

SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY
Department of Sociology

SOC 227
Race in American Society
Summer II, 1994

Professor James Hannon
Sawyer 1046 (573-8491)
Office hours: T, Th 4-5 and by appointment

"If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground....Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

--Frederick Douglass

"The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,--the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea."

--W.E.B. DuBois

"All dreamers and sleepwalkers must pay the price, and even the invisible victim is responsible for the fate of all."

--Ralph Ellison

"The moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

--Martin Luther King Jr.

"Man, like all the other animals, fears and is repelled by that which he does not understand, and mere difference is apt to connote something malign."

-- Alice Walker

Course Description:

W.E.B. DuBois described it as the problem of the color line. Gunnar Myrdal called it the American dilemma. Racism is the inescapable tragedy of American history. Racial justice and the creation of a pluralistic, inclusive society is the inescapable challenge of the present for America.

In this course we will examine the history of race relations in America, from the first European colonization to the present. We will consider the particular experiences of several minority groups but we will emphasize the experience of African-Americans. This historical analysis of the oppression and exploitation of racial minorities will prepare us for a consideration of social movements and social policies designed to address social inequality, prejudice and discrimination.

In the latter sections of the course we will consider several different approaches to the challenges facing minority groups as well as contemporary cultural expressions of resistance and solidarity.

Requirements:

1. Attendance is required. More than two unexplained absences will result in a lowering of the

final grade.

2. There will be two exams: an in-class midterm exam on July 21 and an in-class final exam on the assigned date.

3. There will be two termpapers. The first will be an analysis of the experience of one minority group in regard to one of the challenges identified in the readings and lectures, e.g., assimilation, maintenance of cultural identity, political power, economic achievement (7-10 pages). This paper is due on August 9. The second paper will be a thematic analysis of some contemporary event or cultural product, e.g., film, television program, music (5-7 pages). This paper is due on August 16.

Grading Criteria:

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| Midterm exam | 25% |
| Termpaper | 30 |
| Discussion paper | 15 |
| Final exam | 30 |

Texts:

James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time. New York: Random (1992).

Martin Luther King Jr., Three Essays (Loving Your Enemies, A Letter from Birmingham Jail, Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam). New York: A.J. Muste Institute.

Cherie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color. Latham, NY: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press (1983).

Shelby Steele, The Content of Our Character. New York: St. Martin's (1990).

Ronald Takaki, A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America. Boston: Little-Brown (1993).

William Julius Wilson, The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1990)

Recommended:

Ronald Takaki, From Different Shores: Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity in America, 2nd. ed. New York: Oxford University Press (1994).

These books are available for purchase in the campus bookstore. They will also be available at the reserved reading desk of Sawyer Library. Other readings (marked with *) will be available only at the reserved reading desk. Films listed on the syllabus will be shown in class unless marked as on reserve--in which case they can be borrowed as videos from the sociology department.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments:

A= first half of class (5:00-6:15) B= 6:30-7:30

I. A Brief History of Race and Racism in America, 1492-1865

7/5 Introduction to the Course

(A)

- (B) Racism at the Roots of American History
7/7 Foundations: Conquest, Slavery and Manifest Destiny
Takaki, A Different Mirror, Chs. 1-4

Recommended reading:

Winthrop Jordan, "First Impressions: Libidinous Blacks," pp. 43-53 in R. Takaki (ed.), From Different Shores (*)
Ronald Takaki, "The Metaphysics of Civilization and Indians in the Age of Jackson," pp. 54-68 in From Different Shores (*)
Howard Zinn, A People's History of the United States, Ch 1-4 (*)

7/12 Class and Race: Divide and Conquer

- (A) Takaki, A Different Mirror, Chs. 5 and 6
(B) The Betrayal and Exploitation of Emancipated Negroes and the Development of Strategies of Accommodation, Self-improvement, Nationalism and Socialism
Takaki, A Different Mirror, Ch. 9

