Political Science
University of Connecticut, Storrs

Professor Fred Lee
Fall 2013

POLS 2998: Critical Race Theory

Course Syllabus

Class times: MWF 10:10-11 am, KNS311
Email: fred.lee@uconn.edu

Office hours: MWF 11am-12 pm
and by appointment, 436 Oak

I. Overview

Critical race theory aims at understanding and transforming (relationships between) racial identities, social orders, and political actions. Narrowly construed, the term refers to a body of legal scholarship within the American academy. Broadly understood, critical race theory is also practiced by activists, artists, and thinkers in social movements, media representations, and political texts.

This course surveys legal, social, and political theoretical approaches to problems in critical race theory. These include the construction and regulation of race in law and policy; the position of Asians and Latinos vis-à-vis white/non-white and the black/white binaries; the interactions between states and social movements on racial questions; the relationships ("intersections") of race, class, gender, and membership; and the problems with both post-racialism and politics based on identity.

While interdisciplinary in content, our course will employ the interpretive methods of contemporary political theory. The emphasis will be on closely-reading extended selections from important ("canonical") texts in their intellectual and historical contexts. More simply put, we will study authors like Ian Haney López and Charles Mills in the same way that we might study authors like Plato or John Rawls in a more traditional political theory class.

II. Objectives

Our primary objective is to map out the political and theoretical contours of contemporary race studies. We will compare how critical theorists from various academic disciplines, intellectual traditions, and historical contexts are posing and responding to a common set of questions about the sources, functions, and politics of race. By the end of the course, students will be able to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of individual critical race theorists as well as the legal, social, and political theoretical sources of their ideas.

Our second objective is to put contemporary critical race theory into historical perspective. We will interpret our theorists as drawing from the intellectual traditions of legal studies (part I), social theory (part II), and political philosophy (part III). We will also consider how critical race theory in the American academy arises as a distinctively scholarly response to

identity-based inequalities and social justice movements in trans-Atlantic, trans-Pacific, and pan-American contexts.

III. Schedule

Part I. Legal Theory: Legal Power and Social Dominance
1. Legal meanings of whiteness
August 26. Introduction to class
August 28. Haney López, *White by Law* "Preface…," "A Note on Whiteness," chapter 1
August 30. Haney López, *White by Law* chapters 2-3

2. Racial requirements for naturalization
September 2. Labor Day [no class]
September 4. Haney López, *White by Law* chapter 4
September 6. Haney López, *White by Law* chapter 5

3. Broader meanings of whiteness
September 9. Haney López, *White by Law* chapter 6
September 11. Haney López, *White by Law* chapter 7-8
September 13. Bell, *Silent Covenants* "Introduction," chapters 1-3

4. Convergences of white/black interests
September 16. Bell, *Silent Covenants* chapters 4-6
September 18. Bell, *Silent Covenants* chapters 7-9
September 20. Bell, *Silent Covenants* chapters 10-11

5. African American struggles for education
September 23. Bell, *Silent Covenants* chapters 12-13
September 25. Bell, *Silent Covenants* chapter 15, "Conclusion"
September 27. **Midterm exam #1 in class**

Part II. Social Theory: Divisions of Labor and Social Movements
6. Race and gender with citizenship and labor
September 30. Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom* "Introduction," chapter 1
October 2. Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom* chapter 2
October 4. Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom* chapter 3 [pg. 56-76]

7. Comparative histories of American inequality
October 7. Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom* chapter 3 [pgs. 76-92]
October 9. Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom* chapter 5 [pgs. 144-164]
October 11. Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom* chapter 5 [pgs. 164-189]

8. Legacies of American inequality

October 14. Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom* chapter 6 [pgs. 190-215]
October 16. Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom* chapter 6 [pgs. 215-235]
October 18. Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom* chapter 7

9. Movement activism and the racial state
October 21. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation* "Preface to 1994 Edition," "Introduction," "Paradigms of Race, Ethnicity, Class, and Nation," chapter 1
October 23. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation* chapter 4
October 25. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation* chapter 5

10. Racial transformations and reactions
October 28. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation* chapter 6
October 30. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation* chapter 7, "Conclusion"
November 1. **Midterm exam #2 in class**

Part III. Political Theory: Modern Identities and Political Futures
11. Problematizing *Latinidad* and nationalism
November 4. Beltrán, *The Trouble with Unity* "Introduction," "Conclusion"
November 6. Beltrán, *The Trouble with Unity* chapter 1
November 8. Beltrán, *The Trouble with Unity* chapter 2

12. Reimagining communities and coalitions
November 11. Beltrán, *The Trouble with Unity* chapter 4
November 13. Beltrán, *The Trouble with Unity* chapter 5
November 15. No class [I'll be at the Northeastern Political Science Association meeting]

13. Origins and implications of racial inequality
November 18. Mills, *The Racial Contract* "Introduction," chapter 1
November 20. Mills, *The Racial Contract* chapter 2
November 22. Mills, *The Racial Contract* chapter 3

Thanksgiving break
November 25, 27, 29 [no class]

14. A post-racial present or a new era of racialization?
December 2. Class discussion of "Yellow Face (Part 1 of 2)" and "Yellow Face (Part 2 of 2)" on The YOMYOMF Network/YouTube [watch these videos before class]
December 4. Conclusion to the course

December 9 at 12 pm. **Final paper due online**

IV. Requirements

This course is not only organized around the legal, social, and political theories of race, but also around the practices of discussing, reading, and writing critical race scholarship. Final grades will be determined in terms of

1. **15% discussion**. At least 30 minutes of each class will be reserved for an open-ended discussion, which will allow for a collective exploration of the assigned readings and their worldly significances. I will bring questions on the first and last days of class as well as for our first discussion of an author. For all other meetings, a student in the class will bring and pose discussion questions.

