

**AAAS 595 Theorizing Race**  
**UH 086**  
**MW 1:30-3:18**

***Instructor Information:***

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***Office Hours: MW 3:30 – 4:30 and by appointment***

***Course Description:***

What is race? Most people assume that they understand the meaning of the word “race,” but the idea of race is highly contentious and many debates surrounding this concept have affected the way that nations, education policy, scientific discourses, and social relationships have been shaped. In this course, we shall look at influential thinkers from the enlightenment to the present in order to examine foundational narratives that have shaped thinking in the West about racial identity. We will examine texts written by those who link race to intellectual aptitude and behavior and look at the ways that understandings of race have shaped laws throughout the world. We will also read the work of scholars and writers who have explored the intersections between race, gender, sexuality, genetics, and politics. *Theorizing Race* is an interdisciplinary course that includes literature, sociology, philosophy, ethnic studies, and science studies.

While this is an interdisciplinary course, it is housed in African-American and African Studies and the primary focus of the course will be on racial discourses affecting black bodies and the responses black thinkers have made to discussions about black identity. However, many of the texts we read are not from Black Studies. This course is not exclusively about people of African descent, and every topic covered in the course will be useful in discussing topics outside of African-American and African Studies. Students are encouraged to bring their varied intellectual interests to class discussions.

All participants in this class should also be prepared to take on very difficult material--both emotionally and conceptually. No student should presume that the presence of a text on the syllabus means that the instructor embraces the content. Many of the texts are included because they have been important in the history of theorizing race in the West. Some of the texts may incite anger and disgust, some writings that trouble you may be valued by a classmate. Members of the class must be mature enough to discuss the controversial and troubling nature of some of the material and intellectual differences in the classroom. All participants in the seminar will demonstrate their respect by listening to all arguments and responding with thoughtful replies.

We all must keep in mind that the class is about “theory,” and that the language that theorists use is often very difficult. As a group with a common purpose, we will struggle

with the material together. We will master the content of the texts and learn how to concisely articulate the arguments of the texts and use these texts to discuss topics that are meaningful to us. As we struggle, we will always remember that every member in the classroom is also theorizing—we are all intellectuals participating in discussions that have been taking place long before us and will continue long after we are gone.

### ***Required Texts:***

Course Pack from Zip Notes

Octavia Butler *Dawn*

Aime Cesaire *Discourse on Colonialism*

Frantz Fanon *Black Skin, White Masks*

George Schuyler *Black No More*

(*Dawn*, *Discourse on Colonialism*, and *Black Skin, White Masks* may be available at greater discounts at [bookfinder.com](http://bookfinder.com) or from a used vendor on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).)

### ***Primary Course Objectives:***

1. The participants in this seminar will become familiar with important terms, histories, and thinkers who have influenced discourses around race.
2. The participants in this seminar will actively participate in class discussions and develop greater facility in discussing the issues related to conflicts about racial identity.
3. The participants in this seminar will develop their own informed positions on these debates and issues and be able to articulate their arguments in writing.

### ***Course Requirements:***

Paper 1 (3-5 Pages)	20%
Presentation	10%
Presentation Paper (4-5 pages)	20%
Final Paper (7-8 pages)	30%
Attendance and Participation	10%
Short Assignments	10%

### ***Papers***

*Paper 1:* The first paper in this course is your extended answer to the question, “What is race?” Students will demonstrate their ability to synthesize the material read thus far and also use an example from the news, history, or a fictional narrative to demonstrate how race functions. A handout outlines the instructions for this assignment.

*Presentation Paper:* The paper related to your presentation is due **one week** after your class presentation. This deadline is flexible if the presentation paper deadline is close to the deadline for Paper 1. With this assignment students will demonstrate their ability to

critique a critical essay and use it to discuss another text. A handout outlines the instructions for this assignment.

