

Comparative Studies in Cultures and Transformation

Instructor: Rhea Rahman
E-Mail: Rhea.Rahman@brooklyn.cuny.edu
Office: James Hall 3301C
Office Hours: W 1:00-2:00

Overview

Anthropology involves the study of human societies and cultures. The anthropological foundations of the concept of 'culture' developed as a critique of prevailing ideas about human difference based on 'race'. This course takes up this supposed distinction between culture and race and applies the conceptual, theoretical and methodological tools of cultural anthropology to cross-cultural examinations of race, racism and racialization. Understanding racism as a means through which difference is used to divide humans through social hierarchies, we take from anthropology a toolkit that allows for a critical examination of power and inequality in contemporary social life. In particular, we will examine critical debates and intersections between race and the following topics in anthropology: culture, ethnicity and nationalism; colonialism; and global economy. Geographical focus is Africa, the U.S., and the Caribbean.

Goals

The goals of this course are:

- To encourage a comparative approach to the study of human experiences in different contexts.
- To use historical and social sciences perspectives to examine the formation of ideas, human behavior, social institutions, and social processes.
- To develop critical reading, writing, and discussion skills which challenge certain taken-for-granted social and cultural assumptions.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify major debates, aims and methods of anthropological research.
- Utilize the conceptual and methodical tools of cultural anthropology in your own daily life as you think about the world as it is and as it is becoming and consider tackling crucial issues of social hierarchy and inequality.

Materials

Required texts will be available on Blackboard under "Course Documents".

Milestones

Mar 5

Unit 1 Quiz: Race, Class, Gender and Culture

Mar 26

Unit 2 Quiz: Interrogating Whiteness

Apr 16

Unit 3 Quiz: Anthropology and the 'Other': Colonialism, Imperialism and Race

Apr 23

Unit 4 Quiz: Global Economy

May 14

Unit 5 Quiz: Politics of Race in Ghana

May 16

Final Quiz

- Distinguish the critical difference between the socially constructed nature of 'race' and the social reality of material and social inequality created and sustained through global cultural processes, institutions and systems of power – i.e. racism.

Evaluation

Participation: 15%

Weekly Quizzes: 10%

In-Class Group Work: 5%

Three Short Papers: 45%

Final Paper: 25%

TOTAL: 100%

Participation

- Participation is a large percentage of your grade. However, attendance does not equal participation. To receive participation credit you must in some capacity participate in class discussion. We will spend time on the first day discussing different options for participation. If you are not comfortable speaking in class, you must find other alternatives. Options include posting on the Discussion Board on Blackboard, or writing a discussion reflection during class and handing it in to me at the end of class.
 - Speaking in class
 - We will spend time on the first day creating ground rules for a good discussion. But speaking in class **must be informed by the day's reading**. While personal reflections are encouraged, you must relate your personal experiences to the readings, themes and concepts of the course. Comments that are not informed or have nothing to do with the reading, will not translate to a high participation grade.
 - Reflection on Blackboards
 - Responses on Blackboard **must** be posted by midnight before class. You must comment on the main point of the day's reading, include one question you have about the reading, and explanation of how the reading relates to the course's main themes or concepts.
 - Written Reflections
 - Reflections handed in at the end of class must be written in paragraph form and must reflect on the reading and class discussion. I will not accept your class notes as credit for participation.
- Please come to class on time. If you have circumstances that cause you to be late, please speak to me about it. If you are than 10 minutes late, and you do not provide any explanation, your participation grade will be reduced.
- I emphasize critical thinking skills in this class. Thus you will not be evaluated on your ability to memorize definitions, but reflect what you have learned from the readings and discussions through thoughtful participation in class. I want to see how you think, not what you can memorize. Class room discussions are where you can develop and demonstrate this ability.
- We will spend time on the first day of class outlining course expectations for students and instructor for creating a positive learning environment for the duration of the semester.

- You must bring a copy of the day's reading with you to class as we will reference the text during discussion. Failure to do so will affect your participation grade. This includes either a print-out of the PDF, or you may access the reading on a laptop or tablet. *You may not access readings on your phone as phones are not permitted to be used during class.*
- **Good Participation:** Arrive on-time, with the course text and having completed readings and assignments. Demonstrate engagement with course materials, contribute regularly and respectfully to discussions and listen carefully to instructor and fellow students.
- **Poor Participation:** Disrupting class, making inappropriate or disrespectful comments, **violating technology policy**, not bringing course text and assignments to class.

