

PSCI 3184: Race, Power, & Politics  
Spring 2023  
Meetings: MWF–3:35-4:20pm Hellems 267  
Professor Scott B. Ritner  
Email: [Scott.Ritner@Colorado.edu](mailto:Scott.Ritner@Colorado.edu)  
Office: Ketchum 114D  
Office Hours: Mondays 11am-1pm or by appointment.

**Course Description:** This class is designed to examine the history and resistance to racial inequality in the US expressed in the founding contradiction between the Declaration of Independence and the recognition of slavery in the US Constitution and a little bit about Canada and Mexico too. We read works by authors of various races that catalog racial oppression and resistance from the colonial resistance to British rule through Reconstruction, the advent of mass incarceration, various immigration regimes, the Civil Rights Movement, the American Indian Movement, and contemporary struggles like Black Lives Matter, Climate Struggles, resistance to Covid-related racism, and anti-tourism struggles in Hawai'i, among others. We will discuss how race, as a modality of power and politics, overlaps and intersects with gender, sexuality, and class in order to come to a greater understanding of how and why racial hierarchy is maintained. As such, we will look into practical and structural framings of race.

The class casts a wide net, but does not cover “everything or “everyone” because that cannot be done in one semester. It is not intended to be an introductory class to political theory or the concepts of race and power. These will be the themes of the course as we look how race and power are mobilized in diverse manners throughout US politics, history, and cultural formations.

**Classroom Conduct:** During the course of this semester we will be delving into some topics that are emotionally charged, personal, or otherwise distressing for some students. Among other topics, we will be discussing forms of oppression based on race, gender, and sexuality. Students are expected to engage with sensitive topics in a class on political theory. Throughout the course of the semester we will be dealing with questions of truth rather than fact. This distinction is important because while absolute truth can be posited it can also be challenged as such. There is no single person who is able to attain absolute truth, not the professor, not your fellow students, and not yourself. Dialogue will be the driver of our class sessions. At times, class discussions will be tense. I encourage you to disagree with your fellow students, and with me. That said, outward hostility, *ad hominem* attacks, intimidation, and any other form of disrespectful behavior towards fellow students will not be tolerated. The classroom is a safe and sacred space for the discussion of difficult themes and thus must remain one of respectful discourse.

Furthermore, this course has been designed to engage with authors of a plethora of racial, gender, and national identities. Students will be expected to engage honestly with literature that may challenge their assumptions, their way of life, and their position in society. This will include texts by both left-wing thinkers who may not have respect for your mother who is an entrepreneur and

right-wing thinkers who may not have respect for your father who is an immigrant. Compassion (without prejudice) for your fellow students will be tested at times because of these readings.

**Course Requirements:** *Class Participation (10%)* and *Group Participation (10%)*: Group discussions and full-class discussions will be the driver of the course. Your presence in these discussions is pertinent to your ability to pass the class.

The *Group Discussion Notes (10%)*: Each group will be organized into a google document where discussion questions/topics will be posted by the beginning of each class session. Groups will record their answers or questions as they discuss the topics for the day. These will be graded on a group basis and submitted into Canvas at the end of the semester (I will also have access to all of the Google Docs).

The *Film Reflection (10%)* is a 500 word (approx 1 page) reflection on *Smoke Signals* using the background of both Deloria's writings and *Reel Injun*.

The *Mid-term paper* will be a 2,000-ish word paper based on the historical readings we do in the first 7 weeks of class. You will be asked to think about the ways in which race was made in the US and North American context with reference to Roediger, Dunbar-Ortiz, Deloria, Du Bois, Vasconcelos, and Trevino.

The *Playlist Assignment* must be submitted both digitally (through Canvas) and brought to class on Friday, April 21. Building on Gilroy's work, the question is what does Black Counterculture sound like? You need at least 10 songs.

The *Final Paper* is a 2,000-ish word paper in which you will have the option to take up the strands of race in the 20th Century and leading forward into the 21st Century in the work of Tallbear, Eng & Han, and/or Lordi.

