

AMST-A201: RACE, SEX, AND POPULAR CULTURE
SPRING 2008 (2ND 8 WEEKS)

Class meets: M/W 4-6
Instructor: Prof. Micol Seigel
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classroom: SY 002
office: Memorial Hall East M33
office hours: Weds 1-3 & by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will introduce students to tools useful in the analysis of popular culture. It focuses on some of the social categories most consequential in the structuring of power in the U.S. today: race, sex, and gender. Opening sessions will ask students to question the assumptions many North Americans bring to bear on the substance and meaning of these social categories, offering a variety of perspectives with an eye to redefinition or better yet, an awareness of the multiple definitions in use and the stakes involved in each. The course then proceeds to apply the tools these considerations offer to the analysis of a variety of cultural forms. It begins with what are arguably the dominant narrative texts of contemporary U.S. culture—Hollywood movies—and then encourages students to apply their “reading” skills to the news, print matter, toy culture, and food. Class participation is heavily emphasized. Readings are supplemented by films, both feature and documentary, and occasional lectures by the instructor; assignments include in-class journals, groupwork and class presentations, and a final exam.

COURSE MATERIALS

Book: Toni Morrison, [Playing in the Dark](#). BUY – Available at T.I.S. & the IU Bookstore; Amazon.com also has used copies for \$7-8 with shipping.

Course packet: self-assembled. See below under Course Requirements.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

∞ **Assembly of Course Packet (10 points).** As a research assignment, each student will assemble their own packet of readings. This is not only cheaper and quicker than asking you to purchase a packet through a bookstore, but it provides you with an opportunity to gain expertise in maneuvering the IUB library system, online and in paper. In addition, ensuring hardcopies of the readings is intellectually productive, given 1) the golden rule of textual assignments, lent from tenancy law: possession is 9/10's of doing the reading, and 2) then you may consult the texts in class, where critical acts of comprehension occur. This assignment sets you up to learn and succeed.

- **E-reserves direct url:** <http://ereserves.indiana.edu/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=6021>; **password:** ideal.
- **Print reserves** are available at Wells Library. Log on to IUCAT, choose “Class Reserves” from the red-print list at right, and search by instructor. Get books from the Kent-Cooper room downstairs at Wells.
- **Journal searches** can be performed by logging on to IUCAT, choosing “Periodical Title Search” from the same red-text list on the right, and entering the journal title. Then select the correct volume and issue, using the bibliographic information in this syllabus. You can print the object of your search.

NB: COURSE PACKETS SHOULD BE ASSEMBLED BY THE SECOND CLASS FOR FULL POINTS.

We will begin class Wednesday, March 5 by taking 10 minutes for each of you to show me your bound or stapled packet with your name on it in ink. Points awarded as follows: all 11 articles by March 5: 10 points. Each article missing = -1 point; each class day late = -2 points. No points awarded after Wednesday, March 26.

Suggestion: team up with a group to make this assignment simpler. Just make sure everyone in your group gets a chance to proceed through both Reserves and online journals, so as not to deprive anyone of this learning.

∞ **Participation (60 points):**

- **Credit for Presence: 40 points.** Because of the nature of humanities pedagogy, class presence is critical for learning to take place. In this class, therefore, students earn credit for presence, rather than have credit docked for absences. Each student earns 3 points for each class period they attend in full and on time. Lateness and leaving early will diminish this amount. There is a built-in cushion of 2 points to allow for the occasional unavoidable absence (do the math); every student begins with another 3 points to augment this cushion.

An instructor has no place as arbiter of college student decision-making, so there is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. All absences are excused (or unexcused, depending how you think about it).

- **Credit for Participation: 20 points.** The largest part of participation is presence in class. Additional points can be earned by active participation. Here is a guide to how these points will be allocated:
 - Relevant, productive contributions in more than 8 classes: 20 points.
 - Relevant, productive contributions in more than 4 classes: 10 points.
 - Tangential or distracting contributions in more than 8 classes: 10 points.
 - Tangential or distracting contributions in more than 4 classes: 5 points.

- Very infrequent or disrespectful or disruptive contributions: 0 points.

NB: Shyness. Students who are very shy may submit brief (one-page) written reflections on the reading to earn these points rather than speaking in class. The same criteria will apply.

NB, bis: Absence and Class Materials. Students are responsible for the material discussed in class.

Students who cannot attend class should, first, consult with another member of the seminar whom they trust to follow closely, and should discuss at some length what happened in class, including the course of the conversation as well as logistical details. To prepare for the eventuality of unanticipated absence, students should arrange in advance to offer each other this favor. I suggest securing phone numbers and emails after the first class for this purpose, and then having lunch or taking your classmate out to coffee for the substantive discussion. Do NOT ask your professor what you did in class; it is not my responsibility to repeat, in the five minutes before or after class, the entire painstaking pedagogical process. I will, however, happily discuss class content with any student at leisure during office hours.

