Media, race, and identity   Summer 2021

University of Heidelberg   **Romanisches Seminar**
Dr. Giulia Pelillo-Hestermeyer   **Prof. Gil Rodman**
giulia.pelillo@urz.uni-heidelberg.de   gil@gilrodman.com

Course description

Racial prejudice and institutional racism remain significant problems today, and race continues to matter tremendously when it comes to the distribution of education, jobs, housing, healthcare, justice, political power, and then some. One of the most significant arenas where racial politics manifest themselves is the broad and varied terrain of contemporary media. We will spend the semester studying how this thing we call "race" both shapes and is shaped by a variety of media practices and policies. In particular, we will examine:
  • the social construction of race and racial identity,
  • the public discourses around racial/ethnic assimilation and integration,
  • the politics of media representation and invisibility,
  • the history of interracial cultural borrowing and theft,
  • the racialization of marginalized ethnic, religious, and national identities, and
  • the transcultural negotiations of race and racism in the context of globalization.

The course is for MA students and students in the final phase of the BA (Hauptseminar/Proseminar +), and will include both synchronous and asynchronous activities (i.e., Zoom meetings, and Moodle forum discussions, respectively).

Course philosophy and requirements

The course requires you to participate in all activities and to engage in all the topics covered during the semester. This is _not_ a course where you will be able to read at your own pace for several months and then turn in a Referat or a Hausarbeit at the end of the semester. Instead, this course will require you to contribute to the course blog on a weekly basis and participate in Zoom discussions every other week. Those interactions, in turn, will depend on you doing the required readings with enough care and thought for you to be able to contribute productively to both sets of discussions all semester long.

Overall, the formal written requirements for the course total ~8000 words, divided roughly equally between the course blog and a final essay.

Moodle

You can find our course Moodle site here or at https://moodle.uni-heidelberg.de among the courses offered by the Neuphilologische Fakultät.

We will use Moodle for several things this semester:
  • access to the official course documents
  • access to all the required readings and podcasts
  • a course blog where you will contribute posts about the readings and podcasts
  • a repository for relevant media examples and optional supplemental readings
  • business-related announcements about the course

Course Structure

The course is structured in 7 Blocks. Except for Block #1 (which lasts 3 weeks), each Block is 2 weeks long. Except for Block #7 (which is when you will submit a draft of your final paper, and the class will collectively workshop everyone's drafts), each Block will include a podcast for you to listen to, several texts for you to read, and online discussions (both synchronous and asynchronous) for you to contribute to.

Class "meetings"

We have organized the course into 7 Blocks. Blocks #2-6 will use the following schedule:
- Day 2, 17:00 (first Tuesday): We will share a podcast about the Block's required readings, with prompts to help frame our discussions for the rest of the Block.
- Day 5, 17:00 (first Friday): By this day/time, you should have made at least one contribution (type #1 or #2, see below) to our online discussions.
- Day 9, 17:00 (second Tuesday): By this day/time, you should have submitted your second contribution to our forum for the Block in question.
- Day 12, 11:15 (second Friday): We will hold a full-class discussion about the Block's materials on Zoom.

Block #1 is an introductory Block that lasts for 3 weeks instead of 2. It will include some brief preliminary readings and an extra Zoom meeting during the first of those weeks, with the last two weeks matching the same rhythm described above.

Block #7 is devoted to the class' final papers, drafts of which will be submitted during the first week, and the class as a whole will read those drafts and collectively workshop them during 2 Zoom meetings on the final Friday.

Blog

The blog is a forum where you and your classmates will stake out clear positions on the _major_ issues raised by the required readings and podcasts, and offer persuasive arguments to support those positions. Posts/comments that (1) are primarily summaries of the readings, (2) focus mostly on minor facets of the readings and/or topics outside of the course content, or (3) offer simple statements of (dis)agreement without any substantive commentary of your own will _not_ meet this requirement.

For any given Block, there are two types of contributions you can make:
- Type #1: a post of _at least 250 words_ of thoughtful commentary about the readings.
- Type #2: a thoughtful response of _at least 250 words_ to that block's podcast.

For evaluation purposes, only your own words count: e.g., 75 words from you plus 200 words quoted from elsewhere counts as 75 words, rather than 275. Similarly, if your contributions include large amounts of filler prose, only the substantive words will count toward the requirements above. Any given contribution must be substantially different from your other contributions: i.e., you don't get credit simply for rephrasing an argument you've already made in previous posts/comments. Posts/comments shorter than 250 words will _not_ count toward the requirements above.

