COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is an introduction to the sociological study of racial orders in comparative and historical perspective. This is not a course about the experiences of particular “races” or ethnic groups in any particular part of the world. Rather, this is a course about how the idea that human beings come naturally partitioned into races takes hold in different parts of the world in different ways, and with different consequences for those considered to be members of such groups. A central objective of the course is to encourage students to think critically about the historical and contemporary meanings of race in the United States through comparison with the operation of race as a principle of social division and exclusion in other times and places.

The course is divided into three parts. The first part (weeks 1-4) introduces basic concepts and ideas that will enable you to critically engage the material presented in the rest of the course. The issues covered in part I of the course include: the social, historical, and political construction of race vs. its apparent reality as biological fact; the distinction between everyday, commonsense notions of race and its use as an analytical concept in the social sciences; problems of conceptual travelling (using concepts rooted in the historical experience of one time and place to analyze other times and places); and an introduction to some of the general social processes at work in the construction, maintenance, and reproduction of racial boundaries (including categorization, social closure, political mobilization, public policy, and law).

The second part of the course (weeks 5-9) focuses on the historical construction of racial boundaries in different contexts. This semester, we will focus primarily on the historical experiences of the United States, Spanish Latin America, Brazil and South Africa, with some supplementary materials drawn from other countries as well. We will explore how and why systems of racial classification have differed historically within and across national borders. By the end of this part of the course, students should be able to identify similarities and differences in the logics of racial classification (and thus the meaning of “race”) that crystallized in these countries at different points in time, and to recognize some of the historical reasons for -- and implications of-- these differences.

The final part of the course (weeks 10-15) examines contemporary antiracist struggles in comparative perspective, focusing especially on the United States, Brazil, Cuba and South Africa. With an analytical lens that has been sensitized by our recognition of the particular (il)logic of racial classification in each context, we will survey the trajectories of antiracist struggle in each country since WWII and compare some contemporary indicators of racial inequality in these societies. Questions addressed in this part of the course include: How have the distinct social and political histories of
each country informed efforts to combat ethnoracial prejudice, discrimination, and inequality from the 1950s to today? Do these historical legacies make particular strategies for combating racial inequality more likely to succeed in one context than another? What lessons might one country’s experience in combating racial inequality offer another (and what lessons might be less easily transferred)? Are particular strategies for fighting discrimination and prejudice in one society directly applicable to another? How do debates about multiculturalism and affirmative action play out in these different contexts?

**REQUIREMENTS:**

The single most important requirement of this course is that you approach the reading, lectures, and discussions with an open mind. The material covered in this course will challenge many of you think about the seemingly familiar phenomena of race in new ways. You do not have to agree with everything you read in this class. But you will be expected to take the arguments and ideas of the authors you read seriously, and to critically engage them in discussion, in the midterm, and in the final exam.

This course is designed for students with some background in social science. Due to the difficulty of some of the material it is not recommended for students who have never taken courses in social science before.

Attendance at lecture is required. Lectures will supplement and expand on the assigned reading; they will not restate what you have already read. Each week’s lectures will build on previous lectures. This means that missing class will put you at a disadvantage for comprehending subsequent lectures. Lectures will be run as structured discussions, so if you are absent you will neither benefit from the insights of your classmates nor be able to make your own contribution to the class. Please note that I reserve the right to call on you to solicit your input at any time during a lecture. Preferably, you will all volunteer to participate so this practice will not be necessary. Attendance and participation will count for 15% of your final course grade. You are allowed two unexcused absences over the course of the semester with no questions asked. After that, any unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your participation grade.

To get the most out of lectures and to facilitate engaging discussions, you are expected to do ALL the reading assigned for each week before the first class meeting for that week. I believe that active, informed discussion is one of the best ways to develop critical thinking skills and learn the material at hand. If you are not prepared for class, you not only miss out on this valuable opportunity, you also lower (or at least do not help to elevate) the level of the discussion, and thus detract from the learning experience of others. I therefore consider it the responsibility of every student enrolled in this class to come prepared. This means not only reading the material assigned for each week, but thinking about it as well. Please look over the syllabus and be realistic about the amount of time you will need to devote to this course in order to meet this requirement.

**Required Reading:** All the required reading for the course is contained in a reader available from the Social Science Copy Center, 6120 Social Science Building.
A note on Academic Honesty: It is assumed that all students are familiar with the University’s policies regarding academic honesty and misconduct. (If you need a reminder, see www/wisc.edu/students/amsum.htm). Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be dealt with according to the strictest sanctions at my disposal. Academic misconduct includes any effort to pass off someone else’s work as your own, such as turning in work done by someone else, cheating on exams, plagiarism (using the words or ideas of others without citing the source -- including cutting and pasting text from the web), etc. In sum, you are expected to do your own work. If you have any doubts about what constitutes legitimate vs. illegitimate use of other’s work, please ask. The Writing Center’s handout titled “Quoting, Paraphrasing and Acknowledging Sources” can also help clarify any confusion on such matters.

The Department of Sociology is licensed to use a powerful anti-plagiarism software which compares student work to a vast, comprehensive data base of on-line texts and to papers submitted to Sociology courses in previous semesters. Any written work submitted to this class may be processed through the anti-plagiarism software. In addition, you are hereby notified that any written work you submit to this class may be entered into the anti-plagiarism database so that it cannot be plagiarized in future semesters. A clear definition of plagiarism as well as information about disciplinary sanctions for academic misconduct may be found at the Dean of Students web site: http://www.wisc.edu/students/UWS14.htm. Knowledge of these rules is your responsibility, and lack of familiarity with the rules does not excuse misconduct.

