

PSCI3294-581: Theories of Identity

Professor Scott B. Ritner

Course Meetings: Asynchronous Online.

Drop-In Hours: Thursdays 11am-1pm in Ketchum 137 or on [Zoom](#) or by appointment.

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Course Description:

Race, Gender, Class, Sexual orientation, ethnicity, citizenship, political affiliation. What do these different group identities mean to Americans? How do they influence our politics? Should we celebrate or downplay our diversity? This course explores how we think about others and ourselves as members of different groups and what consequences it has for how we treat one another. Our fundamental social identities can be a source of power or of powerlessness, a justification for inequality or for bold social reform. Students learn about the importance of race, class, gender and sexual orientation across a variety of important contexts, such as the family, workplace, schools, and popular culture and the implications these identities have on our daily lives.

This course is designed to take questions around conceptions of identity and the everyday interactions of politics. We take up these questions from the perspective of the scholarly debates that have shaped and continue to shape political practice in the United States. We will examine theories (or models) that seek to capture the relationship between personal, public, and impersonal conceptions of identity. We will discuss how familiar identities are imposed, implied, performed, and practiced for one's own self and in public discourse. We will discuss both how identity creates an "us" and "them" and how identities intersect, blend, and are decentered at both the individual and intersubjective levels. We will challenge our ideas about politics and scrutinize the limitations and possibilities of "the political" as we study formal political venues such as political representation, social movements, and law and public policy making, as well as informal and cultural-political realms such as film/video, music, literature, and social media. We will examine textual evidence, case studies, and even map our daily identities.

As this course is about identity, we will be directly discussing some of the hot-button issues of our day. Migration, race, gender, and sexual orientation are especially pertinent contemporary political debates. Our discussions will not shy away from them, and I will not shy away from them.

If there is anything I can do, in addition to these guidelines, to make this class more accessible for you, please let me know by the end of September.

Preferred Student Names and Pronouns:

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

I will give each person the opportunity to share their preferred name and pronouns on the first day of class. I require that all students in my classes respect the preferences of each of their classmates.

Honor Code:

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code may include but are not limited to: plagiarism (including use of paper writing services or technology [such as essay bots]), cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty.

All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution: honor@colorado.edu, 303-492-5550. Students found responsible for violating the Honor Code will be assigned resolution outcomes from the Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution as well as be subject to academic sanctions from the faculty member. [Visit Honor Code](#) for more information on the academic integrity policy.

Prof. Ritner's note: The best way to get the most out of this class is to do the work yourself. I'm not big on bureaucratic processes, but if you plagiarize, you will fail the class. This Includes any use of AI Generated information for assignments. It's not good, just don't do it.

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation:

CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. University policy prohibits protected-class discrimination and harassment, sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, and related retaliation by or against members of our community on- and off-campus. These behaviors harm individuals and our community. The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) addresses these concerns, and individuals who believe they have been subjected to misconduct can contact OIEC at 303-492-2127 or email cureport@colorado.edu. Information about university policies, [reporting options](#), and support resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and graduate instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when they are made aware of incidents related to these policies regardless of when or where

something occurred. This is to ensure that individuals impacted receive an outreach from OIEC about their options for addressing a concern and the support resources available. To learn more about reporting and support resources for a variety of issues, visit [Don't Ignore It](#).

Religious Holidays:

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class simple notification by email in advance of the holiday is sufficient.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

Mental Health Services:

The University of Colorado Boulder is committed to the well-being of all students. If you are struggling with personal stressors, mental health or substance use concerns that are impacting academic or daily life, please contact Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS) located in C4C or call 303-492-2277, 24/7.

Free and unlimited telehealth is also available through Academic Live Care. The [Academic Live Care site](#) also provides information about additional wellness services on campus that are available to students.

General Grading Guidelines—for all written work.