II. The Experience of Asians, Latinos and American Indians in the United States, 1845-1945

7/14 Imperialism and Racist Justifications in the Mexican and Spanish-American Wars

- (A) Takaki, A Different Mirror, Chs. 7 and 10
(B) "Yellow Peril"--The Exploitation and Oppression of Chinese Immigrants
Takaki, A Different Mirror, Ch. 8

7/19 Some are More Equal than Others: Differences in the Experiences of Immigrant Groups (A)

- Ivan Light, "Ethnic Enterprise in America: Japanese, Chinese and Blacks," pp. 83-93 in Takaki, From Different Shores (*)
film (in-class showing) "East of Occidental"
(B) Japanese-Americans, Internment and "Success"
Takaki, A Different Mirror, Ch. 14
Ronald Takaki, "Do Asian Americans Do All That Well? Let's Look at Reality," Boston Globe, 9/8/91 (*)

Recommended reading:

The following articles from Takaki, From Different Shores:

Mario T. Garcia, "Americanization and the Mexican Immigrant," pp. 69-77. (*)
John Higham, "Nativism and Nationalism," pp. 78-82. (*)
Vine Deloria Jr., "Identity and Culture," pp. 94-108. (*)

7/21 (A) EXAM

III. The Post-War Era: Racial Oppression and the Development of the Civil Rights Movement and Related Movements for Empowerment

7/26 The Continuation of Racial Injustice and the Beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement
film "Awakenings," (Eyes on the Prize #1)

- 7/28 "It Is the Innocence Which Constitutes the Crime": Seeing for Innocence in the 1950's.
 (A) James Baldwin, "Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in My Mind," pp. 25-141 in The Fire Next Time
- (B) "Even the Invisible Victim is Responsible for the Fate of All": Nonviolent Resistance as a Moral Imperative
 Martin Luther King Jr., "Loving Your Enemies" and "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in Three Essays
 film "Fighting Back" (Eyes on the Prize #2)
- 8/2 Militant Developments in the 1960's: Black Power, Nationalist Consciousness, Solidarity Movements, Chicano and Native American Movements
- (A) Takaki, A Different Mirror, Ch. 12
 Malcolm X, "Message to the Grass Roots," pp. 248-261 in Clayborne Carson et. al., (eds.), The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader (*)
 Martin Luther King Jr., "Black Power," Ch. 2 in Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community? (*)
 Martin Luther King Jr., "Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam," in Three Essays.
 film "No Easy Walk" (Eyes on the Prize #4)
- (B) Working Within the System
 film "Keys of the Kingdom" (Eyes on the Prize #13)

IV. Current Conditions, Policies and Prospects

- 8/4 Double Discrimination: Economic and Political Struggles of Women of Color in the Modern Era
- (A) Ronald Takaki (ed), From Different Shores, pp. 161-168 (*)
 The following articles from From Different Shores:
 Denise Segura, "Labor Market Stratification: The Chicana Experience," pp. 175-185 (*)
 Chalva Loo and Paul Ong, "Slaying Dragons With a Sewing Needle: Feminist Issues for Chinatown's Women," pp. 186-191. (*)
 Lourdes Miranda King, "Puertoriquenas in the U.S.: The Impact of Double Discrimination," pp. 192-196. (*)
- (B) And Ain't I a Woman? The Challenge of Identity for Women of Color in Contemporary American Society
 The following articles from Moraga and Anzaldua, This Bridge Called My Back:
 Mitsuye Yamada, "Invisibility is an Unnatural Disaster: Reflections of an Asian-American Woman," pp. 35-40.
 Barbara Cameron, "Gee, You Don't Seem Like an Indian From the Reservation," pp. 46-52.
 Aurora Levins Morales, "...And Even Fidel Can't Change That," pp. 53-56.
 Chrystos, "I Don't Understand Those Who Have Turned Away From Me," pp. 68-70.
 Audre Lord, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," pp. 98-101.
 Gloria Anzaldua, "La Prieta," pp. 198-209.
- 8/9 Living in the City

