

AFRO/AMIN/AAS/CHIC 1201
Racial Formation and Transformation in the United States
Spring 2025

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Instructional Time : Tu/Th 11:15am – 12:30pm
Location : TBA

Course Description: What does it take to discuss race seriously? An exploration of this question demands a counter-narrative, for our contemporary moment is such that a growing public opinion (1) casts America as a “raceless nation” (2) interprets antiracism as “reverse racism” and (3) embraces “diversity” to maintain the racial status quo. Talking about race is not easy to be sure; it engenders a host of unsettling emotions ranging from guilt and shame to anger. Yet not talking about race as a social fact in American life and culture merely reinforces the existing racial hierarchy. It forecloses opportunities to reach across boundaries of social difference to strive toward a shared sense of community and belonging. Together, we will participate in racial struggles, albeit at times painful and challenging, to address and grapple with ethical-political imperatives to pursue social justice and make the notion of diversity anew.

Student Learning Outcomes:

This course will guide students to:

- Go beyond the understanding of race as a synonym for skin color.
- Cultivate insights to deepen the understanding of racism as not just a matter of personal prejudice but an articulation of power that is structural and institutional.
- Develop the framework for the comparative study of racialization.
- In addition, students will improve their skills in: Synthesizing various texts by formulating a unified topic of discussion and analysis in presentations and written work.
- Derive deeper meanings from various texts to formulate an original, creative, and focused thesis statement.
- Communicate thoughts and perspectives of others, as well as unexpected connections and relationships in discussions, presentations, and written work
- Hone sensitivities toward details and logical organization, both in their own writing and the work of others.

On Effective Reading:

As you engage with the assigned texts, keep in mind that the best readers are not those who can whip through an article at high speed; the best readers read recursively. That is, they shuttle back and forth, browsing, skimming, and re-reading as necessary. Use the following checklist to further hone your effective reading strategies:

- Highlight ideas and phrases that strike you as significant. But avoid excessive highlighting.
- Re-read difficult sections or flip back and skim an earlier section if you feel yourself getting lost.

- Summarize the content of the paragraph or section in a word or two alongside the margins. These notes will serve as reminders as you re-read sections.
- Keep a record of mental shuttling by writing comments or questions in the margins as you read.
- Make a note in the margin if a particular section or passage puzzles you.
- Make sure to ponder why you felt confused, annoyed, or affirmed by a particular passage/section.

On Effective Writing:

While this course is not writing intensive, it occupies a central place. The truth is writing never comes easy. Yet, once you start to recognize the power of writing, it can transform the way you see yourself and relate to the world at large. The course will approach writing as

(1) a tool for learning and intellectual development.

(2) a vehicle for self-empowerment; and

(3) a process that requires practice, attention, revision, and collaboration with others.

The successful completion of this course requires dedication and motivation, to be sure, but ultimately a strong desire on your part to become a confident writer.

Required Texts

1. Robert A. Williams, Jr., *Like a Loaded Weapon: The Rehnquist Court, Indian Rights, and the Legal History of Racism in America* (University of Minnesota Press, 2005)
2. Percival Everett, *Erasure* (Graywolf Books, 2001)
3. Ishle Yi Park, *The Temperature of This Water* (Kaya Press, 2004)
4. Grace Lee Boggs, *The Next American Revolution* (University of California Press, 2011).

Liberal Education Requirements

This course fulfills the Liberal Education (LE) Core of Social Sciences and (LE) Theme of Race, Power, and Justice in the United States.

Social Sciences Core

By turning to the theories of contemporary racism found in cutting-edge sociological and ethnic studies literature, students will develop a sharp critique of the U.S. racial wealth divide and its multiplier effects in American society, which appear most explicitly in where people of color live, as well as how they are taught in public schools and relate to the local food system (to name just a few). Throughout the semester, thus, we explore the following guiding questions: What are some of the causes and consequences of the U.S. racial wealth divide? How has race, as a social concept and a political authority, entered law-making and the sphere of cultural representation to reinforce the system of inequality based on race and class? How have people of color responded to dominant stereotypes and racializing powers? How have multiracial coalitions emerged to respond to the political challenge still unmet that is the creation of a truly just and egalitarian society in the United States?

Race, Power, and Justice in the United States Theme

This course is concerned with the ways aggrieved racialized groups in the United States: African Americans, American Indians, Latina/os, and Asian Americans struggle over identity, culture, place, and meanings of these categories in relation to each other, especially in the context of existing racial hierarchy. In other words, we are interested in examining the diverse histories of racialization, the systematic and coordinated exercises of racial power, and how these aggrieved groups respond to this power. A successful outcome of this course is two-fold: together, we will learn to not only imagine new forms of coalition but also traverse the politics of difference with a

renewed sense of racial justice.