A. An essay in the “A” Range has

- a strong thesis with a clear thesis/claim and reasons/evidence;
- clear discussion of why this topic matters, why the reader should care;
- numerous specific examples drawn from appropriate and/or assigned sources;
- consistently clear analysis of examples;
- consistently appropriate and correct use of citation (including attributive tags);
- consistently clear and correct use of quotation, summary, and paraphrase;
- careful attention to issues of grammar and style (especially sentence boundaries, clarity, coherence, and punctuation); and
- the meeting of minimum page requirements.

B. An essay in the “B” Range has

- a generally good thesis with a clear claim, reason, and warrant;
- several specific examples drawn from appropriate sources;
- generally clear analysis of examples;
- generally appropriate and correct use of citation;
- generally clear and correct use of quotation, summary, and paraphrase;

- generally strong attention to issues of grammar and style; and,
- the meeting of minimum word-count requirements.

C. An essay in the “C” Range has

- a thesis lacking a clear claim, reason, and/or warrant;
- few specific examples drawn from appropriate sources;
- little specific analysis (often as a result of a poor thesis);
- minimally appropriate and correct use of appropriate citation styles;
- minimally clear and correct use of quotation, summary, and paraphrase;
- minimal attention to issues of grammar and style; and
- the meeting of minimum word-count requirements.

D. An essay in the “D” Range has

- no real thesis;
- few or no examples;
- little or no analysis;
- generally inappropriate or incorrect use of citation (but without lapsing into plagiarism);
- generally unclear or incorrect use of quotation, summary, and paraphrase;
- significant problems with grammar and style; and
- the meeting of minimum word-count requirements.

E. There are no E grades.

F. An essay in the “F” Range has

- no real thesis;
- few or no examples;
- little or no analysis;
- generally unclear and incorrect use of citation styles (often in ways that lapse into plagiarism);
- generally inappropriate or incorrect use of quotation, summary, and paraphrase;
- significant problems with grammar and style; and / or
- a failure to meet minimum word-count requirements;
- **Plagiarism or use of an AI software.**

Writing Resources

- Me!–Drop by office hours on Thursdays 11am-1pm in Ketchum 137 to get help with your writing. If those hours don’t work for you, let me know and we can make an appointment.
- Purdue Owl–This is a useful online writing lab with lots of trustworthy guidance, from mechanics and grammar help to how to write a paper and how to cite:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/index.html

- University of Colorado at Boulder’s Libraries–You can get lots of help here, from librarians and researchers: <https://www.colorado.edu/libraries/>

Late Assignment Policy/Assignment Submission Policy:

Assignments will be submitted through the course Canvas page on their due date in PDF format unless otherwise noted in the assignment description (the interviews and the meme, will have different formats). All Students get a 72 hour-no questions asked extension on one (1) assignment during the semester. Any other extensions need to be worked out in advance with me (by email) or determined through Disability Services.

Generative AI and ChatBot Usage:

Generative AI Technologies

Generative AI technologies (GAI) are any artificial intelligence technology that can produce or summarize digital content (e.g., text, images, video, audio) from a prompt. Current examples include ChatGPT, Bard, Perplexity, the Google Docs “Help me write” feature, Dall-E, and Midjourney.

Development as a writer requires personal investment and practice. GAIs are tools that good writers may rely on in some situations. Part of your development as a writer entails critically considering different occasions and developing a rationale for the appropriate use of AI writing tools. It is important to be aware of the limitations and ethical issues surrounding the use of GAIs:

- GAIs work by predicting what text is most likely to follow previous text based on the information it has been “trained” on. Therefore, they can often return incorrect or false information. For example, they may cite nonexistent academic references or completely make up facts.
- GAIs can generate biased text, including racial, ethnic, or gender bias present in the training data.
- The output may not fit the style or genre you are writing in, and may compromise the development of your own voice. Frankly, most text that GAIs produce is pretty boring!
- **GAIs will likely use your work as subsequent training data if you ask them to edit your work, which is a privacy concern.**
- If you do use a GAI as a tool in your writing process, **you are ultimately responsible for the work you turn in under your own name.**

In this class, **do not use verbatim text from GAIs.** We will be learning how to join academic conversations, and you cannot “converse” with GAIs since they are not intelligent – they do not make their own claims. Furthermore, if you turn in an AI’s work as your own, you are making the argument

that you can do no better than AI, and are thus replaceable by AI. Why would any employer hire you if you can't outperform AI?

