ANTH 696c: Race and the Body
Professor Jennifer Roth-Gordon
University of Arizona
Spring, 2011

Course Information:

Class Time/Location: Wednesdays, 10:00-12:30
Haury 215

My Contact Information: Email: jenrothg@email.arizona.edu
Office: Haury 301
Hours: Tuesdays 11:00-12:00, Thursdays 2:00-4:00
Phone: 626-0696

Course Description:

At the heart of racism lies the question of how bodies come to be seen as different and how this difference is given racial meaning. Scholars now recognize this as a social process, rather than an observation of what is “real,” and they have turned to explore the various narratives (of biology, of culture, of ancestry, and of appearance) used to explain the production of racial difference. And yet, these narratives often hide as much as they reveal: The U.S. adherence to a “one drop rule” of ancestry vs. Brazil’s focus on the blackness phenotypically displayed by the Brazilian body exemplify the competing tropes of blood vs. color, but they explain neither the U.S. phenomenon of passing (in which ancestry can be hidden and erased) nor the common Brazilian saying that “money whitens” (where skin color visibly “improves” with signs of wealth). Even within the U.S. antebellum South, white skin was unreliable as a sign of racial purity or the actual “whiteness” of the body. How, then, do we know race when we see it?

If anthropologists agree in theory that there is no visual clarity to racial groups – only the socially constructed idea of physical or phenotypical similarity, then we must ask not only how people make sense of what they see, but also how they create what is there to be seen in the first place. Race does not “reside” in physical bodies alone, nor is it inherent in objects, practices, or places. Racial meaning is created through the interaction between the two: We interpret objects, practices, and places through the people we see engage with them, just as we recognize people’s bodies as racialized based on what they do. In this course, we will interrogate Ann Stoler’s provocative claim that race is “not really a visual ideology at all” (2002:84).

This advanced graduate seminar forces anthropology’s return to the in-depth examination of actual human bodies. Drawing from medical anthropology, colonial studies, history, and cultural anthropology, this course investigates how social, political, economic, and historical factors shape the physical body. This examination of race through the lens of the body allows us to address broader questions of citizenship, globalization,
neoliberalism, and modernity. Students are encouraged to draw on their own research agendas (past, present, and future) in weekly posts/presentations and course papers.

**Course Requirements:**

1. **Attendance and Participation:**

   In an upper-level seminar, it goes without saying that your active and informed participation is expected. As a courtesy, please let me know ahead of time if you will be late or unable to attend a session of class. Also, if, for whatever reason, you find it difficult to participate in class as often as you would like, please make efforts to contribute to the class in alternate ways, such as by contributing more frequently to the online discussion board. All students are asked to take an active role in working towards the success of this class. Auditing will only be permitted in exceptional cases. Frequent absences (3 or more) will negatively impact a student’s grade and may constitute grounds for dismissal from the class.

2. **Online Discussion OR Weekly Presentations:**

   **Option A:** In order to make the most of our class time together, all students will be required to participate in an online discussion of the readings. Each student is required to submit 8 online posts over the course of the semester, during 8 separate weeks. This means that you can skip 3 weeks of your choosing. Each post should be at least two long paragraphs in length and should pertain to the readings for the week. You have several choices for the topic of your post: 1) draw on your own research experience 2) provide a contemporary example from the media (with links, if possible) 3) offer critical commentary or questions. Please feel free to build on previous posts by your classmates! This is an especially good forum for students who have trouble speaking up in class and who prefer to more carefully craft their comments. Please allow enough time for thoughtful reflection of the readings! Posts may be submitted no later than Tuesday at 8 pm. All students will need to print the week’s posts, read them, and bring them to class the following day.

   To access the discussion board: [http://d2l.arizona.edu](http://d2l.arizona.edu)
   To get help with the discussion board: [http://help.d2l.arizona.edu/forstudents.html](http://help.d2l.arizona.edu/forstudents.html)

   **Option B:** Students will work either in pairs or individually to prepare a presentation of at least 30 minutes that will start off the class session. There are several ways to approach these presentations, but all presentations must include: 1) PowerPoint and 2) a handout for each student. While you may choose to comment on the readings or present an overview of work conducted in this area, the bulk of your presentation should include data to analyze and discuss in relation to the readings and topic for the day. You have many options in choosing data to present. You may work with data that one student has collected from their ongoing fieldwork; you may do a comparison of several students’ data; and you may also bring in media clips (Youtube, etc.) to analyze. Each student will be responsible for two presentations over the course of the semester.
### Mid-term Paper:

For your first paper, you will explore one of the main topics we have covered in a short paper of 8-10 pages. **Drawing on your current research agenda is highly encouraged!** You may also choose to present a more theoretical discussion of the readings. **Please cite generously from class readings and feel free to consult with me before the paper deadline.** Please submit an abstract for your mid-term paper over email or in class by February 23\(^{rd}\). **Your mid-term paper is due by Friday, March 11\(^{th}\) at noon.**

### Final Paper(s):

A final paper of 15-20 pages should address a different course theme than previously addressed in your mid-term. Please submit an abstract for your final paper (email is fine) no later than April 13\(^{th}\). **Your final paper is due on Wednesday, May 4\(^{th}\) by noon. No incompletes, please!** All students are advised to meet with me at least once during the semester to discuss your progress in the class.

### Grading:

- Attendance, Participation, Online Posts: 25%
- Mid-term Paper: 25%
- Final Paper: 50%

### Course Readings:

All readings will be made available at the d2l class website. If you have trouble accessing the site for any reason, please email me. We will be reading several chapters from different texts used in the course. While I have made all of these chapters available on d2l, you are encouraged to purchase any books that would be especially useful for your research. (My favorites are noted with a \*.)

### Class Schedule:

**Week One: Introductions**

January 19

**Week Two: White Things**

January 26


Introduction, xi-xxvii.
The Pot Calling the Kettle: White Goods and the Construction of Race in Antebellum America (chapter 1), 3-43.


*Week Three: Making Modern Bodies
February 2*


The Lightness of Whitemen (chapter 3), 64-94.

Conclusion: Whitemen Beyond (chapter 6), 209-259.


*Week Four: The Cultural Politics of “Nature” and Racial Difference
February 9*


Introduction, 1-7

No Place for a White Man (chapter 3), 73-94

Conclusion: Biology and Nation, 253-258


Racial Degradation and Environmental Anxieties (chapter 4), 142-227.
Smokey Bear is a White Racist Pig (chapter 5), 184-227.

Nuclear Natures: In the Shadows of the City on the Hill (chapter 6), 228-275.

**Week Five: Bodies in the Racial Imaginary**

**February 16**


Preparing for a Bacterial Invasion: Cholera and Inequality in Venezuela (chapter 1), 19-47.

Turning Chaos into Control: Initial Responses by Regional Institutions (chapter 5, excerpt), 112-119.

Medicine, Magic, and Military Might: Cholera Control on La Tortuga (chapter 8), 179-198.


**Week Six: Bourgeois Bodies and Racial Selves**

**February 23**


→ *Mid-term Paper Abstracts due in class.*

**Week Seven: Groomed to be Useful**

**March 2**


Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: Cultural Competence and the Dangers of Métissage (chapter 4), 79-111.

A Sentimental Education: Children on the Imperial Divide (chapter 5), 112-139.


The Great White Mother (chapter 3, excerpt), 111-148.

Groomed to Be Useful (chapter 6, excerpt), 229-251.

Maternalism in the Institutions (chapter 7, excerpt), 302-317.


**Week Eight: Connections**

**March 9**

→ *Mid-term Papers due by Friday March 11th at 12pm.*

**Spring Break: No Class**

**March 16**

**Week Nine: Commodification and Consumption**

**March 23**

Cleanliness and “Civilization”: Hygiene and Colonialism in Southern Africa (chapter 1), 17-34.

Education, Domesticity, and Bodily Discipline (chapter 2), 35-62.

Manufacturing, the “African Market,” and the Postwar Boom (excerpt from chapter 4), 99-104.


Bodies and Things: Toiletries and Commodity Culture in Postwar Zimbabwe (excerpt from chapter 6), 166-192.

**Week Ten: Contamination and the Body Politic**

**March 30**


Introduction, 1-12.

“Only Man Is Vile” (chapter 3), 74-103.

Excremental Colonialism (chapter 4), 104-129.


**Week Eleven: Racial Transformations**

**April 6**


**Week Twelve: Turning Bodies into Citizens**

**April 13**


➔**Final Paper Abstracts due in class (or sooner, by email).**

**Week Thirteen: Race, Language, and the Body**

**April 20**

In-class Presentation by JRG: “A Modern Blackness: Race, Language, and the Body in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil”

**Week Fourteen: Concluding Thoughts**

**April 27**

**Week Fifteen: Final Papers only (no class)**

**May 4**

➔**Final papers due by noon in my office.**

Have a nice summer break!