- ∞ **In-class journals (70 points):** Most of the classes in which there is reading assigned will begin with 10-15 minutes of in-class journaling on specific questions about the reading. The questions will be designed to assess whether students completed the reading and will most likely be some variation on the question, “what is the main argument of this reading?” The journaling will be open-note but closed-book, so take reasonable notes as you read. The journal question will never test you on the “facts” conveyed in a piece—don’t concern yourself with trivia. Find the main themes and arguments.
 - March 17 - 3 articles: 15 points
 - Mar 19 - 3 articles: 15 points
 - Mar 24 - 3 articles: 15 points
 - Mar 31 - Playing (book): 15 points
 - Apr 14 - 2 articles: 10 points

Students who have test-taking issues or anxiety should consult with the instructor; they will be offered an alternative with no prejudice to their grade.

Students who must be absent on journal days may make them up in my office hours within 1 week; maximum scores will be two-thirds the regular days’ total.

- ∞ **Group project, Food (20 points):** Details TBA.
- ∞ **Final Exam (50 points):** Details TBA.

GRADING

The assignments carry a total of 210 points. Grades will be determined by dividing points earned in half and applying a standard 100-point scale without D-, D+, or A+ (0-59=F; 60-69=D; 70-71=C-; 72-77=C; 78-79=C+; 80-81=B-; 82-87=B; 88-89=B+; 90-91=A-; 92-100=A).

ACADEMIC HONESTY

It is the obligation of all students to inform themselves of University regulations on academic honesty as outlined in Indiana University’s Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct, <http://campuslife.indiana.edu/Code/>. Cheating, plagiarism, and other examples of academic misconduct will be pursued and sanctions will be levied. There will be no exceptions. If you have questions about academic integrity, please do not hesitate to consult with me. **In addition to university-mandated sanctions, plagiarism or cheating will result in an “F” grade in this course.**

CLASS AND READINGS SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION (Week 1)

M 3 – W 5 Mar Movie: Crash, dir. Paul Haggis (2005). Mon Mar 3 in class.
Distribute & discuss syllabus.

SHOW COURSE PACKETS FOR CREDIT WEDS (10 POINTS)

SPRING BREAK, MAR 8-17. *Read over break!*

PART I: KEY TERMS (Weeks 2-3)

M 17 Mar: **What is Race?**

Fields, Barbara Jeanne, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America," New Left Review I, no. 181 (May/June 1990): 95-118. *ONLINE (periodical title search)*
Tatum, Beverly Daniel, Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race (New York: Basic Books, 1997), chap. 1, "Defining Racism," 3-17, and chap. 2, "The Complexity of Identity," 18-28. *PRINT and E-RESERVES*
Williams, Patricia J., "The Ethnic Scarring of American Whiteness," The House that Race Built, ed. Wahneema Lubiano (NY: Vintage Books, 1998), 253-263. *PRINT and E-RESERVES JOURNAL (15 POINTS)*

W 19 Mar: **What is Sex?**

Fausto-Sterling, Anne, "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough," The Sciences (March/April 1993): 20-24. *ONLINE (periodical title search)*
Butler, Judith, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, & David M. Halperin (NY: Routledge, 1993), 307-320. *PRINT and E-RESERVES*
Rubin, Gayle, "Thinking Sex," Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader, 3-44. *PRINT and E-RESERVES JOURNAL (15 POINTS)*

M 24 Mar: **What Is the Relationship between Race and Sex?**

Brown, Elsa Barkley, "'What Has Happened Here': The Politics of Difference in Women's History and Feminist Politics," Feminist Studies 18, no. 2 (Summer, 1992): 295-312. *ONLINE via JSTOR.*
Stepan, Nancy Leys, "Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science," Isis 77, no. 2 (June, 1986): 261-277. *ONLINE via JSTOR*
Somerville, Siobhan, "Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body," Journal of the History of Sexuality 5, no. 2 (October 1994): 243-66. *ONLINE via JSTOR JOURNAL (15 POINTS)*

W 26 Mar: Discussion of issues & readings to date (bring packets).

PART II: LEARNING HOW TO READ (Weeks 4-8). *NB: Complete readings by the Monday of each week.*

M 31 Mar – W 2 Apr: **Reading Major Social Texts**

Toni Morrison, Playing in the Dark.
JOURNAL MON (15 POINTS)

NB: W 2 APRIL, CLASSROOM CHANGE: MEET IN BALLANTINE HALL ROOM 005 (bring Morrison).

M 7 – W 9 Apr: **Reading the News**

Lubiano, Wahneema, "Black Ladies, Welfare Queens, and State Minstrels: Ideological War by Narrative Means," Race-ing Justice, En-gender-ing Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality, ed. Toni Morrison (NY: Pantheon, 1992), 323-63. *PRINT and E-RESERVES*

M 14 – W 16 Apr: **Reading Toys**

Film: Barbie Nation: An Unauthorized Tour, dir. Susan Stern (2003). In class, Mon Apr 14.
Urla, Jacqueline and Thomas Swedlund, "The Anthropometry of Barbie: Unsettling Ideals of the Feminine Body in Popular Culture," in Deviant Bodies: critical perspectives on difference in science and popular culture, ed. Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 277-313. *E-RESERVES (print copy available at the Lilly Library). JOURNAL (10 POINTS – Lubiano & Urla/Swedlund readings)*

M 21 – W 23 Apr: **Reading Food.** No assigned readings.

GROUP PROJECTS (20 POINTS)

M 28 Apr – F 2 May: **Finals week.** *FINAL EXAM (50 POINTS)* **M 28 Apr 2:45-4:45** (regular classroom).