**Evaluation:** Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- 10% - Class Participation
- 10% - Group Discussion Participation
- 10% - Group Discussion Notes
- 10% - Film Reflection
- 25% - Mid-term paper
- 10% - Playlist assignment
- 25% - Final Paper

**Grading Rubric for Written Work:**

- A. Excellent work, with clear, challenging, original ideas supported by sufficient, appropriate, logically interpreted evidence. The essay should engage the reader in the inquiry, convincingly answer opposing views, be well organized, and free of significant grammatical flaws. An 'A' paper should be not just good but outstanding in ideas and presentation. An 'A' paper is not completely without flaws, but they are minimal, at best.
- B. Good to very good work, with a clear thesis supported by sufficient, appropriate citation, organized and interpreted comprehensively. The 'B' paper may have some outstanding qualities but be marked by significant flaws which keep it from being an 'A'; or it may be all-around good work, free of major problems but lacking the deeper insight necessary for excellence.
- C. Satisfactory work, but not yet good. The 'C' paper meets the basic requirements of an argument supported by interpretation of specific evidence, but still needs work in thinking and/or presentation. There may be a lack of clarity, the evidence may not always be sufficient or appropriate, citation may be sloppy, or the interpretation may have significant flaws. The essay may have organizational or mechanical problems that keep it from being good. The 'C' paper may be good in some respects but poor in others, or it may simply be adequate or inconsistent overall.
- D. A barely passing work that shows effort but is too inherently flawed to be considered satisfactory. Papers without a readily identifiable argument, or significant flaws in the execution thereof, are likely to be graded 'D'.
- F. Failing work -- for example, a hasty, sloppy paper that shows little or no thought, effort, or familiarity with the text.

**Requirements for COVID-19:** As a matter of public health and safety, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements and all public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. CU Boulder currently requires COVID-19 vaccination and boosters for all faculty, staff and students. Students, faculty and staff must upload proof of vaccination and boosters or file for an exemption based on medical, ethical or moral grounds through the [MyCUHealth portal](#).

The CU Boulder campus is currently mask-optional. However, if public health conditions change and masks are again required in classrooms, students who fail to adhere to masking requirements will be asked to leave class, and students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to [Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#). For more information, see the policy on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#). If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please follow the steps in the "Accommodation for Disabilities" statement on this syllabus.

If you feel ill and think you might have COVID-19, if you have tested positive for COVID-19, or if you are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you should stay home and follow the further guidance of the [Public Health Office](#) (contacttracing@colorado.edu). If you are fully vaccinated and have been in close contact with

someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay home; rather, you should self-monitor for symptoms and follow the further guidance of the [Public Health Office](#) ([contacttracing@colorado.edu](mailto:contacttracing@colorado.edu)).

***My policy on absences is that you give me advance notice, by email, if you are going to miss class. I do not need to know the reason, just that you will be absent. I ask that you please do not abuse this trust.***

**Accommodation for Disabilities:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu) for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

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 academic integrity policy. Violations of the Honor Code may include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, 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 the Honor Code ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found on the [Honor Code website](#).

***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.***

**Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation:** CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. The university will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate

partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, or protected-class discrimination or harassment by or against members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or email [cureport@colorado.edu](mailto:cureport@colorado.edu). Information about university policies, [reporting options](#), and the 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 of sexual misconduct, dating and domestic violence, stalking, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about their rights, support resources, and reporting options. To learn more about reporting and support options for a variety of concerns, 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.

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

If needed, please be sure to make any necessary academic arrangements in advance of due dates so that I can best assist you.

**Statement on Academic Freedom:** Your academic freedom and mine does not require that you agree with me, nor that I agree with you. It does not require that I, as the course instructor, make pretense of “impartiality” or objectivity (these are mythical things when it comes to politics!). It does, however, require a good faith effort on both my part and yours to make a coherent and thoughtful argument, and to consider that there is more to learn. <https://www.cu.edu/regents/law/7>

**Required Readings:** The Following Texts are required and available at the CU Bookstore or other online spaces. Anything not from these required texts will be available on the course [Canvas page](#), and the class [Google Drive](#).

