and Culture." <i>The Culture of Technology</i> , MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1983, pp. 1–12.	
Week 3	Race, Tech, and Language		
	Jan 22 nd	Nakamura, Lisa. 2023. "Glitch Racism: Networks as Actors within Vernacular Internet Theory." <i>Culture Digitally</i> . December 10, 2023. https://culturedigitally.org/2013/12/glitch-racism-networks-as-actors-within-vernacular-internet-theory/ .	
	Jan 24 th	Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud_ African Americans, American Artifactual Culture, and Black Vernacular Technological Creativity	
	Jan 26 th		André Brock, On Race and Technoculture, Microsoft Research Lecture Series, 23 Nov. 2021, https://youtu.be/XIE4MYNF72k?si=KIG0hFtHhvWt22ue .
Week 4	The Technology of Sugar		
	Jan 29 th	Innovations in Sugar-Cane Mil Technology in	

		Jamaica	
	Jan 31 st	Sidney W. Mintz - Sweetness and Power_ The Place of Sugar in Modern History-Penguin Books (1985)	
	Feb 2 nd		<p>Sugar & Slavery: The Building Blocks of Bristol's 1% Empires of Dirt, Vice, https://youtu.be/Z4GtcMCTm_4?si=hhsvo1LyKIXhKyal</p> <p>DISCOVERED! 18th Century SUGAR Production ALIVE In Rural Jamaica Sugar Cane Farming In Jamaica https://youtu.be/xHNFdry_kp_g?si=L4L6BEYYFj0ZlvB4</p> <p>'Poisoning the well' MSNBC https://youtu.be/699Hj46NEDU?si=OXCQI8Qm7Wgy8FOz</p>
Week 5	Algorithms of Oppression		
	Feb 5 th	Noble, Safiya Umoja. "A Society Searching." Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2018, pp. 15–63.	
	Feb 7 th		
	Feb 9 th	Noble, Safiya Umoja. "Searching for Black Girls." Algorithms of Oppression How Search Engines Reinforce Racism, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2018, pp. 15–63.	
Week 6	Algorithms of Oppression WK 2		
	Feb 12 th	Noble, Safiya Umoja. "Searching for People and Communities." Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism, New Yorkk University Press, New York, NY, 2018, pp. 110-119	
	Feb 14 th		
	Feb 16 th	Noble, Safiya Umoja. "Searching for Protections from Search Engines." Algorithms of Oppression How Search Engines Reinforce Racism, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2018, pp. 119–133	
Week 7	Algorithms of Oppression WK 3		
	Feb 19 th	Noble, Safiya Umoja. "The Future of Knowledge in the Public" Algorithms of Oppression How Search	

		Engines Reinforce Racism, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2018, pp. 134–153	
	Feb 21st		
	Feb 23 rd	Noble, Safiya Umoja. “The Future of Information Culture” Algorithms of Oppression How Search Engines Reinforce Racism, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2018, pp. 153–170	
Week 8	Digital Black Feminism		
	Feb 26 th	Steele, Catherine Knight. “A History of Black Women and Technology, or Badges of Oppression and Positions of Strength” Digital Black Feminism, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2021, pp 21-40	
	Feb 28 th		
	Mar 1 st	Steele, Catherine Knight. “Black Feminist Technoculture, or the Virtual Beauty Shop” Digital Black Feminism, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2021, pp 41-64	
Week 9	Digital Black Feminism WK 2		
	Mar 4 th	Steele, Catherine Knight. “Principles for a Digital Black Feminism, or Blogging While Black” Digital Black Feminism, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2021, pp 65-94	
	Mar 6 th		
	Mar 8 th	Steele, Catherine Knight. “Digital Black Feminist Praxis, or Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing” Digital Black Feminism, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2021, pp 95-122	
Week 10	Spring Break Mar 11 th – 15 th		
Week 11	Digital Black Feminism WK 3		
	Mar 11 th	Steele, Catherine Knight. “Digital Black Feminism as a Product, or ‘It’s Funny How Money Change a Situation’” Digital Black Feminism, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2021, pp 123-148	
	Mar 13 th		
	Mar 15 th	Steele, Catherine Knight. “Conclusion: A Digital Black Feminist Future” Digital Black Feminism, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2021, pp 149 - 158	
Week 12	Distributed Blackness		
	Mar 18 th	Brock, André L. “Introduction.” Distributed	

		Blackness: African American Cybercultures, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2020, pp. 1–16.	
	Mar 20 th		
	Mar 22 nd	Brock, André L. “Distributing Blackness: Ayo Technology! Texts, Identities, and Blackness.” Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2020, pp. 17-37.	
Week 13	Distributed Blackness		
	Mar 25 th –	Brock, André L. “Information Inspirations: The Web Browser as Racial Technology.” Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2020, pp. 38–78.	
	Mar 27 th		
	Mar 29 th	Brock, André L. “‘The Black Purposes of Space Travel’: Back Twitter as Technoculture.” Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2020, pp. 79–124.	
Week 14	Distributed Blackness		
	Apr 1 st	Brock, André L. “Black Online Discourse, Part 1: Ratchetry and Racism.” Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2020, pp. 125–170.	
	Apr 3 rd		
	Apr 5 th	Brock, André L. “Black Online Discourse, Part 2: Respectability.” Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2020, pp. 171–209.	
Week 15	Distributed Blackness		
	Apr 15 th	Brock, André L. “Making a Way out of No Way: Black Cyberculture and the Black Technocultural Matrix.” Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures, New York University Press, New York, NY, 2020, pp. 210–242.	
	Apr 17 th		
	Apr 19 th	Q and A with Andre Brock	
Week 16	AI and Blackness		
	Apr 22 nd	Technoskepticism AI	

	Apr 24 th	Conversation with Rianna Walcott	
Final Exam	May 3 rd	TBA	