Required Course Work

Attendance & Participation (15%)

Analytical Essay #1 (15%)

Midterm Essay Exam (20%)

Analytical Essay #2 (20%)

Final Project, Part I: Group Work/Presentation (10%)

Final Project, Part II: Analytical Essay #3 (20%)

In this course, you will write three analytical essays that are five pages in length. The midterm is also an essay exam. The successful completion of written work requires an effective synthesis. Over the course of the semester, I expect you to learn how to bring together seemingly disparate reading assignments and lecture notes, as well as your own insights to develop an argument and analysis. In addition, participation is central. We want to make this learning community productive for analytical discoveries and new kinds of social relations and political visions to emerge. I want each student to feel emboldened to pursue the task of analyzing unresolved questions and problems concerning race in America. To set us on this path to creating such an active, open, and engaged learning community, we need to be cognizant of the following operating principles:

Note-Taking: I want you to take notetaking seriously in this class. I make notations on the board constantly as we all present ideas and make connections among these ideas. I paraphrase and locate these comments in the context of class discussion. I keep track of these flashes of critical insights so that you would see how we collectively work toward the synthesis of main arguments and analytical insights derived from assigned readings and exchanges of ideas. This task of synthesis is one of the central learning objectives of this class.

Being on Time: This class will become generative and enabling

(1) if you come to class on time and are all consistent in attendance.

(2) if you come to class prepared to discuss assigned readings; and

(3) if everyone feels a sense of responsibility toward each other and the class overall.

This course's attendance policy is this: You are expected to attend all class meetings. If you miss three class periods or more, your overall grade will be penalized. If you miss more than six class periods, you will receive a failing grade for the semester. Also, remember that two instances of tardiness will count as one absence. This attitude toward preparedness is key to academic success. If you are unable to hand in your assignments on time, you will unquestionably receive low grades. Once you fall behind, you will end up rushing through the course materials just to catch up rather than completing the assignments with the kind of care and attention that you need to do well. Keep in mind that the late assignment will be penalized at least a half-letter-grade each class it is late for two weeks. Thereafter, your assignment will be considered missing work, and you will receive a failing grade. In this class, you will have to complete all the assignments to receive a passing grade. Any legitimate conflicts must be discussed and presented in writing.

Generally, if you receive a failing grade on one of the assignments you will end up with a semester grade lower than C-.

Working Together. The central idea that drives our concept of participation is collaboration.

Throughout the semester, you will work together with your peers in small groups. Learning how to work with different people with various orientations and experiences is how one learns to move through and make connections across complexities.

University Policies

Student Conduct Code

The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community.

As a student at the University, you are expected to adhere to Board of Regents Policy: Student Conduct Code. To review the Student Conduct Code, please see:

https://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/2019-09/policy_student_conduct_code.pdf

Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach and/or a student's ability to learn." The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities.

Scholastic Dishonesty

You are expected to do your own academic work and cite sources as necessary. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

(Student Conduct Code:

https://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/2019-09/policy_student_conduct_code.pdf)

If it is determined that a student has cheated, the student may be given an "F" or an "N" for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University. For additional information, please see: <https://policy.umn.edu/education/instructorresp>.

The Office for Community Standards has compiled a useful list of Frequently Asked Questions pertaining to scholastic dishonesty: <https://communitystandards.umn.edu/avoid-violations/avoiding-scholastic-dishonesty>.

If you have additional questions, please clarify with your instructor for the course. Your instructor can respond to your specific questions regarding what would constitute scholastic dishonesty in the context of a particular class, e.g., whether collaboration on assignments is permitted, requirements and methods for citing sources, if electronic aids are permitted or prohibited during an exam.

Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences

Students will not be penalized for absence during the semester due to unavoidable or legitimate circumstances. Such circumstances include verified illness, participation in intercollegiate athletic events, subpoenas, jury duty, military service, bereavement, and religious observances. Such circumstances do not include voting in local, state, or national elections. Documented absence due to illness, injury, surgery, death in the family, a family emergency should be reported to the instructor with an appropriate written excuse *immediately* following your absence. For complete information, please see: <https://policy.umn.edu/education/makeupwork>. Grades and grade-related concerns after the end of the semester will only be addressed via an official email account (umn.edu).

