Introduction to Race and Ethnicity

SOCI 217
TR 11:10-12:25 pm

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12-5pm and by app’t.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to Sociology 217: Introduction to Race and Ethnicity. As its title suggests, this lower division undergraduate course is an introduction to the sociological examination of race and ethnicity in social life. Its purpose is to provide the student with both an understanding of the concepts of race and ethnicity and the effective use of sociological theories and methods in their study.

The specific topics to be covered in this course include: sociological theories and perspectives on race and ethnicity, their influence on individual and group identities, their influence on the institutions that organize community life, and their relationship to politics and social change. Among the questions to be addressed are: What are race and ethnicity? How and why do we construct racial and ethnic identities? How do race and ethnicity function simultaneously as identities and as systems of inequality? In the process of answering these questions, we will touch on larger issues in the field of sociology, such as: the significance of race for other social identities such as gender, sexuality, and class; how the experiences of minority groups with key social institutions differ from those of majority groups; and how race as a stratifying principle in our society shapes our understandings of social phenomena. Along the way, this course will introduce you to important sociological perspectives and tools that researchers have used to answer such questions, both historically and presently.

As the weeks progress, you will find this course academically challenging and intellectually provocative. Keeping in mind that it is the task of sociology as a discipline to question everyday assumptions about social life using scientific inquiry, this course has one major goal: to challenge you to take a step back from “common sense” explanations and think critically and theoretically about race and ethnicity as well as other forms of difference.

The amount of readings will average between 50 to 100 pages per week. Note: Your success in this class will be determined by the amount of time and attention you devote to completing assigned readings, attending lectures, participating in classroom discussion and completing other assignments.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Office of Support Services for Students with Disabilities in Cain Hall, Room B118 (979-845-1637; http://disability.tamu.edu/)
REQUIRED TEXTS & READINGS

Additional readings marked (e) will be made available to you electronically through E-Learning. Please put “Readings for SOCI 217” in the subject line.

If you have difficulties accessing them, let me know immediately via e-mail.


GRADING & EXAMS

Letter grades will be assigned based on the percent of total points possible. The grading scale is as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60-69</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
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Final grades will be calculated as follows:

- Class Attendance & Participation: 10%
- Reading Quizzes: 10%
- Midterm #1: 20%
- Midterm #2: 20%
- Group Presentation: 15%
- Final Exam: 25%

Students should expect reading and writing assignments appropriate for a lower division course. The final grade will be computed based on the assignments described on the following page.
STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

CONTENT:
- An introduction to the various theoretical and methodological approaches employed in the sociological study of race and ethnicity
- An introduction to the comparative study of racial/ethnic communities in the United States including a brief survey of the population histories of racial/ethnic communities.
- The impacts of race and ethnicity as principles of social organization.

SKILLS:
- The use of theoretical concepts and frameworks as tools for critical thinking about the self, society, social problems and public policies.
- Critical thinking, analytic reading, and their use in the evaluation and production of scholarly research.
- Effective communication through speaking, writing, and other forms of expression.

MODES OF ASSESSMENT:
- Reading assignments: scholarly journal articles, excerpts from research monographs and textbooks, from 75 to 125 pages per week
- Take-home writing assignments (5-7 pages per question)
- Weekly online quizzes (Short Answers)
- One in-class group presentation
- One in-class essay examination

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to...
- Identify and explain sociological theories of race and ethnicity.
- Apply an understanding of the significance of race and ethnicity as social forces that impact human populations and the societies they create.
- Identify and use appropriate social science data as the primary means of answering sociological questions about the significance of race and ethnicity among human populations and the societies they create.
ASSIGNMENTS

Class Participation (10%)
All students are expected to attend class regularly, to have completed the assigned readings before class, and to be prepared to offer thoughtful commentary and/or questions. Students will begin the semester with 50 points. Students can add to their points by participating substantively in class discussions. If you're reluctant to speak up, please talk to me and we'll figure out a way for you to participate.

TOTAL POINTS 100

Reading Quizzes (10%)
Reading quizzes are assigned for each week noted with an asterisk (*). All students are expected to complete weekly online quizzes over the week's reading in the time allotted. Any quizzes not completed by the deadline will automatically receive a score of zero (0). In order to avoid the inconvenience caused by technical difficulties or last-minute submissions, students are strongly advised to take the quiz at the earliest possible time.

TOTAL POINTS 100 (each online quiz is worth 10 points, maximum)

Midterm Examination #1 (20%)
Your first midterm examination will be a take-home exam in which you will be expected to answer questions using the course readings and lectures. If you wish you may use additional material to questions, but your grade will be based upon your grasp of the concepts presented in assigned readings and class lectures.