GRADES:

Your grade in the course will be determined by the following:
1. Take-home writing assignment (25%)
2. Midterm exam (25%)
3. Final Exam (35%)
4. Participation (15%)

1. Take-home writing assignment: Distributed in class on February 10 and due at the beginning of class on February 15. This will be a short writing assignment (3 double-spaced pages) based on the content of the first four weeks of the course. More details will be provided in class.

2. An in-class midterm exam will be given on Thursday, March 17. The midterm will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions. It will cover the reading, lectures and discussions from the first half of the class. A study guide will be provided in class one week before the exam.

3. A final exam will be given on the officially scheduled date and time: Wednesday, May 11, 2:45pm. Location TBA.

4. Participation grade is determined by attendance (10%) and quality of contribution to class discussions (5%).
Please note: The scheduled dates for assignments and exams are NOT flexible. Do not remain enrolled in this class if you will be unable to take exams and complete assignments on the scheduled dates.

Grades will be changed ONLY in the case of calculation error.

**GRADUATE STUDENTS:** Graduate students enrolled in this class should consult with the instructor during the first three weeks of the semester during office hours to discuss their research interests and expectations for the course. In addition to demonstrating mastery of the course material through completion of the requirements described above, graduate students are expected to complete an additional research assignment for this course related to the existing literature on race and ethnicity and/or their ongoing research for their masters thesis or dissertation project. The design and content of this research assignment will be determined for each graduate student in consultation with the instructor.
Course Outline

Week 1: (January 18 and 20)
Introduction

Thursday, Jan 20: Screening of “Race: the Power of an Illusion” Part I

Required Reading for Week 1
“Races as the Same Machine in Different Colors” (New York Times, Jan 1, 2002)

Recommended
James C. King. “Traditional Misconceptions about Human Variation” and “Unity and Variety in the Human Species” (Ch.6 and 7 of The Biology of Race).

Week 2: (January 25 and 27)
The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity

Required Reading for Week 2

Recommended
Wacquant, Loic. “For an Analytic of Racial Domination” Political Power and Social Theory, v.11 (221-234)
Week 3: (February 1 and 3)

How “race” gets constructed (I): Categorization, social boundaries, inclusion and exclusion

Required Reading for Week 3

Jenkins, Richard. “Rethinking ethnicity: identity, categorization and power”

Longman, Timothy. “Identity Cards, Ethnic Self-Perception, and Genocide in Rwanda” (pp. 345-357 in Jane Caplan and John Torpey (eds).

Cornell, Stephen and Douglas Hartmann. “A Constructionist Approach” and

Recommended


Week 4: (February 8 and 10)

How “race” gets constructed (II): Law, public policy, and political process

Required Reading for Week 4


Recommended


**Take-home Writing Assignment**: Handed out in class Feb. 10. **Due at the beginning of class on Feb. 15**. Details will be provided in class.

**Part II: Racial (il)logics in comparative-historical perspective**

**Week 5: (February 15 and 17)**

**The United States: the historical peculiarity of the “one drop rule”**

Tuesday, Feb 15: Screening of “*Race: The Power of an Illusion*” Part II

**Required Reading for Week 5**

“Letter from Thomas Jefferson: Virginia’s Definition of a Mulatto” (pp.405-406 in Ferrante and Brown, Jr. [eds.])


**Recommended:**


**Week 6: (February 22 and 24)**

**The idea of “race” in Latin America**


**Recommended:**

Week 7: (March 1 and 3)

“Whitening” and the Ideology of Racial Democracy in Brazil

Required Reading for Week 7
Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics. “What Color are You?”

Recommended
Degler, Carl N. *Neither Black nor White.*

Week 8: (March 8 and 10)

Color lines in South Africa

Required Reading for Week 7

Recommended:

Week 9: March 15 and 17

Mid-term review (Tuesday, March 15)
Midterm Exam (Thursday, March 17)
(No new reading this week)

Week 10: SPRING RECESS March 19-27. No Class this Week.

Part III: Contemporary Antiracist Struggles in Comparative Perspective

Week 11: (March 29 and 31)

Racial(ized) Inequality in the Contemporary United States

Tuesday, March 23: Screening of “Race- The Power of an Illusion” Part III

Required Reading for Week 11

Week 12: (April 5 and 7)

Antiracist Politics in the Contemporary United States: Racial Identities and Affirmative Action

Required Reading for Week 12
Two short overviews of affirmative action:
http://www.infoplease.com/spot/affirmative1.html [“Bakke and Beyond: A history and timeline of Affirmative Action”]

Recommended:

Week 13: (April 12 and 14)

Combating Racism in Contemporary Brazil: Obstacles and Opportunities

Required Reading for Week 13

Recommended:
do Nascimento, Abdias, and Elisa Larkin Nascimento. “Dance of Deception: A Reading of Race Relations in Brazil” (pp.105-156 in Beyond Racism).

Week 14: (April 19 and 21)

State Socialism and Racial Inequality: the Cuban Experience
Required Reading for Week 14
   De la Fuente, A Nation for All, Part IV (pp259-339).

Week 15: (April 26 and 28)

Post-Apartheid South Africa: A “non-racial” future?

Required Reading for Week 14

Recommended:
   Ramphele, Mamphela. “Combating Racism in South Africa: Redress/Remedies” (pp.63-83 in Beyond Racism).

Week 16 (May 3 and 5):

Comparative Lessons, Future Prospects

Required Reading for Week 16

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 11, 2:45pm, location TBA