Appropriate Student Use of Class Notes and Course Materials

Taking notes is a means of recording information but more importantly of personally absorbing and integrating the educational experience. However, broadly disseminating class notes beyond the classroom community or accepting compensation for taking and distributing classroom notes undermines instructor interests in their intellectual work product while not substantially furthering instructor and student interests in effective learning. Such actions violate shared norms and standards of the academic community. For additional information, please see: <https://policy.umn.edu/education/studentresp>.

University Grading Scales

The University has two distinct grading scales: A-F and S-N.

A-F grading scale. The A-F grading scale allows the following grades and corresponding GPA points:

Grade	GPA	Points Definitions for undergraduate credit
A	4.000	Represents achievement that significantly exceeds expectations in the course.
A-	3.667	
B+	3.333	
B	3.000	
B-	2.667	Represents achievement that is above the minimum expectations in the course.
C+	2.333	
C	2.000	
C-	1.667	
D+	1.333	Represents achievement that partially meets the minimum expectations in the course. Credit is earned but it may not fulfill major or program requirements.
D	1.000	
F	0.000	Represents failure in the course and no credit is earned.

S-N grading scale.

The S-N grading scale allows for the following grades and corresponding GPA points:

Grade	GPA	Points Definitions for undergraduate credit
S	0.00	Satisfactory (equivalent to a C- or better)
N	0.00	Not Satisfactory

For additional information, please refer to: <https://policy.umn.edu/education/gradingtranscripts>.

Sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking and relationship violence

The University prohibits sexual misconduct, and encourages anyone experiencing sexual misconduct to access resources for personal support and reporting. If you want to speak confidentially with someone about an experience of sexual misconduct, please contact your campus resources including the Aurora Center, Boynton Mental Health or Student Counseling Services (<https://eoaa.umn.edu/report-misconduct>). If you want to report sexual misconduct, or have questions about the University's policies and procedures related to sexual misconduct, please contact your campus Title IX office or relevant policy contacts.

Instructors are required to share information they learn about possible sexual misconduct with the campus Title IX office that addresses these concerns. This allows a Title IX staff member to reach out to those who have experienced sexual misconduct to provide information about personal support resources and options for investigation. You may talk to instructors about concerns related to sexual misconduct, and they will provide support and keep the information you share private to the extent possible given their University role.

https://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/2019-09/policy_sexual_harassment_sexual_assault_stalking_and_relationship_violence.pdf

Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, & Affirmative Action

The University provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, membership or activity in a local commission created for the purpose of dealing with discrimination, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, please consult Board of Regents Policy:

https://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/2019-09/policy_equity_diversity_equal_opportunity_and_affirmative_action.pdf

Disability Accommodations

The University views disability as an important aspect of diversity, and is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations.

If you have, or think you have, a disability in any area such as, mental health, attention, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical, please contact the DRC office on your campus (UM Twin Cities - 626.1333) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

Students with short-term disabilities, such as a broken arm, can often work with instructors to minimize classroom barriers. In situations where additional assistance is needed, students should contact the DRC as noted above.

If you are registered with the DRC and have a disability accommodation letter dated for this semester or this year, please contact your instructor early in the semester to review how the accommodations will be applied in the course.

If you are registered with the DRC and have questions or concerns about your accommodations

please contact your (access consultant/disability specialist).

Additional information: Twin Cities - <https://diversity.umn.edu/disability/>, drc@umn.edu)

Mental Health and Stress Management

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health Website: <http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu>.

Academic Freedom and Responsibility:

Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the University. Within the scope and content of the course as defined by the instructor, it includes the freedom to discuss relevant matters in the classroom. Along with this freedom comes responsibility. Students are encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. Students are free to take reasoned exception to the views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.*

Reports of concerns about academic freedom are taken seriously, and there are individuals and offices available for help. Contact the instructor, the Department Chair, your adviser, the associate dean of the college, or the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs in the Office of the Provost. [Customize with names and contact information as appropriate for the course/college/campus.]

* Language adapted from the American Association of University Professors "Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students."