2. **10% reading quizzes.** Five reading quizzes—consisting of 3 questions requiring short answer responses—will be randomly distributed over the course of the semester. The lowest score will be dropped and the remaining scores will be averaged. Quizzes are meant to encourage you to attend class regularly and keep up with the readings. They will be graded on a scale of 0-3: 3 is roughly an A, 2 is roughly a B, 1 is roughly a C, and 0 is no credit. Anyone who has read the assigned material carefully should have no problem earning a 2 on the quiz.

3. **25% first midterm exam and 25% second midterm exam.** The first midterm will cover the Haney López and Bell readings; the second midterm will cover the Nakano Glenn and Omi & Winant readings. The first part of both exams will require you to respond to 3 out of 5 short-answer questions; the second part of both exams will require you to respond to 1 out of 2 essay questions. Short answer questions will ask you to explain a particular concept, framework, argument, or passage; essay prompts will ask you to examine two texts with regards to a particular theme or problem. Essay topics, but not the exact wording of the prompts will be distributed before the exams.

4. **25% final paper.** A 6-7 page essay will respond to 1 out of 4 prompts on Beltrán, Mills, or both Beltrán and Mills (these prompts will be especially challenging). All prompts will ask you to perform what political theorists call a "close-reading"—to make a good-faith effort to *understand* what the texts mean and to undertake a thoughtful *evaluation* of what the texts argue. Outside research could be helpful, depending on your choice of prompt, but is not required. Specific criteria for evaluation as well as writing guides will be distributed as we approach the deadline for this assignment.

V. Late policies

Make-up quizzes and make-up examinations will be administered only in adequately documented cases of (a) personal or family emergency or (b) participation in University of Connecticut activities—athletic or academic—during regularly scheduled times.

It is your responsibility to inform me about the need for paper extensions at least **48 hours** before the final paper is due. Late essays will be accepted without penalty in sufficiently

documented cases of personal or family illness or emergency. Otherwise, essays submitted after the specified deadline will be penalized one mark per 12 hours: an A paper turned in 0-12 hours late will count as an A-, an A- paper turned in 12-24 hours late will count as a B+, and so forth.

VI. Academic integrity

There will be a zero-tolerance policy for any academic dishonesty or misconduct prohibited by the University of Connecticut's Student Code (quoted below):

"A fundamental tenet of all educational institutions is academic honesty; academic work depends upon respect for and acknowledgement of the research and ideas of others. Misrepresenting someone else's work as one's own is a serious offense in any academic setting and it will not be condoned.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for academic evaluation (e.g., papers, projects, and examinations); any attempt to influence improperly (e.g., bribery, threats) any member of the faculty, staff, or administration of the University in any matter pertaining to academics or research; presenting, as one's own, the ideas or words of another for academic evaluation; doing unauthorized academic work for which another person will receive credit or be evaluated; and presenting the same or substantially the same papers or projects in two or more courses without the explicit permission of the instructors involved.

A student who knowingly assists another student in committing an act of academic misconduct shall be equally accountable for the violation, and shall be subject to the sanctions and other remedies described in The Student Code."

VII. Texts

The books for this class will be available for purchase at the campus bookstore. If you purchase the required books from a different source, pay attention to the publication information listed below—and pay special attention to the publication dates for *White by Law* and *Racial Formation in the United States,* which come in multiple editions.

1. Ian Haney López, *White by Law,* rev. ed. (NYU, 2006) ISBN: 978-0814736944
2. Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants* (Oxford, 2005) ISBN: 978-0195182477
3. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom* (Harvard, 2004) ISBN: 978-0674013728
4. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States,* rev. ed (Routledge, 1994) ISBN: 978-0415908641
5. Cristina Beltrán, *The Trouble with Unity* (Oxford, 2010) ISBN: 978-0195375916
6. Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Cornell, 1999) ISBN: 978-0801484636

VIII. Supplemental material

This course will place a premium on engaging with the assigned materials and the practical and theoretical problems they address. I would suggest the resources listed below for students who want to undertake a deeper exploration of critical race theory in legal studies, social theory, and political philosophy. Furthermore, I would be happy to tailor reading suggestions to specific issues, histories, or ideas upon request.

Part I. Legal Theory
1. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction,* 2nd ed. (NYU, 2012)
2. Kimberlé Crenshaw et al, eds., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement* (New Press, 1996)
3. University of California, Davis, Critical Race Theory (faculty blog)

Part II. Social Theory
1. Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America,* rev. ed. (Bay Back Books, 2008)
2. Daniel Martinez HoSang et al, eds., *Racial Formation in the 21st Century* (University of California, 2012)
3. The Movement / El Movimiento, Ethnic Studies Now (activist blog)

Part III. Political Theory
1. Paul Taylor, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction* (Polity, 2003)
2. Linda Martín Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (Oxford, 2005)
3. Symposia on Gender, Race, and Philosophy, Gender, Race, and Philosophy (academic blog)