TOTAL POINTS- 100

Midterm Examination #2 (20%)
Your second midterm examination will be a take-home exam in which you will be expected to answer questions using the course readings and lectures. If you wish you may use additional material to questions, but your grade will be based upon your grasp of the concepts presented in assigned readings and class lectures.

TOTAL POINTS- 100

Group Presentation (15%)
You will be assigned to a group and asked to collaborate on leading discussion on one of the last five classes in weeks 12-14. Your group will be responsible for providing an informational handout, PowerPoint presentation, and facilitating Q&A on the day's topic. Your group will be evaluated on how well you organize and present the material. You will receive a peer evaluation from the class as well as an assessment from the instructor.

TOTAL POINTS- 100

Final Exam (25%)
The final examination for this course is a 2-hour, in-class final examination. Students will please bring a Blue Book and a pencil or pen.

TOTAL POINTS- 100

Please note that all exams will be cumulative, meaning that you are responsible for *all* material covered up until that point.
GENERAL COURSE GUIDELINES

1. **WEBSITE:** Students are required to register with the course website at http://elearning.tamu.edu. The site is designed for you to have a readily accessible resource for any concerns or questions about the course, such as contacting the instructor, checking grades, and keeping up with any changes to the course schedule. It is your responsibility to utilize the site for these purposes.

2. **READING:** There is a substantial amount of reading required for this course. It is your responsibility to keep up and be prepared for each class meeting. If you are having difficulty with a concept, or with reading comprehension, I am available for consultation during office hours, or by appointment. However, I would strongly encourage you to form study groups for this purpose.

3. **ATTENDANCE:** The University views class attendance as the responsibility of an individual student. Attendance is essential to complete the course successfully. Students are expected to attend class regularly and to arrive on time. If you cannot make it to class, it is your responsibility to find out what was discussed. I do not give “private lectures,” so you must obtain missing lecture notes from another student. Again, I strongly encourage you to form study groups for this purpose. Rescheduled exams will be given only to those students who have excused absences. University rules related to excused and unexcused absences are located on-line at http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07. It is also your responsibility to reschedule missed exams in a timely fashion. As a rule, exams should be rescheduled within no more than 24 hours of your return to classes, and must be taken within a week’s time.

4. **CONSULTATION ABOUT GRADES:** Students desiring a consult should make use of office hours or schedule an appointment. I absolutely do not give “extra credit” so please do not ask!!! In accordance with university policy, students who fail to complete all of the assigned work before the end of the semester will receive an “F” for their final grade. Incompletes (“I” grades) can only be given to those students who present a university-approved excuse and have completed all coursework with the exception of a major quiz, final examination or other work. For more information see http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule10.

5. **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.” Upon accepting admission to Texas A&M University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor System. Students will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the TAMU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor System. For additional information please visit: http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu
Course Schedule & Assigned Readings

Week 1: Course Introduction and Orientation*

Tuesday, August 27th: Course Introduction
- Introductory Lecture: “Race and Ethnicity as Sociological Topics”

Thursday, August 29th:
- Race: The Power of An Illusion—“The Difference Between Us” (FILM)

Week 2: Race and Ethnicity as a Field of Inquiry*
Here we will begin our introduction to the course and start by posing important questions. What are race and ethnicity? Are they more than just ways of classifying people? Why do we study race and ethnicity? What impact do they have on social life? Why are they of such interest to sociologists and others?

Tuesday, September 3rd
- Schaefer, Ch. 1: Exploring Race and Ethnicity
- Cornell and Hartman, Ch. 2, “Mapping the Terrain: Definitions” (e)

Thursday, September 5th
- Marger, “Introduction: Some Basic Concepts” from Race & Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives (e)

Week 3: Studying Race & Ethnicity—Sociological Frameworks & Methods*
What frameworks do sociologists use to study race and ethnicity in societies? What are some of the different ways that they conceptualize “race” and “ethnicity?” How do they understand the relationship between race, ethnicity and other hierarchical structures like class, gender and sexuality?

Tuesday, September 10th
- Schaefer, Ch. 2: Prejudice
- Schaefer, Ch. 3: Discrimination

Thursday, September 12th
- Feagin & Feagin, “Theoretical Perspectives in Race and Ethnic Relations” (e)
- Omi & Winant, “Racial Formations” (e)

Week 4: Studying Race & Ethnicity—Sociological Frameworks & Methods (cont’d)*

Tuesday, September 17th
- Andersen & Collins, “Conceptualizing Race, Class, and Gender” (e)
- Bonilla-Silva, “Racialized Social Systems Approach to Racism” (e)

Thursday, September 19th
- Yang, “Methodologies of Ethnic Studies” pp. 19-35 in Ethnic Studies: Issues and Approaches (e)
Week 5: Racial and Ethnic Identities in America*
What are the major racial and ethnic groups in the United States? How have race and ethnicity shaped the identities and social experiences of Americans, both past and present? What is contemporary significance of race and ethnicity in the United States?