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Complaints Regarding Teaching/Grading

Students with complaints about teaching or grading should first try to resolve the problem with the instructor involved. Please note that no such discussion can be held at the beginning or end of class because of time constraints. Kindly, therefore, arrange to virtually meet with the instructor during a mutually convenient time. If no satisfactory resolution is reached through these venues, students may then discuss the matter with the Department Chair, Professor Karen Ho (karenho@umn.edu) 612-624-9847, who will attempt to mediate. Failing an informal resolution, the staff in the AA&AS departmental office will facilitate the filing of a formal complaint. Official U of M information on grading can be found at <http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/policies/gradingpolicy.html>

Course Schedule

Week 1 Defining Key Concepts: Race & Racism

Beverly Daniel Tatum, “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria” (Chapter 1 & 2). Toward an Autobiography of the Experience of Race: Describe your earliest memory of incidents that helped shape your race consciousness, as well as your racial identity, be it as White, Black, Asian, or Latina/o. The goal is to craft the autobiography of the experience of race. Your essay needs to be two pages in length (typed & double-spaced). Be specific, open, and honest about your own racial biases or your encounters with racial injustice (and white terror) within your family, community (such as at school and work), or circle of friends. The only thing I ask is that you be race conscious. Keep in mind that talking about race does not simply mean talking about people of color or their injury and hurt; it also involves confronting head on what it means to be white, including aspects of racial privilege and domination. Be sure to read Beverly Daniel Tatum’s chapters to stimulate your thinking, and when possible, utilize insights found in her work to shape your autobiography of the experience of race.

Week 2 How “Colorblind Racism” Works

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism & Racial Inequality in Contemporary America* (Chapter 1 & 2).

Week 3 How the “Possessive Investment in Whiteness” Works

George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (Introduction & Chapter 1).

Week 4 Toward a Synthesis Analytical Essay Assignment #1

The scholars of race contend that the idea that racism is over, or a tremendous sense of promise and hope attached to the doctrine of colorblindness, has crippled the efforts to confront head on the persistence of structural racism in contemporary America. The truth is that the strong shaping power of an idea that America is post-racial has made the work of antiracism more difficult and challenging. Drawing on Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, George Lipsitz, and Nathan McClintock’s essays, develop an analysis that can reinvigorate the discourse of antiracism. How might you engage with critics who adhere tenaciously to the doctrine of colorblindness? Format 4-5 pages in length. Typed & Double-spaced. Do not use first person. Cite when you paraphrase and incorporate quotes. Use the parenthetical citation method (author’s last name and page #). Edit your paper: work on transitions between ideas and sentences to achieve overall coherence. Proofread. Come up with an apt title that strikes at the core your thesis/main argument

Week 5 Race & Law: An American Indian Critique

Williams, *Like a Loaded Weapon*, Introduction (xiii-xxxvi) & Part I & II (p.1-83)

Week 6 Race & Law: The Legal Production of Mexican Illegality

Williams, *Like a Loaded Weapon*, Part III (p.85-133) & Conclusion (161-195)
Nicholas De Genova, “The Legal Production of Mexican/Migrant”

Week 7 Midterm Exam

Question: How has law contributed to the formation of a race-making nation in the history of the United States? To put it differently, how might you explain the material force of law, or its instrumentality in making white supremacy, especially in the context of colonialism toward Indian nations and Mexican immigration to the United States? The answer to these questions is your thesis statement. Develop your argument and analysis by concretely engaging with Williams’s *Like a Loaded Weapon* and De Genova’s essay.

SPRING BREAK Read & Finish Percival Everett, Erasure

Week 8 Entering the House Built by Race, Part I Claire Jean Kim, “The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans”.

Week 9 Entering the House Built by Race, Part II

Ishle Yi Park, *The Temperature of This Water*

Week 10 Toward a Synthesis Analytical Essay Assignment #2

In Percival Everett’s work of satire (*Erasure*) and Ishle Yi Park’s prose and poems (*The Temperature of This Water*), you find protagonists who have to struggle with their social existence because of dominant stereotypes about African Americans and Asian Americans. These stereotypes are tightly bound up with race, class, gender, and sexuality. An outcome is that these stereotypes foreclose avenues to fulfill deep and honest cross-racial human/social contact. That is to say, the basic human needs to be accepted as they are unfulfilled. Thus, ubiquitous are conflicts, divisions, and misunderstandings in their lives and surroundings. How do Everett and Park explore in their works the possibilities of cultivating new social relations and realities so that people of color can find a path to overcome the burden of stereotypes? You are required to carry out the close reading of the following two texts under review, *Erasure* and *The Temperature of This Water*. I also strongly encourage you to incorporate Spencer Nakasako’s documentary (*A.K.A. Don Bonus*). Claire Jean Kim’s theory of “racial triangulation” is particularly useful in terms of analyzing tensions and conflicts among people of color, which appear prominently in both *The Temperature of This Water* and *A.K.A. Don Bonus*. Format: 4-5 pages in length. Typed & Double-spaced. Do not use first person. Synthesize required texts. Cite when you paraphrase and incorporate quotes. Use the parenthetical citation method (author’s last name and page #). Edit your paper: work on transitions between ideas and sentences to achieve overall coherence. Proofread. Come up with an apt title that strikes at the core your thesis

Week 11 Learning from Grace Lee Boggs’s *The Next American Revolution*

Week 12: The Homegrown Minneapolis Initiative

Expanding the Local Food Movement: Food Security, Food Justice, or Food Sovereignty? “Crisis, Food Movements, and Regime Change” in *Cultivating Food Justice* (The MIT Press, 2011), 309-330.