- Du Bois, W. E. B., *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*. New York: Free Press, 1999. ISBN: 9780684856575 (Recommended to Purchase, PDFs of the Chapters will be provided.)
- TallBear, Kim, *Native American DNA : Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. ISBN: 9780816665860
- Lordi, Emily J., *The Meaning of Soul : Black Music and Resilience since The 1960s*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020. ISBN: 9781478009597
- Deloria, Philip J., *Playing Indian*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022. ISBN: 9780300264845
- Eng, David L. and Han, Shinhee, *Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation : On the Social and Psychic Lives of Asian Americans*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019. ISBN: 9781478001607

### **Course Schedule:**

The readings are listed for the day that we will discuss them. Please be prepared in class with the readings and a notebook, computer, or tablet for taking notes. I highly recommend not using your phone for the readings. I know it is unavoidable for some, but it really is not the best.

As course instructor I reserve the right to alter the readings based on unforeseen scheduling events, contemporary political events, illness, weather, etc. I do offer this guarantee: I will not eliminate any books I have required you to buy.

Please be sure to read the texts in the order they are listed on the syllabus.

I have done what I can to keep the reading within reasonable limits. Some readings are long, by necessity of needing to read a full chapter or essay to get the argument the author(s) is making. On average you will read between 20 and 40 pages of text per class session. There are also sessions in which I am asking you to watch a movie of 1:30-2:30 hours in length. I will do my best to give some guidance for the longer readings, and if I forget, please do not hesitate to remind me of this paragraph.

### **January 18-20–Introductions:**

- Wednesday: What are we doing here?
  - Who am I?
  - Who are you?
  - How to read political theory handout
  - Brief discussion of what we will do and how I made these decisions.
- Friday: How was race made?
  - David Roediger, [“Historical Foundations of Race”](https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/historical-foundations-race)  
<https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/historical-foundations-race>

### **January 23-27–Race at the founding:**

- Monday: What was independence for?
  - Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous People’s History of the United States*, Chapter 1
  - Nikole-Hannah Jones, *The 1619 Project*, Introduction
- Wednesday: Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998.
  - Introduction and Chapter 1
- Friday: Deloria, *Playing Indian*, Chapter 2.

### **January 30-February 3–The Republic of Letters:**

- Monday: Firsting and Lasting
  - Deloria, *Playing Indian*, Chapter 3.

- Wednesday: Two Films:
  - Watch *Reel Injun*
    - I'm trying to figure out how to provide this.
  - Watch [Smoke Signals](#)
    - You must be logged into the Chinook Library to View this Film
- Friday: No Class, Professor Away
  - Film Reflection Due at 11:59pm.
    - What does it mean to “Play Indian” in *Reel Injun* and *Smoke Signals*?

#### February 6-10–Race & Slavery:

- Monday: Work and Race
  - W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999. Chapters 1 & 2.
- Wednesday: Slavery & Gender
  - Angela Davis, “Reflections on the Black Woman’s role in the community of slaves” in *The Massachusetts Review* Vol. 13, No. 1/2, Woman: An Issue (Winter - Spring, 1972), pp. 81-100.
  - Watch, [Beloved](#)
    - You must be logged into the Chinook Library to view this film.
- Friday: Property as modality of oppression
  - Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*. Chapter 3

#### February 13-17–Race & Class in Reconstruction:

- Monday: The General Strike and the Civil War
  - Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*. Chapter 4
  - Watch Steven Spielberg’s [Lincoln](#)
    - You must be logged into the Chinook Library to view this film.
- Wednesday: Reconstruction & Labor
  - Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*. Chapter 7
- Friday: Reconstruction & Democracy
  - Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*. Chapter 9

#### February 20-24–Race in the Borderlands I:

- Monday: No Class, Professor Away
- Wednesday: White Supremacy and Westward Expansion
  - Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*. Chapter 13

- Friday: Nature & Race
  - Deloria, *Playing Indian*, Chapter 4

#### February 27-March 3–Race in the Borderlands II/Race Science I:

- Monday: Early 20th C. Conceptions of Race
  - José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*. Trans. Didier T. Jaén. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995. 1-40.
- Wednesday: Critical Poetry
  - Wendy Trevino, *Brazilian is not a Race*
- Friday: Race Science, an Anthropological Perspective.
  - Kim Tallbear, *Native American DNA : Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. Introduction

#### March 6-10–Race Science II Selling Belonging:

- Monday: An Introduction to DNA
  - Tallbear, *Native American DNA*, Chapter 1
- Wednesday: Selling Ancestry
  - Tallbear, *Native American DNA*, Chapter 2
- Friday: No Class, Professor Away
  - **Mid-Term Paper on Race in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries Due.**
    - This paper covers Du Bois, Deloria, and Vasconcelos.