*Final Paper:* Both of the prior writing assignments are preparation for the final paper. The final paper topic is open. The only guidelines are that students relate the topic to theories of race and ethnicity, and use **2 scholarly sources** that were not used in class. **All students must meet with Professor Wanzo and discuss their paper topics.** Three short assignments--- an annotated bibliography, an introductory paragraph, and an outline--- will aid students in completing this assignment.

### ***Presentation:***

Students will select a presentation topic. Presenters will read the suggested essay for that topic and deliver a 10-15 minute presentation on the assigned day. In their presentations: students must:

1. successfully communicate the thesis and content of the essay
2. relate the essay to class reading(s)
3. provide a handout and/or visual aid
4. produce at least 3 questions, given the to the professor at the beginning of class, to prompt class discussion.

This is your chance to teach the class on a topic, and students are encouraged to be creative. Students who wish to do presentations for the last three class meetings are encouraged to turn in their papers early.

### ***Short Assignments:***

A limited number of short assignments will be completed over the course of the quarter--- 3 of which are designed to help you with writing the final paper. Other assignments will be given throughout the quarter as needed to help facilitate discussion or understanding of a class topic.

### ***Policies and Procedures***

#### **Attendance and Participation:**

I expect you to attend every class. After two **unexcused** absences (a doctor's note, death in the family, or other emergency constitutes an excuse), your grade will be dropped half of a letter grade. I also expect you to be on time. If you are tardy three times I will count that as an absence. If you have some problem getting to class from your previous class or work, please discuss this with me.

Attendance constitutes part of your participation grade. Being present is not enough to earn full credit for participation. Contributing to class discussion is a must as a course is only as good as its members and the community built in the classroom.

### On Writing:

Learning how to write is a continuous exercise. As you work on your writing for this course, I encourage you to come to me for help. You are also fortunate to have a Writing Center at OSU that aids students of all skill levels. Please take advantage of the free tutoring if you feel the need. The OSU Writing Center is located in 475 Mendenhall Laboratory, on the south end of the oval. Their phone number is 688-4291, and their website is [cstw.ohio-state.edu/writing\\_center/index.htm](http://cstw.ohio-state.edu/writing_center/index.htm).

### Plagiarism:

The following is my department's expanded statement of The Ohio State University's policy on plagiarism:

As defined by University Rule 3335-31-02, plagiarism is "the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas." Plagiarism is one of the most serious offenses that can be committed in an academic community; as such, it is the obligation of this department and its instructors to report all cases of suspected plagiarism to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. After the report is filed, a hearing takes place and if the student is found guilty, the possible punishment ranges from failing the class to suspension or expulsion from the university. Although the existence of the Internet makes it relatively easy to plagiarize, it also makes it even easier for instructors to find evidence of plagiarism. It is obvious to most teachers when a student turns in works that is not his or her own and plagiarism search engines make documenting the offense very simple. You should always cite your sources (I can help you with this if you are unfamiliar with proper styles of documentation). Always ask questions before you turn in an assignment if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism. Always see your TA or professor if you are having difficulty with an assignment. To preserve the integrity of OSU as an institution of higher learning, to maintain your own integrity, and to avoid jeopardizing your future, **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!**

### *Reading Schedule:*

(Except for the required books, all class readings are in the course-pack unless otherwise indicated. All presentation essays are on reserve unless otherwise indicated.)

1/5 M Course Introduction and *Space Traders* from *Cosmic Slop*

#### **"I know it when I see it": Defining race and ethnicity**

1/7 W Werner Sollors "Beyond Ethnicity"  
Michael Omi and Howard Winant "Racial Formation" (**ON RESERVE**)  
Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "The Metalanguage of Race" 251-258  
Recommended: *All* of "The Metalanguage of Race"; Angel R. Oquendo  
"Re-Imagining the Latino/a Race"

**No history and no future? Foundational theories in Race, Nation, and Citizenship**

1/12 M Hume, "Of National Characters" from *Race and the Enlightenment* 29-33;  
Thomas Jefferson, excerpt from *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 182-199; Kant, "On  
National Characteristics" 49-58

