

Sociology 134: American Racial and Ethnic Minorities
Fall Semester, 2009

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TR 11:00am-12:15pm
5106 Sewell Social Science
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Summary

Sociology 134 provides a basic sociological understanding of relations among racial and ethnic groups in the United States. A sociological approach includes considering race and ethnicity as social constructs that permeate all social life and are entrenched in social structures and institutions. More concretely, we will attempt to understand the ways in which race and ethnicity continually shape public policy and our experience of the world and ourselves.

Such a perspective suggests that: (1) race and racism are reflective of society-wide power relationships that deeply affect all of us on a daily basis; (2) that racial and ethnic categories—including “white”—can be viewed usefully as the result of historical struggles over economic resources, political access, and cultural identity, rather than as objective measures of biological difference; and (3) the institutional forms of racism, indelibly etched into this nation’s past, did not end with Civil Rights legislation in the 1960s but continue to shape social institutions today.

Readings

All readings and other materials for this course are available through the course website on Learn@UW. I encourage you to go paperless and try reading the articles straight off your computer. It takes a while to get used to but it’s free and it saves trees. Or you can print them off.

Assignments

There will be a weekly two-page paper submitted through Learn@UW, except the weeks when there is an exam. The deadline is 11:00am on Thursdays.

For these papers, you will choose a 1-3 sentence quote from your readings that are due that week. Put the quote, along with the name of the reading and the page it came from at the top of your paper. The quote cannot come from the article abstract or from the first page of the article. Then do either of the following:

- Discuss whether you agree or disagree with the quote and why. You may use a wide variety of sources to support your argument, including personal experience and observation, material from other courses, other material from this course, etc.
- Discuss how the quote might apply to some current event or public policy debate. For example, if your quote is about racial discrimination in hiring practices, how might you use that information in the current debate about

health care reform? Or, how might a quote about racial stereotyping help us to understand the recent incident with the Harvard's Professor Gates?

The assignments will be graded on a 10 point scale:

10--This is an assignment that exhibits exceptional effort, insight and mastery of course material. You really have to knock my socks off for a 10.

9--This is a paper that fulfills the assignment adequately, shows a reasonable understanding of course material and doesn't have any major flaws. The vast majority of assignments will fall into this category.

8--This is an assignment that doesn't quite fulfill the requirements. It is way too brief, contains many factual errors, fails to provide evidence that you actually did the reading, or shows that you don't understand the course material.

Your lowest assignment will be dropped from your average, which means you can blow it off for one week without consequence.

Illness

Due to the H1N1 virus this season, I ask that you stay home if you are sick. I will post lecture slides on the course website after class and I encourage you to get notes from a friend. If you miss a video, I will put most of them on reserve at College Library after I show them in class and you can watch them there later. If you miss an assignment due to illness, you have to use your freebie first. If you've already missed one assignment, and you have to miss another, send me an email and I will give you special access to the dropbox. **To be able to turn in a late assignment, you must have emailed me at least 12 hours prior to the due date of the assignment, ie. 11pm on Wednesday night.** If you don't email me ahead of time, I will not accept a late assignment.

Exams

There will be three 50-point objective exams (multiple choice, matching, T/F, etc.). The exams will be open notes, open book. You will take them during normal class time, but you will take them at home, in a computer lab or wherever you choose. If you really like sitting in the lecture hall, you can bring your laptop there and take the exam, I don't care. The only rule is that you must work alone. The order of the questions will be randomized for each person, so you will not be able to divide up the questions and work in groups. Consulting with another person on the exam, whether that person is in the class or not, is considered cheating. If I find out about any cheating, i.e. working together, I will fail everyone involved and send letters to the dean recommending academic discipline. For further information about this, see the university's policy on academic misconduct.

Schedule

Part I: The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity

Week 1—September 8 and 10

What is Race? What is Ethnicity?

- “The Race Myth”
- “Who is Black?”
- Video—Race: The Power of an Illusion, Pt. 1
- PAPER DUE THURSDAY

Week 2—September 15 and 17

Changing Ideas of Race and Ethnicity

- “How Jews Became White Folks”
- “America’s Changing Color Lines”
- Video—Race: The Power of an Illusion, Pt. III
- PAPER DUE THURSDAY

Week 3—September 22 and 24

Racial and Ethnic Identities

- “Getting Under My Skin”
- “Looking Back at the Balcony”
- “Real Indians”
- Video—Between: Living in the Hyphen
- PAPER DUE THURSDAY

Week 4—September 29 and October 1

Racial and Ethnic Identities, cont.

- “Optional Ethnicities”
- EXAM THURSDAY

Part II: Stereotypes, Racism and Discrimination

Week 5—October 6 and 8

Racism

- “Defining Racism”
- “Breaking the Silence”
- “The Anatomy of Racially Motivated Violence in New York City”
- Video—TBA
- PAPER DUE THURSDAY

Week 6—October 13 and 15

Stereotypes and the Media

- “Self-fulfilling Stereotypes”
- “The Mascot Slot”
- “Battle Rages Over a Five Letter 4-Letter Word”
- “Racism in Toyland”
- Video—Ethnic Notions
- PAPER DUE THURSDAY

Week 7—October 20 and 22

Discrimination

- “Blaming the Victim”
- “Discrimination and the American Creed”
- “Racial Profiling”
- Video—TBA
- PAPER DUE THURSDAY

Week 8—October 27 and 29

White Privilege

- “Failing to See”
- “Looking at White Culture”
- “White Privilege Shapes the US”
- Video—TBA
- PAPER DUE THURSDAY

Week 9—November 3 and 5

Affirmative Action

- “Affirmative Action”
- EXAM ON THURSDAY

Part III: Mapping Racial and Ethnic Inequality

Week 10—November 10 and 12

Residential Segregation

- “Half Empty of Half Full?”
- Video—TBA
- PAPER DUE THURSDAY

Week 11—November 17 and 19

Education

- “Hitting Them Hardest When They’re Small”
- “Savage Inequalities”
- Video—I am Promise
- PAPER DUE THURSDAY

Week 12—November 24 and Thanksgiving

Work and the Economy

- “Can’t Afford to Lose a Bad Job”
- “Five Myths about Immigration”
- **NO PAPER DUE**

Week 13—December 1 and 3

Environment and Health

- ”Environmental Justice in the 21st Century”
- Video—Unnatural Causes
- **PAPER DUE THURSDAY**

Week 14—December 8 and 10

Criminal Justice

- “Color Lines”
- “Race and Criminalization”
- Video—TBA
- **NO PAPER DUE**

Week 15—December 15

* **EXAM ON TUESDAY**