Group Work

- In class, you will be asked to divide into groups of 3-4 to work on discussion questions. I will give you at least two questions during the previous class so that you can prepare before you come to class. I will add more questions that you can then work together on together with your group.
- You must choose one person to be the scribe to record your group answers.
- One person (it can be the scribe or someone else) must report back to the rest of the class when we return to a full-class discussion.
- I will walk around the room to monitor group activity and to answer any questions. If you participate, you will be given full credit.

Unit Quizzes

- The syllabus is divided into three sections: Classifications of Difference; Institutions and Systems of Power; and a Case Study. Within the sections are a total of five unites.
- At the end each unit, you will take an in-class quiz consisting of a short-answer essay. I will give you a list of quiz questions in the class preceding the quiz. You will be given 20 minutes of class time to complete a short-answer question. This will be a 'closed-book' quiz, meaning you cannot use any sources (i.e. your own notes or texts).
- The quizzes make up the half of your final grade, missing one will result in significant impact towards your final grade.
- Make-ups will only be allowed if you contact me **before** the quiz!
- To do well on the quizzes, you must do the readings and attend class for lectures and discussion.
- Quiz Schedule:
 1. Race, Class, Gender and Culture – **March 5**
 2. Interrogating Whiteness –**March 26**
 3. Anthropology and the 'Other': Colonialism, Imperialism and Race - **April 16**
 4. Global Economy - **April 23**
 5. Politics of Race in Ghana - **May 14**

Final Cumulative Quiz

- Short definitions of key terms from the semester and one short essay question. We will spend class time on Monday May 14 to review.
- In-Class **Wednesday May 16**

Final grades will be based on the following point scale (there will be no rounding up):

A 93.0 - 100	B- 80.0 - 82.9	D+ 67.1 - 69.9
A- 90.0 - 92.9	C+ 77.1 - 79.9	D 60.0 - 67.0
B+ 87.1 - 89.9	C 73.0 - 77.0	F below 60.0
B 83.0 - 87.0	C- 70.0 - 72.0	

Extra Credit

- The ONLY extra credit work I will accept will be a five page paper at the end of the semester.

Requirements and Policies

1. **Blackboard** is an essential part of this course and you are required to check it regularly. If you have any difficulties with blackboard, please consult the following website: <http://dewey.brooklyn.cuny.edu/ait/blackboard/bb8-student-faq.pdf>
Any changes to the syllabus will be announced there. You will need a CUNY portal ID to access Blackboard.
2. Participation, not simply attendance, is mandatory. Being present in the class room is not enough to receive participation credit. You must participate in classroom discussion by either speaking in class, writing a reflection before on Blackboard before class, or handing in a written reflection at the end of class.
3. Unexcused absences will adversely affect your participation grade. Excused absences (for which you must notify me) include illness, family emergency, or observance of religious holidays.
4. Please come to class on time. Being more than 10 minutes late will affect your participation grade.
5. **Cell phones are not allowed in class under any circumstance. If I see you using your phone, you will be marked as absent despite your participation in discussion.** Laptop computers and tablets are allowed for note-taking, but if I notice that are using it for other purposes during class, I will ask you to put it away and you will forfeit your right to use a laptop or tablet for the rest of the semester.
6. You must complete each day's readings *before* coming to class and bring electronic or printed copies to class for reference.
7. The class is a safe space for sharing diverging viewpoints. You are welcome to voice disagreement with the readings, my comments, or others' comments, but your disagreements must be informed and must be done respectfully.

Contacting me: I check my email on the days we have class and thus will respond to you within 2-5 days. Before emailing me, please be sure to thoroughly review the syllabus and blackboard to make sure the answer to your question is not already listed here. **I may not respond to emails if the answers are already included on the syllabus or blackboard!**

University's policy on Academic Integrity: The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. **Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both.** The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at: www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member **MUST** report the violation.

Center for Student Disability Services: In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services, please provide your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him/her.

Religious observance and class attendance: According to New York state law, students who are unable to attend classes on a particular day or days because of religious beliefs will be excused. Reference to the state law regarding non-attendance because of religious beliefs can be found on pg. 66 in the [Undergraduate Bulletin](#).