In addition, **do not use GAI for peer review**, since submitting another student's work to GAI violates their privacy and deprives them of the human reaction they are expecting.

The following are cases where it is reasonable to use GAI on your formal assignments:

- brainstorming or generating ideas/questions/topics
- planning or tweaking the organization of your assignments

If you use GAI in this class in any way, please write a short paragraph at the end of your assignment explaining which app you used, how you used it, and where in your assignment one would see its contribution (which, again, should NOT be verbatim text).

Using verbatim text from GAI, or failing to disclose your use of GAI, will be treated as a form of academic dishonesty akin to plagiarism or cheating, reportable to the Honor Board and punishable with a zero on the assignment.

Minimum Technology Requirements:

For this class you will need a computer with word processing capacities and access to either Google Docs or MS Word. The ones built into a computer are certainly sufficient. Headphones with a microphone are recommended and are required if there is too much background noise in your workspace. You will need to be able to read, or have read to you, either hard-copy or ebooks as well as PDFs and word documents. You will also need to be able to view recorded lectures and powerpoint presentations.

Course Requirements:

In this course, you will be graded on the following: Class participation (10%), four Response Papers (15% each), one in-class debate (10%), one Identity Web Assignment (10%), and one playlist assignment (10%)

IN ORDER TO PASS THE CLASS YOU MUST SUBMIT ALL ASSIGNMENTS IN FULL.

The ***Perusal Notes*** are due with each reading. You can set your own notes or engage with your classmates notes as well. The expectations for this are that you will take notes on the readings while you are reading them, make comments via the "conversation" or "comment" options, that either ask questions or attempt to elucidate definitions, concepts, or main arguments in the text. You should use it as though you are taking notes for yourself as well as working through the text with a group. You are not required to respond to fellow students' notes or questions, but this will help them and you! The purpose is to get reading notes and discussion at the same time.

The ***Four Response Papers*** will be either posed as review essays, reactions to a reading, or a question that requires a little extra research on your own. These will be spaced out during the semester.

The ***Identity Web Assignment*** will be a two-part assignment. At the beginning of class, each student will be asked to make an “Identity Web.” At the end of the semester, you will be asked to reevaluate your identity web and describe your identity again based on the accumulated knowledge of the semester. The first part of the assignment will be either 5 points for completion or 0 for non-completion. The second part of the assignment will be graded on a scale of 1-5.

The ***Playlist Assignment*** is your final assignment for the semester. It requires you to make a playlist which includes one song or poem for each of the readings we have done over the course of the semester. You must submit this in two ways: 1) as a word document that shows which song is connected to which reading and includes a 3-5 sentence explanation for each choice, and 2) as a link to either a spotify or youtube playlist.

Evaluation:

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- **Perusall participation (20 points)**
- **Four Response papers (15 points each for a total of 60 points)**
- **One Identity Web Assignment (10 points)**
- **One Playlist Assignment (10 points)**

IN ORDER TO PASS THE CLASS YOU MUST SUBMIT ALL ASSIGNMENTS IN FULL.

Required Materials:

You will need access to a computer or a tablet. Phones will work, but are not optimal. All readings will be on Perusall.

ALL CLASS READINGS ARE AVAILABLE ON PERUSALL. THIS WILL SERVE AS OUR REPLACEMENT FOR CLASS PARTICIPATION AND GROUP DISCUSSION.

Useful Websites and Podcasts:

This is a list of websites and podcasts that may offer some more extensive background or short-form analysis of our readings and thinkers who are not on the syllabus but may have relevance to our topics. (Presented in no particular order.)

