AMST 560: Readings on Race and Ethnicity

Fall 2011  Lecture 10466R  M 4-6:20PM  GFS 217

Professor:  Lanita Jacobs
Office:  Grace Ford Salvatori Hall (GFS) 128
[Note:  To get to my office, you must first enter the Anthropology Department at GFS 120]
Email:  jacobshu@usc.edu
Office Hours:  M 1-2PM, W 3-4PM; also by appointment.  You can also contact me Monday-Friday via email.

Course Website: AMST 560 course materials are accessible through Blackboard; to access, click on:
https://blackboard.usc.edu/

Required Texts:
1. AMST 560 Reader.  *(Abbreviated as RDR in Reading Schedule)*  (Available in Blackboard under Course Resources; select articles available via Ares Electronic Reserves)

Highly Recommended Text:

NOTE: All texts are on reserve in Leavey Library.

Course Description: This graduate seminar seeks to introduce students to the significance of race and ethnicity through a broad range of recent and classic research mainly concerned with the U.S. This semester’s iteration of the course grapples with articulations of the “the real” as it relates to African Americans. We will mine a range of interdisciplinary and multi-genred texts, especially work in anthropology, which construct, contest, and in other ways contend with notions of racial, gendered, etc. authenticity. Our goal will be to analyze stances around racial authenticity, “real Blackness,” and colloquial bids to “keep it real”; we want to appreciate the vagaries, constructions, and seduction surrounding such articulations in African American culture, the broader U.S., and beyond. This course privileges our shared appreciation for race as a social construction and authenticity as a historically wrought and politically fraught notion. Thus, we will not rehearse these chords at length. Instead, we will pursue a new song concerned with when and why Black folks make room for the potential of “a real.” Asking such questions focuses our attention on the contextual and interactional dimensions of racial authenticity; it also foregrounds the indelible stakes of racial authenticity. This seminar also seeks to cultivate skills in a) reading and analyzing scholarly research and b) translating our own findings in new, accessible, and potentially interventionist ways. Accordingly, you will have ample opportunity to critically engage various texts via critical readings, in-class presentations, and critical dialogue. Consider this course an opportunity to better understand not just how racial authenticity gets constructed on various stages, but also when and why these constructions (and the stakes they bespeak and provoke) remain persistent in the present-day.
Class Expectations & Evaluation: Class meetings will consist of article/data presentations, occasional films, and discussion, with a strong emphasis on the latter. Accordingly, it is essential that you keep up with weekly readings and submit written assignments on time. Course grades will be determined by your performance in the following arenas:

Class Participation: Regular attendance is expected as it will enable you to contribute a unique, informed, and collegial verse during class discussions. If you are unable to attend a class, please let me know in advance. (25 points – 25%)

Reading Presentations: In order to facilitate class discussion, students will be required to present, individually or in pairs, readings comprising the seminar’s weekly themes. (This may require students to present more than twice.) On the day your article, book, etc. is assigned, you should prepare and distribute a 1-2 page typed handout that summarizes the author’s argument, methods, and/or findings. Feel free to indicate the relevance/significance of the work as it relates to your own research. For example, you may critique the author’s methods or conclusions, present thoughtful questions to the class that encourage a critical examination of the reading. Be artful with it. If you are conducting research, feel free to incorporate not just theoretical, but also visual, and/or aural examples from your data or discipline that might extend class discussion. (We will be reading scholars who deftly push up against the boundaries of their disciplines in order to speak alternative and palpably felt “truths.” Let us honor their gifts by reading, speaking, and writing in ways that seek to make our own and others’ unconventional thoughts tangible.) (25 points – 25%)

Final Paper Presentation: During the last two weeks of the semester, each student will present a brief, polished, 10 to 15-minute presentation outlining their final paper (i.e., annotated bibliography or research paper/essay; see below). If you complete an Annotated Bibliography, be prepared to discuss the theme/focus of your paper and the general findings, debates, and issues raised in the works you reviewed. If you are writing a paper/essay, prepare an engaging presentation (e.g., written or Powerpoint) that conveys its tenets. (25 points - 25%)

Final Paper: For your final paper, you have the option of completing a research paper/essay OR an annotated bibliography on a topic relevant to your research. A half-page summary of your paper focus is due during the 6th week of class. (25 points – 25% points)

- Research papers should be no more than 10-15 double-spaced pages in length (excluding a bibliography) and grapple with notions of truth and authenticity as it relates to African Americans, or any other ethnic group in the United States. Feel free to present data gleaned from your own research, and risk translating the seeming “intangible” in this paper. Let this be a paper in which you “write to learn” or adopt “classic prose” to say that one thing about race, gender, sexuality, authenticity, and/or truth, etc. you’ve always wanted to say but didn’t quite know how.

- Annotated bibliographies should specify a central research question germane to notions of race, authenticity, and truth and include a review of 25-30 texts (e.g., articles, chapters, films, and/or books). Ideally, these texts should inform your present/projected research. Annotated bibliographies should be single-spaced and provide a three to five sentence summary for each source.