Tuesday, September 24th
- Schaefer, Ch. 6: Native Americans
- **Midterm Exam #1 Distributed in Class**

Thursday, September 26th
- Nagel, “American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Politics and the Resurgence of Identity” (e)
- Cornell, “Transformations of the Tribe: Organization and Self-Concept in Native American Ethnicities” (e)

Week 6: Racial and Ethnic Identities in America (cont’d)*

Tuesday, October 1st
- Schaefer, Ch. 5: Ethnicity & Religion
- **Midterm Exam #1 Due in Class**

Thursday, October 3rd
- Jacobson, “Free White Persons in the Republic, 1790-1840” from Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race (e)
- Jacobson, “Anglo-Saxons and Others, 1840-1924” from Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race (e)

Week 7: Racial and Ethnic Identities in America (cont’d)*

Tuesday, October 8th
- Schaefer, Ch. 14: Jewish Americans-Quest to Maintain Identity

Thursday, October 10th
- Brodkin, “How Did Jews Become White Folks?” (e)
- Waters, “Class, Neighborhood, and Ethnicity” Ch. 4 from Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America (e)

Week 8: Racial and Ethnic Identities in America (cont’d)*

Tuesday, October 15th
- Schaefer, Ch. 7: The Making of African Americans in a White America
- Zinn, “Drawing the Color Line” (RTHCL)
Thursday, October 17th

- Schaefer, Ch. 8: African Americans Today

- Lacy, “Race and Class Based Identities: Strategic Assimilation in Middle Class Suburbia” from Blue Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class (e)

Week 9: Racial and Ethnic Identities in America (cont’d)*

Tuesday, October 22nd

- Schaefer, Ch. 9: Hispanic Americans

Thursday, October 24th

- Schaefer, Ch. 10: Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans

- Davila, “Here Comes the Latino Middle Class” from Latino Spin: Public Image and the Whitewashing of Race (e)

Week 10: Racial and Ethnic Identities in America (cont’d)*

Tuesday, October 29th

- Schaefer, Ch. 12: Asian Americans – Growth and Diversity

Thursday, October 31st

- Schaefer, Ch. 13: Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans

- Tuan, “Cars, Girls, and Baseball—but with an Asian Twist: Growing up Asian Ethnic” from Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites?: The Asian Ethnic Experience Today (e)

- Midterm Exam #2 Distributed in Class

Week 11: Racial and Ethnic Identities in America (cont’d)*

Tuesday, November 5th

- Schaefer Ch. 11: Muslim and Arab Americans-Diverse Minorities

Thursday, November 7th


- Midterm Exam #2 Due in Class
Week 12: The Difference Race Makes-- Race and the Social Structure
Here we will revisit some of our initial questions about the salience of racial and ethnic identities with an eye on social structures (the economy, housing, health and environmental justice). How have race and ethnicity shaped the experiences of groups and individuals with these institutions? What steps can we take as individuals and as a nation toward a more equitable future?

Tuesday, November 12th: Group 1 Presentation-Race & The Economy
- Shapiro, “Transformative Assets, the Racial Wealth Gap, and the American Dream” (RTCL)

Thursday, November 14th: Group 2 Presentation-Race & The Media
- Lewis & Jhally, “Television and the Politics of Representation” (RTCL)
- Klein & Naccarato, “Broadcast News Portrayal of Minorities: Accuracy in Reporting” (RTCL)

Week 13: The Difference Race Makes-- Race and the Social Structure (cont’d)
Tuesday, November 19th: Group 3 Presentation-Race & Housing
- Massey, “Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Conditions in U.S. Metropolitan Areas (RTCL)

Thursday, November 21st: Group 4 Presentation-Race & Health
- Zenk, et al., “Why Are There No Supermarkets in My Neighborhood?: The Long Search for Fresh Fruit, Produce, and Healthy Food (RTCL)
- Williams & Collins, “The Color of Health in the United States” (RTCL)

Week 14: The Difference Race Makes-- Race and the Social Structure (cont’d)
Tuesday, November 26th: Group 5 Presentation
- Gallagher, “Ten Things You Can Do to Improve Race Relations” (RTCL)
- Lui, Robles, Leondar-Wright, et al., “Policy Steps toward Closing the Gap” (RTCL)

Thursday, November 28th
* NO CLASS MEETING - THANKSGIVING

Week 15: Reading Week
Tuesday, December 3rd
* Reading day

FINAL EXAMINATION: TBA