<u>Tips, advice, and other rules</u>
- While there is no formal upper limit on your contributions to the blog, we *strongly* recommend that you keep your posts and comments to less than 500 words.
- Your contributions to our discussions should be respectful and constructive -- *especially* (though not exclusively) if you are disagreeing with something one of your classmates has written.
- Good blog contributions involve an approach to writing that is simultaneously more formal than the average in-class discussion but less formal than a standard research paper. You should craft your words with enough care for them to serve as productive contributions to the discussion, but you do not need to approach them as if you are producing a publishable essay. Nevertheless, being this an academic blog, you should carefully quote all the sources (essays, books as well as online sources) and always mention the author of the contents you quote also when referring to contributions made by your classmates (s. section "academic dishonesty" below)
- The biweekly rhythm of the course is likely to vary from student to student, and potentially even from block to block. The general goal, however, is for there to be a structured conversation that flows and unfolds over the entire two-week span of the block. You should aim to complete the reading as early in the block as you can, and to spread your required contributions to the discussion out across the two weeks.
- Individual posts/comments are *not* required to address all the readings for any given block, or all the major issues raised by any individual reading (this would, in most cases, be difficult to do well in only 250-500 words). That said, we still expect that the totality of your contributions to our discussions will reflect the depth and breadth with which you have done all the readings for any given block, and our formal evaluation of your work for the course will be shaped by this.

<u>Technical instructions</u>
The Moodle site is structured in sections. In each section you will find the readings, our audio/video with the prompts, and the blog. To create a post, click on the forum icon and then on "add a new discussion topic." To create a comment, click on the title of the post you want to comment on, and then on "Reply" (at the bottom right side). When you are done with your comment, click on "submit" to publish it.

<u>Essays</u>

Your major writing project is a short essay on a topic of your choosing that speaks in significant ways to *all three* of the major aspects of the course theme: i.e., media, race, and identity. In Block #7, you will upload a draft of your essay at the end of the first week for the entire class to read. We will hold 2 Zoom sessions at the end of Block #7, where the class as a whole will workshop each other's drafts. If you are hoping to earn 5 CP for this course, your essay should be at least 3500 words. If you are hoping to to earn 6 CP for this course, your essay should be at least 4500 words.

We would be happy to meet with you during the semester to help you think about the specific topics for your essays, the potential arguments you might make, additional sources you might consult, and so on. Please feel free to contact us, and we will set up mutually agreeable days/times for Zoom meetings.

Timing

The following table displays the timing of the major course activities:

	Activity	Date	Time
1. block	Podcast available	15 April	12:00
	Introductory Zoom meeting	16 April	11:15 - 12:45
	First blog contribution due	23 April	17:00
	Second blog contribution due	27 April	17:00
	Zoom discussion	30 April	11:15 - 12:45
2. block	Podcast available	4 May	17:00
	First blog contribution due	7 May	17:00
	Second blog contribution due	11 May	17:00
	Zoom discussion	14 May	11:15 - 12:45
3. block	Podcast available	18 May	17:00
	First blog contribution due	21 May	17:00
	Second blog contribution due	25 May	17:00
	Zoom discussion	28 May	11:15 - 12:45
4. block	Podcast available	1 June	17:00
	First blog contribution due	4 June	17:00
	Second blog contribution due	8 June	17:00
	Zoom discussion	11 June	11:15 - 12:45
5. block	Podcast available	15 June	17:00
	First blog contribution due	18 June	17:00
	Second blog contribution due	22 June	17:00
	Zoom discussion	25 June	11:15 - 12:45
6. block	Podcast available	29 June	17:00
	First blog contribution due	2 July	17:00
	Second blog contribution due	6 July	17:00
	Zoom discussion	9 July	11:15 - 12:45
7. block	Essay drafts due	16 July	17:00
	Zoom workshop of drafts and final discussion	23 July	11:15 - 12:45 **and** 14:00 - 15:30

Academic dishonesty

We expect you to understand and use proper citation techniques when you refer to and/or quote work originated by others (including your classmates). The following is a *partial* list of examples of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism in any of its forms
- copying assignments (in whole or in part) produced by other students
- "double-dipping" (i.e., using the same work to earn more than one grade -- including attempts to reuse work that you have submitted for a grade in some other course)
- having someone else research and/or write substantial portions of any graded assignment for you
- deleting and/or re-editing discussion posts/comments after they've been placed on the course Moodle site
- knowingly assisting someone else in their efforts to engage in any of the above practices

Put bluntly, the risks are high (plagiarism is usually easy to identify), the penalties are higher (e.g., you could fail to earn credit for the course), and the potential benefits are usually trivial (e.g., you have saved yourself the "trouble" of writing a 250-word blog post on your own).