Research Assistance: Utilize the Library for assistance with your research project. Contact Prof. Mariana Regalado (regalado@brooklyn.cuny.edu) for assistance.
http://library.brooklyn.cuny.edu/library/about/directory/index.php?view=show_staff&staff_id=31

Instructors' responsibilities: To present course material clearly; to assist students in talking and thinking about readings and concepts discussed in course; to respect and value students' opinions and contributions; to be clear about what is expected from students and the requirements of the course; to be available to answer students' concerns and questions; to give students clear feedback and to have assignments graded and handed back in timely fashion.

Classroom Behavior: Disruptive classroom behavior negatively affects the classroom environment as well as the educational experience for students enrolled in the course. Any serious or continued disruption of class will result in a report to the Office of Judicial Affairs. Public Safety will be summoned immediately if a serious disruption prevents the continued teaching of the class and you may be subject to disciplinary action. For disruptive behavior that does not prevent the continued teaching of the class, you will receive a warning after one such disruption. If the disruptive behavior is repeated in the same or subsequent classes, you may be asked to leave the classroom for the remainder of class and you may be subject to disciplinary action.

Important dates: Please refer to the Brooklyn College Spring 2018 academic calendar for deadlines regarding registration, withdrawal, and pass/fail:
<http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/about/administration/enrollment/registrar/bulletins/spring18.php>

Course schedule

****Please note:** Readings may be subject to some minor changes or re-arrangements which will be announced in class and will be updated on the syllabus on Blackboard.

1. Mon, Aug 27 –Why Race? Why Anthropology?

What does Race have to do with Culture?

Introductions and reviewing syllabus

2. Weds, Aug 29 – Anthropology, Power and Representation

Miner, Horace. "Body Ritual among the Nacirema," *American Anthropologist*, 53:3, 1956, pp. 503-507.

Wainaina, Binyavanga. "[How to Write About Africa](#)," *Granta 92: The View From Africa* 19 January 2006.

"[Colonial Gaze](#)." *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*

Kovvali, Silpa. "[There is no such thing as an 'unbiased' history class](#)", *Salon* August 7, 2015.

Section I: Classifications of Difference

Unit 1: Race, Class, Gender and Culture

3. Wed, Sept 5 – Anthropology and Racism

Visweswaran, Kamala. "Race and the Culture of Anthropology" *American Anthropologist* 100(1): 70-83

* *optional*: Baker, Lee, "History of Anthropology," *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism* Ed. John Hartwell Moore. Vol. 1, Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008. 93-97.

4. Weds, Sept 12 – Race and Anthropology

Ntarangwi, Mwenda. Ch 2: "Tripping on Race, Training Anthropologists" in *Reversed Gaze: An African Ethnography of American Anthropology*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010, pp. 24-76.

5. Mon, Sept 17 –

6. Mon, Sept 24 – Anthropology of Africa

Ntarangwi, Mwenda. Ch 3: "Of Monkeys, Africans, and the Pursuit of the Other," in *Reversed Gaze: An African Ethnography of American Anthropology*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010, pp. 24-76.

7. Wed, Sept 26 –

8. Mon, Oct 1 – Classes follow Monday Schedule

In-class screening: *Through a Lens Darkly: Black photographers and the emergence of a people* (2014).

9. Weds, Oct 3 – Antiracist Anthropology

Mullings, Leith. "Interrogating Racism: Toward an Antiracist Anthropology," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 2005, pp 667-693.

10. Wed, Oct 10 – Black Feminist Anthropology & Situated Knowledge

Slocum, Karla. "Negotiating Identity and Black Feminist Politics in Caribbean Research." In *Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory, Politics, Praxis, and Poetics*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

11. Mon, Oct 15 – Race/Color, Class and Gender

Ulysse, Gina, "Conquering Duppies in Kingston: Miss Tiny and Me, Fieldwork Conflicts, and Being Loved and Rescued," *Division II Faculty Publications*. Paper 9, 2007, pp 10 – 26.

Unit 2: Interrogating Whiteness

12. Wed, Oct 17 – Everyday forms of Whiteness

Bush, Melanie E.L. Ch 1 "The Here and Now," *Breaking the Code of Good Intentions: Everyday Forms of Whiteness*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004, pp.1-54.