Final papers must adhere to the following format: 12 point-font, 1” top, bottom, right, and left margins. Staple your paper/review and number your pages (no folders please); also include a title page. Bibliographic entries should be formatted according to either MLA or APA format; sample guidelines are available online. Also, research papers should be double-spaced (please avoid extra spaces between paragraphs) and annotated bibliographies should be single-spaced. Final papers are due in my mailbox by 5PM on Monday, December 12th (Do not email papers; late papers will be docked points).
READING SCHEDULE*

WK 1: 8/22  Course Introduction

WK 2: 8/29  The Social and Communal Stakes of Racial Authenticity
- Favor: Discourses of Black Identity: The Elements of Authenticity [in RDR]
- **Film:** Black Is ... Black Ain’t

Optional/Additional Readings:
- Jenkins: Decoding Essentialism [in RDR]
- Kelley: Looking for the “Real” Nigga [in RDR]
- McWhorter: Authentically Black: Essays for the Silent Majority

WK 3: 9/5  No Class (Labor Day)

WK 4: 9/12  Race into Culture?
- Hartigan Jr.: Culture against Race: Reworking the Basis for Racial Analysis [in RDR]
- Michaels: Race into Culture [in RDR]
- Visweswaran: Race and the Culture of Anthropology [in RDR]

Optional/Additional Readings:
- Baker: Fabricating the Authentic and the Politics of the Real [in RDR]
- Visweswaran: Introduction, Un/common Cultures [in RDR]

WK 5: 9/19  Debating the Merits of “Truth” and “Authenticity” Writ Large
- Benson & Stangroom: Why Truth Matters [in RDR]
- Lynch: Sweet Lies [in RDR]
- Lynch: Truth and Liberal Democracy [in RDR]
- Potter: The Jargon of Authenticity [in RDR]
- Potter: The Malaise of Modernity [in RDR]

Optional/Additional Readings:
- Guignon: The Culture of Authenticity [in RDR]
- Guignon: Authenticity in Context [in RDR]

WK 6: 9/26  Theoretical Interventions: Racial Sincerity and its Philosophical Subtexts
- Jackson: Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity
- Jackson: A Little Black Magic [in RDR]

Optional/Additional Readings:
- Holland: New Directions for a Critical Race Theory [in RDR]
- Lindholm: Introduction, Culture and Authenticity [in RDR]
- Taylor: The Ethics of Authenticity

WK 7: 10/3  Contemplating an Authentic Home
- Jackson: Harlemworld
- **Film:** Flag Wars

Optional Readings:
- Jacobs-Huey: The Natives are Gazing and Talking Back [in RDR]
- Kondo: The Narrative Production of Home in Asian American Theater [in RDR]

WK 8: 10/10  Comedic Riffs on Gender, Sexuality, and Racial Authenticity
- Jacobs: The Arab is the New Nigger [in RDR]
- Jacobs: TBA
- Jacobs-Huey: Gender, Authenticity, and Hair in AfAm Standup Comedy [in RDR]
- Johnson: Manifest Faggotry [in RDR]
- **Film/Clips:** A Question of Color, Tongues Untied
WK 9: 10/17  No Class (ASA Meetings) – Meditate on the/a “Real”

WK 10: 10/24 *Envisioning Alternate Truths about Racial Essentialism and Solidarity*
- Buden: Strategic Universalism: Dead Concept Walking [in RDR]
- Shelby: Social Identity and Group Solidarity [in RDR]
- Shelby: Conclusion: The Political Morality of Black Solidarity [in RDR]
- Spivak: Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography [in RDR]

WK 11: 10/31 *Envisioning Alternative Ways of Discussing Race in Academe*
- da Silva: Introduction and Conclusion
- da Silva: The Sociologics of Racial Subjection
- Harrison: Expanding the Discourse on Race
- Young & Braziel: Cultural Amnesia and the Academy
- Young: Putting Materialism Back into Race Theory

*Optional/Additional Readings:*
- Shotwell: Commonsense Racial Formation

WK 12: 11/7 *Writing Alternative Truths about Racial, Gendered, Queer, etc. Authenticity*
- Crouch: Blues to Go [in RDR]
- Jacobs-Huey: Into the Breach [in RDR]
- Thomas & Turner: *Clear and Simple as the Truth*

*Additional/Recommended Readings:*
- Gwaltney: Drylongso
- Halberstam: *The Queer Art of Failure*
- Keeling: *The Witch’s Flight*
- Simpson: *Poets in Their Youth*
- Smith: *Cutting Edge Equivocation* [in RDR]
- Zinsser: *Writing to Learn*

WK 13: 11/14  No Class (AAA Meetings) – Meditate on a/the “Real”

WK 14: 11/21  *Final Class Presentations*

WK 15: 11/28  *Final Class Presentations*

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*Final Papers/Annotated Bibliographies are due in my box by 5PM on Monday, December 12th*

*The Reading Schedule may be subject to modification (e.g., trimming, additions, etc.).*