Miscellaneous

- Our discussions will cover topics that may evoke strong differences of opinion. We don't expect our discussions to produce unanimous agreement, but we do expect them to be characterized by mutual respect and collegiality. Strong opinions are acceptable; verbal bullying and personal attacks, however, will _not_ be tolerated.
- "What happens on Moodle stays on Moodle": i.e., the contents of this course -- whether provided by us or you -- are not intended for public circulation or distribution. You are permitted to download and make personal backup copies of such materials for purposes of completing the course successfully, but not otherwise.

Readings

Block #1: The Politics of Representation (12-30 April)
Required readings
- Stuart Hall, "Europe's Other Self"
- Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"
- Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities"
- bell hooks, "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination"
- Edward Said, "The Politics of Knowledge"
- Thomas Nail, "Migrant Images"
- Veronika Zablotksy, "Unsanctioned Agency: Risk Profiling, Racialized Masculinity, and the Making of Europe's 'Refugee Crisis'"

Suggested readings
- Stuart Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media"
- Randy Ontiveros, "No Golden Age: Television News and the Chicano Civil Rights Movement"

Block #2: The Popular (1 -14 May)
Required readings
- Stuart Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?"
- Peter A. Chvany, "Do We Look Like Ferengi Capitalists to You?: Star Trek's Klingons as Emergent Virtual American Ethnics"
- S. Elizabeth Bird. "Imagining Indians: Negotiating Identity in a Media World"
- Eric Lott, "The Blackening of America: Popular Culture and National Cultures

Suggested readings
- Lori Harrison-Kahan, "Inside _Inside Man_: Spike Lee and Post 9-11 Entertainment"
- Sut Jhally & Justin Lewis, "White Responses: The Emergence of 'Enlightened' Racism"
- Grant Farred, _Phantom Calls: Race and the Globalization of the NBA_ [selections]

Block #3: Language (15-28 May)
Required readings
- Rey Chow, "Skin Tones -- About Language, Postcoloniality, and Racialization"
- Rey Chow, "Translator, Traitor; Translator, Mourner (Or, Dreaming of Intercultural Equivalence"
- Frantz Fanon, "The Negro and Language"
- Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Writing 'Race' and the Difference It Makes"
- Gloria Anzaldúa, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue"

Suggested readings
- Ien Ang, "On Not Speaking Chinese"
- Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*

Block #4: Intersections (29 May-11 June)
Required readings
- Patricia J. Williams, "The Distribution of Distress"
- Krista Lynes, "SOPHIA: The Language of 'Trafficking' in the Mediation of Gendered Migration"
- Ralina L. Joseph, "'Mutts Like Me': Mixed-Race Jokes and Post-Racial Rejection in the Obama Era"
- Christopher Rivera, "The Brown Threat: Post-9/11 Conflation of Latina/os and Middle Eastern Muslims in the US American Imagination"
- Carol A. Stabile, "Criminalizing Black Culture"

Suggested readings
- Adrian Piper, "Passing for White, Passing for Black"
- Kai Linke, "Jaime Cortez's *Sexile/Sexilio*: Unlearning Homonationalism and Developing Alternative Discourses"

Block #5: Love and Theft (12-25 June)
Required readings
- Eric Michaels, "Bad Aboriginal Art"
- bell hooks, "Madonna: Plantation Mistress or Soul Sister?"
- Arthur Jafa, "My Black Death"
- Laikwan Pang, "Copying *Kill Bill*"
- Minh-Ha T. Pham, "Racial Plagiarism and Fashion"
- Gilbert B. Rodman, "Lions and Writers and Birds, Oh My: The Racial Politics of Copyright"

Suggested readings
- Gilbert B. Rodman, "A Hero to Most?: Elvis, Myth, and the Politics of Race"
- Gilbert B. Rodman, "Race . . . and Other Four Letter Words: Eminem and the Cultural Politics of Authenticity"

Block #6: Space, Place, and the Future (26 June-9 July)
<u>Required readings</u>
- Karen Shimakawa, "Mind Yourself: On Soundwalking, Race and Gender"
- Garnette Cadogan, "Black and Blue"
- Thomas Keenan & Sohrab Mohebbi, "Listing"
- Krista Lynes & Abdessamad El Montassir, "'The Adouaba Project': Tranquilos, Adwaba and Moving Spaces"
- Gilbert B. Rodman, "What We (Still) Have to Learn: Stuart Hall and the Struggle Against Racism"

<u>Suggested readings</u>
- Lauren Berlant, "The Face of America and the State of Emergency"
- Paul Gilroy, "The Crisis of 'Race' and Raciology"

Block #7: Submission and workshopping of your essays (10-23 July)