Week 13: Toward a Food/Racial Justice Project in Minneapolis

Julie Guthman, “If They Only Knew: The Unbearable Whiteness of Alternative Food” in *Cultivating Food Justice* (The MIT Press, 2011), 263-281.

Week 14: Initial Draft Reviewed - Initial Draft Due on Monday, December 3

Week 15: Wrap Up Due: The Final Project

FINAL PROJECT In the spring of 2009, Minneapolis Mayor R. T. Rybak unveiled an outline of an ambitious local food policy called Homegrown Minneapolis. At the center of this initiative are foods we eat; it recognizes the lack of access to fresh and affordable food in poor communities as a major problem. It aims to create a dynamic local food system of “urban food agriculture enterprise” that can bring together the local food resources. It emboldens policymakers, city residents, and young people to participate in the process of growing, selling, distributing, and

consuming fresh and locally grown food. Keeping Mayor Rybak's Homegrown Minneapolis initiative in mind, write a potentially conversation-changing essay that not only challenges how the local food system initiative is being carried out by the city, but more important suggests ways to move in the new directions. Particularly important to recognize as you review Homegrown Minneapolis is the absence of the revolutionary paradigm for structural change that Martin Luther King, Jr. articulated in his final years and Grace Lee Boggs puts to work at the grassroots in Detroit. Specifically, in this final project, you will write a critical analysis paper that presents the vision of "Minneapolis Homegrown 2035" the vision of the future that radically revises the existing "Minneapolis Homegrown" blueprint. Grace Lee Boggs refers to this exercise in critical thinking and social practice "visioning" borrowing from Bunyan Bryant's concept called "futuring." In "Rehearsing the Future" (1995), Bryant explains: While many of us will become students of history to help interpret and understand world developments, some of us will have to become students of the future. Futuring is based upon hope. Hope gives not only direction and meaning to our visions and actions, but also confidence in what we can become. Hope reaffirms our existence and connects us to the future. Hope is the force that propels us through life, giving us nourishment, purpose, and energy for our actions. Futuring causes us to question assumptions we make about life. Through the techniques of writing and sharing stories, creating images, and participating in roleplays, we can simulate events as though we are already in the future. Our objective in such visualizations is not to predict the future, but to perceive potential futures in the here-and-now and to conceptualize what it will take to get there from here. We can rehearse the future in the present so that we can correct our mistakes before we make them. Rehearsing the future in the present will allow us to ask critical questions and make us more skilled at long-range planning. Rehearsing the future broadens our consciousness to ideas that we otherwise might never consider. We can no longer relegate this task of futuring solely to professionals. Futuring, like other activities, has been compartmentalized from our daily lives. But there is no monopoly on futurism. Every person has the childlike ability to spontaneously create. To bring it forth we must let down our collective guard and allow ourselves to think creatively about the future, about the kind of world we want for ourselves and our children.

Main Question: What would it take to bring together "food justice" and "racial justice" to create a new society? Perform the task of "futuring" that is to say "rehearse the future in the present to present the roadmap to create a new society. This new blueprint must fundamentally critique the limitations and problems of existing Minneapolis Homegrown visions and orientations. Be sure to engage with Minneapolis Homegrown materials to develop a critique. Moreover, to develop an overall analysis, you are required to utilize the insights of Boggs. Also essential are essays written by Eric Holt-Gimenez and Julie Guthman. These pieces will help you understand different degrees of political engagement (from neoliberal to progressive to radical) within alternative food movements and initiatives. The understanding of various political positions is essential to shaping the critique of Minneapolis Homegrown. Also, as a model, look at how Grace Lee Boggs responded to the task of "futuring: Detroit Youth 2032"

<http://www.context.org/iclib/ic40/boggs/>.

Your paper will need to be six pages in length (1500 words).

Updates, *Changes, Modifications and/or Revisions:*

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this schedule to facilitate student learning. Any changes in the schedule will be communicated to students via Canvas. This syllabus is available in alternative formats upon request.