

## AMST 560: Readings on Race and Ethnicity

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Fall 2016

Lecture 10466D

W 2-4:50PM

KAP 150

**Professor:** Lanita Jacobs

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**Office Hours:** W 12-1PM; also by appointment. You can also contact me Monday-Friday via email.

**Course Website:** Course materials are accessible through Blackboard at: <https://blackboard.usc.edu/webapps/login/>

### Required Texts:

1. AMST 560 Reader. (*Abbreviated as RDR in Reading Schedule*; (Available in Blackboard under “Content” [then click “Course Resources”; articles are alphabetized according to author’s last name])
2. Jackson Jr., John L. 2005. *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
3. Jackson Jr., John L. 2001. *Harlemworld: Doing Race and Class in Contemporary Black America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
4. Thomas, Francis-Noël and Mark Turner. 1994. *Clear and Simple as the Truth: Writing Classic Prose*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

### Highly Recommended Text:

5. Zinsser, William. 1993. *Writing to Learn*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

**NOTE:** All texts are on reserve in Levey Library.

**Course Description:** This interdisciplinary graduate seminar explores the significance and stakes of race and ethnicity primarily within 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 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:** This course requires imagination and rigor, as well as patience and collegiality. It necessitates reading assigned texts critically and pursuing additional leads beyond seminar that speak to the questions and interdisciplinary conversations these readings provoke. We must each approach the seminar table ready to contribute our best (if even vulnerable) verses so that we might all: become better scholars and get closer to the truth of our respective work in our minds, dialogue, and, eventually, on the page. Towards these ends, class meetings will consist of article/data presentations and ample discussion. Accordingly, it is essential that you keep up with weekly readings and submit written assignments in Blackboard on time.

**Course Evaluation:** As this a readings seminar, no research paper is required. Instead, students will present on assigned readings and actively participate in their rigorous vetting. Course grades will be determined by your performance in the following arenas:

***Two Seminar Presentations (30 points or 30% each):*** In order to facilitate class discussion, seminar participants will be required to present, individually or in pairs, on at least two course readings. (Students may be asked to present more than twice.) On the day your article, book, etc. is assigned, you should ideally prepare for virtual or hard-copy distribution a 1-2 page typed (and proofread) 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. (Some of the scholars whose work we'll read push against the boundaries of their respective 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.) Key questions you might consider to help facilitate (and participate) in generative discussion include:

- What is/are the analytical imperatives of this work? What is the author seeking to do and why? What bearing might this have on your own work/discipline?
- What kind of "real" is actualized in this work?
- How do the assigned authors speak to one another and/or your own research?
- What might these authors "miss"; are these "missing" things oversights or beyond the scholar's analytical intentions or desired intervention?

***Participation (40 points – 40%):*** Participation encompasses regular attendance so as to afford informed contributions to class discussions. (If you're unable to attend a class, please let me know in advance.) Participation also entails posting "substantive" (i.e., thoughtful/considered responses/questions of at least 300 words [i.e., ½ - 1.5 single spaced typed pages) comments on the readings in Blackboard's Discussion Group portal. (Ideally, please copy and paste comments in the Discussion Board for the appropriate week *in advance of seminar* to make the provision of responses easier.) These critical assessments should be posted in Blackboard by 10AM on Wednesdays.

## READING SCHEDULE

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- WK 1: 8/24     **Course Introduction**
- WK 2: 8/31     ***The Social and Communal Stakes of Racial Authenticity***
- Harper: What's My Name? [in RDR]
  - Japtok & Jenkins: What Does It Mean to Be "Really" Black? [in RDR]
  - Favor: Discourses of Black Identity: The Elements of Authenticity [in RDR]
- 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: 9/7     ***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 4: 9/14     **NO CLASS (Research/Writing Day)**
- View: *Black Is ... Black Ain't* (1994; 1 hr 30 min.)
- WK 5: 9/21     ***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: 9/28     ***Theoretical Interventions: Racial Sincerity and its Philosophical Subtexts***
- Jackson: Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity
  - Jackson: A Little Black Magic [in RDR]
  - Trillig: Sincerity: Its Origin and Rise [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: 10/5     **NO CLASS (Research and Writing Day; Prof. Iyko Day Graduate Seminar in ASE)**
- Day: Being or Nothingness: Indigeneity, Antiracism, and Settler Colonial Critique [in RDR]
- WK 8: 10/12     ***Contemplating an Authentic Home***
- Jackson: Harlemworld
- 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 9: 10/19     **NO CLASS (Research/Writing/Grading Day)**

- WK 10: 10/26 ***Comedic Riffs on Gender, Sexuality, and Racial Authenticity***
- Jacobs: The Arab is the New Nigger [in RDR]
  - Jacobs: “It’s about to get real”: Kevin Hart as Modern Day Trickster [in RDR]
  - Jacobs-Huey: Gender, Authenticity, and Hair in AfAm Standup Comedy [in RDR]
  - Johnson: “Quare” Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother [in RDR]
  - Johnson: Manifest Faggotry [in RDR]
- Optional Readings:*
- Allen, Jr.: Du Boisian Double Consciousness: The Unsustainable Argument
  - Bobo: Reclaiming A Du Boisian Perspective on Racial Attitudes [in RDR]
  - Griffin: Black Feminists and Du Bois: Respectability, Protection, and Beyond [in RDR]
  - Jackson: A Little Black Magic [Revisit; in RDR]
  - Viveros: Black Authenticity, Racial Drag, and the Case of Dave Chappelle [in RDR]
- WK 11: 11/2 ***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 12: 11/9 ***Envisioning Alternative Ways of Discussing Race in Academe***
- da Silva: Introduction and Conclusion [in RDR]
  - da Silva: The Sociologies of Racial Subjection [in RDR]
  - Harrison: Expanding the Discourse on Race [in RDR]
  - Young & Braziel: Cultural Amnesia and the Academy [in RDR]
  - Young: Putting Materialism Back into Race Theory [in RDR]
- Optional/Additional Readings:*
- Shotwell: Commonsense Racial Formation [in RDR]
- WK 13: 11/16 **NO CLASS (AAA/ASA Meetings)**
- WK 14: 11/23 **NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)**
- WK 15: 11/30 ***Writing Alternative Truths about Racial, Gendered, Queer, etc. Authenticity***
- Crouch: Blues to Go [in RDR]
  - Jacobs: Introduction, To Be Real [in RDR]
  - LeClair: ‘The Language Must Not Sweat’ [in RDR]
  - Thomas & Turner: Clear and Simple as the Truth
  - Zinsser: Goodbye and Don’t Come Back [in RDR]
- Additional/Recommended Readings:*
- Jacobs-Huey: Into the Breach [in RDR]
  - Smith: Cutting Edge Equivocation [in RDR]
  - Winant: Review of Eric Porter, The Problem of the Future World [in RDR; see also Porter, The Problem of the Future World]
  - Yancy: Geneva Smitherman: The Social Ontology of African-American Language... [in RDR]

## Select Course Bibliography

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