- The Partially Examined Life: <http://partiallyexaminedlife.com/> (Links to an external site.)
- The History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps: <https://www.historyofphilosophy.net/> (Links to an external site.)
- Public Seminar: <http://www.publicseminar.org/> (Links to an external site.)

- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/> (Links to an external site.)
- The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory (online):
<http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199604456.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199604456-e-002> (Links to an external site.)
- The Angry Black Woman: <http://theangryblackwoman.com/> (Links to an external site.)
- Chicano Conversations: <https://chicanoconversations.wordpress.com/> (Links to an external site.)
- The Red Nation: <http://therednation.org/> (Links to an external site.)
- Emma (in English, or French): <https://english.emmaclit.com/> (Links to an external site.)

Course Schedule:

Note: As course instructor I reserve the right to alter the readings based on unforeseen scheduling events, contemporary political events, illness, weather, the availability of guest speakers, etc.

Please be sure to read the texts in the order they are listed on the syllabus. When there is more than one reading for any given week, this is especially true.

The Readings listed are due for that day. You need to have them read in order to participate in the course discussion.

Thursday, September 7, 2023–Introduction: What are we doing here?

- Identity Web Assignment Explained.

Section 1: Theories of Identity:

Thursday, September 14, 2023–Speaking As A

- Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Go Ahead, Speak for Yourself...,” *The New York Times*
- **Identity Web Assignment Due**

Thursday, September 21, 2023–Stigmas

- Erving Goffman, “Stigma and Social Identity” in *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, 1-40 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963).

Thursday, September 28, 2023–Double Consciousness

- W.E.B. Dubois, “Our Spiritual Strivings” in *The Souls of Black Folk*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Monday, October 2, 2023–First Response Paper Due

Thursday, October 5, 2023–Stereotypes

- Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Stereotypes and the Shaping of Identity”

Thursday, October 12, 2023–Intersectionality

- Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color”, *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6). 1241-1299.
 - **NOTE:** This is our longest single reading of the semester. It is a difficult piece. Please take your time with it.

Thursday, October 19, 2023–Identity Politics & Ally Politics

- The Combahee River Collective, “The Combahee River Collective Statement”
- Vijay Iyer Interviewed by Robin D.G. Kelly, “Ally from noun to verb.”

Monday, October 23, 2023–Second Response Paper Due

Section 2: American Identity–Race and Racism:

Thursday, October 26, 2023–Empire, Genocide, Militarism

- Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), Introduction and Conclusion.
- The Red Nation Podcast, “Learning & unlearning w/ Noname”
 - <https://directory.libsyn.com/episode/index/show/therednation/id/15743372> (Links to an external site.)

Thursday, November 2, 2023–The Making of Race: Playing Indian

- Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), Introduction and Chapter 1.

Thursday, November 9, 2023–The Making of Race: Joining Whiteness

- Cristina Beltrán, *Cruelty as Citizenship*, Chapter 1.

Section 3: Gender:

Thursday, November 16, 2023– Gender Binaries: Women & Men

- Emma, “You should have asked,”
 - <https://english.emmaclit.com/2017/05/20/you-shouldve-asked/> (Links to an external site.)

Thursday, November 23, 2023–No Reading Fall Break

Thursday, November 30, 2023–

- Heath Fogg Davis, *Beyond Trans: Does Gender Matter?*, Chapter 1

Monday, December 4, 2023–Third Response Paper Due

Section 5: Migration, Refuge, Citizenship:

Thursday, December 7, 2023—Refugees and Migrants:

- Hannah Arendt, “We Refugees”

Section 6: Ability:

Thursday, December 14, 2023—Ability in Society: The Crippled City

- Leonard Kriegel, “Beloved Enemy, A Cripple in a Crippled City.”
- Katie & Zaria debate: Do we live in a crippled society?

Monday, December 18, 2023—Fourth Response Paper Due