Takaki, Ch. 13

Steele, The Content of Our Character, Chs. 1-4 and 8.

film (in-class showing) "Racism 101"

8/11 The State of the Debate: Moving Beyond Posturing and Victimization

Steele, The Content of Our Character, Chs. 5-7 and 9

Adolph Reed Jr., "The Rise of Louis Farrakhan," The Nation, 1/21/91 and 1/28/91 (*)

film (in-class showing) "Seven Days in Bensonhurst"

8/16 The Increasing Significance of Class: The Inner City and the Underclass

William Julius Wilson, The Truly Disadvantaged, Chs. 1-4

Spike Lee (dir.), Do the Right Thing (*)

8/18 Moving Towards Racial and Economic Justice

Wilson, The Truly Disadvantaged, Chs. 5-7

SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS/PAPER TOPICS

1. One of the central theses of the course is that "color" in America has operated within an economic context (Takaki, Strangers, p. 13). With reference to Edna Bonacich's concept of "ethnic antagonism," demonstrate how economic considerations determined the racism directed against Chinese-Americans in the 19th century.

2. John Hope Franklin is the originator of the notion that four modes of oppression operated against African-Americans in the post-Civil War era. Identify these four modes of oppression and indicate how they operated against African-Americans or any other minority group in America.

3. For every racial group in America, one of the most difficult challenges has been developing a strategy for collective advancement.

These groups have often polarized around two opposing strategies--accommodation and self-improvement on one side and agitation and political organizing on the other. In the history of African-Americans these opposing strategies were visible even during slavery and were more clearly articulated in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

But these opposing strategies were also debated among second generation Japanese-Americans in the 1930's. Indicate the contours of the debate and, if possible, identify the individuals and/or organizations which advocated the opposing positions. Be sure to indicate any correlation between class status and adherence to a particular strategy.

4. Early in the course we discussed three conditions that are necessary and sufficient for the development of racism and racist stereotypes. Assuming that these conditions are central to the dynamics of racism, apply them to explain the negative characterizations of the sexuality of Chinese or Filipino men at various stages in American history. In your answer you might want to consider why these negative characterizations did not extend as often to Japanese men. Finally, would this analysis explain the negative characterization of the sexuality of African-American men? Are there other psychological dynamics that pertain more specifically in the case of African-Americans?

5. Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward have argued that "The poor gain more through mass defiance and disruptive protests than by organizing for electoral politics and other reform policies." How valid would this statement be if "racial minorities" was substituted for "the poor?" In your answer refer to the historical record and the successes and failures of movement leaders. Consider how the amended statement might be more or less correct in different historical periods. How valid is this statement in regard to the present period? Finally, suggest how Shelby Steele and W. J. Wilson would assess the validity of this statement.

6. Please provide a critical assessment of ONE of the following quotes. By critical assessment I mean that you should defend, attack or qualify the statement. In so doing you should refer to the materials of the course. You should make specific reference to at least two of the following: Steele, Wilson, and Moraga & Anzaldua.

- a. "If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground....Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will." --Frederick Douglass
- b. "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,--the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea."
-W.E.B. Dubois
- c. "All dreamers and sleepwalkers must pay the price, and even the invisible victim is responsible for the fate of all." -Ralph Ellison.
- d. "The moral arc of the universe is long but it bends toward justice."--Martin Luther King Jr.
- e. "Man, like all the other animals, fears and is repelled by that which he does not understand, and mere difference is apt to connote something malign." -- Alice Walker

7. Assume that you are an advisor to a candidate for president in 1996. You are asked to write a brief position paper on the plight of the urban underclass and the federal policies that could address their problems. With reference to Wilson's The Truly Disadvantaged and other readings that seem appropriate, provide this position paper which indicates the policies that should be pursued and the political strategy that will make these policies possible and help make your candidate electable.