#### March 13-17–Who Does Race Science Serve?:

- Monday: Playing Indian on the Internet
  - Tallbear, *Native American DNA*, Chapter 3
- Wednesday: Who Collects? How?
  - Tallbear, *Native American DNA*, Chapter 4
  - Abdul-Aliy Muhammad, “Penn Museum owes reparations for previously holding remains of a MOVE bombing victim,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 21, 2021.
- Friday: Race, Belonging, and Governance
  - Tallbear, *Native American DNA*, Chapter 5
  - Watch *Blood Quantum*
    - This is available on Amazon, and I am working to make it available to stream from the library as well.

#### March 20-24–Fanon’s Legacy:

- Monday: Recognition and the Colonial Context in Canada
  - Glenn Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014
- Wednesday: Recognition and Immigrants in US Cultural Contexts
  - Mina Yang, “Yellow Skin, White Masks,” in *Daedalus*, Fall 2013, Vol. 142, No. 4, American Music (Fall 2013), pp. 24-37
- Friday: What is Cultural Appropriation a Discussion
  - Watch:
    - A Selection of Music Videos will be curated for this day.
  - Due at 11:59pm: Reflection on Race as Science or Relation

March 27-March 31–No Class, Spring Break

April 3-7–Immigration and Race:

- Monday: Race, Immigration, and Childcare
  - Maria Kromidas, “Mothering and the Racialised Production of School and Property Value in New York City” *Antipode* Vol. 54 No. 1 2022 ISSN 0066-4812, pp. 284–304
  - Ken Liu, [“The Paper Menagerie”](#)
- Wednesday: The Subject of Race, Revisited
  - David L. Eng and Shinhee Han, *Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation : On the Social and Psychic Lives of Asian Americans*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019. Introduction
- Friday: No Class, Professor Away

April 10-14–Model Minorities:

- Monday: The Model Minority
  - Eng and Han, *Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation*, Chapter 1.
- Wednesday: Racializing Family
  - Eng and Han, *Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation*, Chapter 2.
  - Watch: [The Joy Luck Club](#)
    - You must be logged into the Chinook Library to view this film.
- Friday: No Class, Professor at a Conference on Campus

April 17-21–Sexuality and Dissent:

- Monday: Colorblind Sexuality
  - Eng and Han, *Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation*, Chapter 4 and Epilogue

- Wednesday: Resistance and Resilience:
  - Emily J. Lordi, *The Meaning of Soul : Black Music and Resilience since The 1960s*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020. Introduction & Chapter 1.
- Friday: Counter Culture and Countermovement
  - Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity & Double Consciousness*. New York: Verso, 1993. Chapter 1.
  - Playlist Assignment Due In Class.

#### April 24-28–Cultural Politics and Power:

- Monday: Singing For Freedom
  - Lordi, *The Meaning of Soul*, Chapter 2.
- Wednesday: Soul Power!
  - Lordi, *The Meaning of Soul*, Chapter 3.
  - Watch: [\*The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975\*](#)
    - You must be logged into the Chinook Library to view this film.
- Friday: From Soul to Post-Soul Politics
  - Lordi, *The Meaning of Soul*, Chapter 5 and Conclusion

#### May 1-5–Wrapping Up, Moving Forward:

- Monday: What have we done?
  - A lot, but also not a lot. We will recap.
- Wednesday: What have we missed?
  - A lot, of course, but let's talk about it.
- Friday: No Class, Reading Day.

#### **Sunday, May 7–11:59pm Final Paper Due**