*Unit 1 Quiz

13. Mon, Oct 22 - Interrogating Whiteness at Brooklyn College

Bush, Melanie E.L. Ch 2 "White, Black, and Places 'In-Between,'" *Breaking the Code of Good Intentions: Everyday Forms of Whiteness*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004, pp. 55-104.

14. Wed, Oct 24 – Whiteness and U.S. Settler Colonialism

Paul Spickard, "Immigration, Race, Ethnicity, Colonialism," in *Almost All Aliens*, New York: Routledge, 2007, pp.1-28.

15. Mon, Oct 29 – Intersecting logics of White Supremacy

Smith, Andrea. "Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy," *Global Dialogue* 12:2, 2010, pp. 1-15.

16. Wed, Oct 31 – Constructing Whiteness

Brodin, Karen B. "How Did Jews Become White Folks?" *Race and Ethnicity* pp. 274-283.

Du Bois, W.E.B. "The Souls of White Folk." *Monthly Review*; New York Vol 55, Iss. 6 (Nov 2003): 44-58.

17. Mon, Nov 5 – Effects of Whiteness: Internalized racism

Pyke, Karen & Tran Dang. "'FOB' and 'Whitewashed': Identity and Internalized Racism Among Second Generation Asian Americans," *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 26, No. 2, Summer 2003.

Baldwin, James – [Speech in Harlem](#) - Listen to the speech and choose three quotes to discuss in class (note the time of each quote so we can listen together in class).

Section II: Institutions and Systems of Power

Unit 3: Anthropology and the “Other”: Colonialism, Imperialism and Race

18. Wed, Nov 7 – European colonialism in Africa

In-Class Screening: [Black Man's Land, White man's Country](#) (1970)

*Unit 2 Quiz

19. Mon, Nov 12 – Histories of Postcolonial Africa

Cooper, Frederick, "Introduction: From colonies to Third World" in *Africa Since 1940* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 1-19.

*optional Fanon, Franz. "Racism and Culture," in *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays*. New York: Grove Press, 1965, pp. 31-44.

20. Wed, Nov 14

21. Mon, Nov 19

22. Wed, Nov 21 – The World and Africa

Du Bois, W.E.B. “The Collapse of Europe”, “The White Masters of the World”, and “The Rape of Africa.” In *The World and Africa: An inquiry into the part which Africa has played in World History*. New York: International Publishers, 1990, pp. 1-80.

23. Mon, Nov 26

Unit 4: Global Economy

24. Wed, Nov 28 – Global Economy, Racial Capitalism and Environmental Racism

Guest, Kenneth. Ch 12 “Global Economy,” in *Cultural Anthropology: First Edition*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014, pp. 449 - 474.

*optional Pulido, Laura. “Geographies of race and ethnicity II: Environmental racism, racial capitalism, and state-sanction violence” *Progress in Human Geography*, 2016.

*Unit 3 Quiz

25. Mon, Dec 3 –

In-Class Screening: *Life in Debt* (2001).

Section III: Case Study

Unit 5: Politics of Race in Ghana

25. Wed, Dec 5 – Predicament of Blackness

Pierre, Jemima. “Introduction” and Ch 1 “Of Natives and Europeans: Colonialism and the Ethnicization of Racial Dominance,” in *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

*Unit 4 Quiz

26. Mon, Dec 10 – Predicament of Blackness

Pierre, Jemima. Ch 2: “‘Seek Ye First the Political Kingdom’: The Postcolony and Racial Formation,” in *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

27. Wed, Dec 12 – Predicament of Blackness

Pierre, Jemima. and Ch 4: “The Fact of Lightness: Skin Bleaching and the Colored Codes of Racial Aesthetics” in *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

**optional* Ch 3: “‘You Are Rich Because You Are White’: Making Race and Signifying Whiteness”

28. Weds, May 2 – Predicament of Blackness

Pierre, Jemima. Ch 5: “Slavery and Pan-Africanist Triumph: Heritage Tourism as State Racecraft,” in *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

29. Mon, May 7 – Predicament of Blackness

Pierre, Jemima. Ch 6: “‘Are you a Black American?’ Race and the Politics of African-Diaspora Interactions” in *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

**optional* Ch 7: Race across the Atlantic... and Back: Theorizing African and/in the Diaspora” and “Epilogue”.

30. Weds, May 9 –

Final Quiz Review

31. Mon, May 14

Final Quiz Review

**Unit 5 Quiz*

32. Wed, May 16

Final Quiz