Presentation AND Recommended: Adolf Hitler "Nation and Race" (CP)

1/14 W Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World  
History* 173-190; W.E.B. Dubois, "The Conservation of Races" in *The Souls of Black  
Folk* (Bedford Edition)

Presentation: Mary Lefkowitz, "Not Out of Africa" and Martin Bernal "A  
Reply to 'Not Out of Africa'"

1/19 M Martin Luther King Holiday--No Class

**"What do you mean 'we,' white man?": Theories of Whiteness**

1/21 W Richard Dyer "The Matter of Whiteness" from *White* 1-40;  
Peggy McIntosh "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" from *Race: an  
anthology in the first person* 120-126

Recommended AND Presentation: David Roediger and James Barrett  
"Inbetween peoples: race, nationality, and the 'new immigrant' working class"

**Do you think Michael Jackson read this?**

1/26 M *Black No More*

Presentation: "Jamie L. Wacks "Reading Race, Rhetoric, and the Female  
Body in the Rhineland Case"

1/28 W *Black No More*

Presentation: Excerpts from *Composition in Black and White: The Life of  
Philippa Schuyler*

Possible Film Showing: *Western Eyes*

1/29 F **First Paper Due**

**Genetics or Social Construction?: Race, Biology, and IQ**

2/2 M Excerpts from *The Mismeasure of Man*

2/4 W *The Bell Curve*, pgs 1-24; 269-315 ; 509-552

Presentation: Responses to *The Bell Curve*

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*Mid-Term Evaluations*

**Is Justice Blind? If true, would that be a good thing?: Race and the Law**

2/9 M Cheryl Wall "Whiteness as Property," Patricia Williams "On Being the Object of Property"

Presentation: Patricia Williams "The Pain of Word Bondage"

2/11 W Neil Gotanda "A Critique of 'Our Constitution is Color-Blind'" 257-275  
Mari Matsuda "Looking to the Bottom: Critical Legal Studies and Reparations"  
63-79

Presentation: Charles Mills "Overview" from *The Racial Contract*

2/13 F **Students must have discussed final paper topic with instructor by this date.**

**Nobody knows the trouble I've seen: Race and the Psyche**

2/16 M *Black Skin, White Masks*

Film Viewing: *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask*

Presentation: Selection from Fanon anthology on reserve

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2/18 W *Black Skins, White Masks*

Recommended AND Presentation: Anne Anlin Cheng "The Melancholy of Race"\* (very difficult material—2 presenters possible)

2/20 F **Annotated Bibliography of 2 sources for Final Paper topic due by 4:00 p.m.**

**What, to the Negro, is the western flag?: Race and Nation**

2/23 M Film: *Sugar Cane Alley*

2/25 W Aime Cesaire *Discourse on Colonialism*

Recommended AND Presentation: Edward Said "Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental"

2/27 F **Introduction due by 4:00 p.m.**

3/1 M Chandra T. Mohanty "Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism" (**ON RESERVE**); Homi K. Bhabha "Of Mimicry and Man" from *The Location of Culture* 85-92

Presentation: Stuart Hall "New Ethnicities"

**Born to be Bad?: Race and Genetics**

3/3 W *Dawn*

Presentation: Priscilla Wald "Future Perfect: Grammar, Genes, and Geography"

**3/5 F Sentence Outline due by 4:00 p.m.**

3/8 M *Dawn*

Presentation: Robyn Wiegman "Intimate Publics: Race, Property, and Personhood"\* (very difficult material—2 presenters possible) (presentation paper due by 3/12)

3/10 W *Dawn*

Presentation: Nancy Jesser: "Blood, genes, and Gender in Octavia Butler's *Kindred* and *Dawn*" (presentation paper due by 3/12)

**Final Paper due Monday March 15<sup>th</sup> by 3:00 p.m.**