

SOC/AAS 3211W      Race and Racism in the US  
University of Minnesota      Spring 2027  
Meeting time/location:      TBA

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**Course Description:** Understanding the social significance of race, class, and gender is pivotal to understanding society itself. These social constructions organize our everyday lives and their implications—both independently and in relation to each other—are far-reaching for everyone. As constructions, these dynamic social categories require constant maintenance. This course will explore the roles and functions of these categories, how we maintain them, and their larger implications.

To achieve this objective, strong critical thinking and writing skills are required. Critical analysis goes beyond mere summary of someone else’s idea; it requires an additional level of inquiry based upon a synthesis of multiple perspectives and a deeper reading of the central concepts. Regardless of your current and future interests, the capacity to critically analyze a complex phenomenon and powerfully articulate your idea in written form is indispensable. As a writing-intensive course, the assignments and exams for this course are intended to develop and strengthen your ability to clearly and concisely articulate an original argument with convincing supporting evidence.

**Learning Objectives:**

The two strongest learning objectives in this course are 1) to learn critical thinking skills and 2) to learn critical writing skills. We’re in the environment of “fake news”—and the misleading/sometimes malicious use of statistics and evidence leads us to faulty conclusions. It’s my hope that not only do we learn how to be critical/skeptical of the claims that people make, but also learn how to counter faulty information. This will help you in your future workplaces and in everyday life, as you can better analyze the information around you and its sources.

**The Principle of Charity:**

“In philosophy and rhetoric, the **principle of charity** requires interpreting a speaker’s statements to be rational and, in the case of any argument, considering its best, strongest possible interpretation. In its narrowest sense, the goal of this methodological principle is to avoid attributing irrationality, logical fallacies or falsehoods to the others’ statements, when a coherent, rational interpretation of the statements is available.”

**Text(s):**

Readings will be available on Moodle in PDF format and should be done by class time on Wednesday.

## Grade Distribution:

Participation and Attendance	15%
Three Reading Reflection Memos	36%
Course Paper (Proposal, Draft, Final)	49%

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## Major Assignments (details):

**Participation and Attendance (15%):** Talking in class and having conversations about topics is important to make class time worth it and to show you're paying attention. So try your best to be engaged in classroom discussions when we have them, and in small-group discussions as well. To do this, you will need to have read the material for the given day. The readings in this course have been specifically chosen for their clarity and quality.

**Three Reading Reflection Memos (36%):** Students will be expected to turn in 3 reading reflection memos on the weeks of their choosing. The memos should reflect upon at least three of the assigned readings for the day selected. Memos are due at the start of the class meeting where the readings will be discussed. Students must attend that session to earn full credit for the memo. Students must turn in two memos by end of Week 9, so that writing workloads don't become too heavy at the end of the course. You may turn in an extra Reading Reflection Memo and we'll drop the lowest score.

Here are the elements of a good reading reflection memo:

*Reading reflection memo expectations:* Summarize each author's main argument (~1 paragraph for each reading). What are the important points that the author is trying to communicate? What kinds of evidence does the author use (e.g. interviews, personal experience, historical data, survey data, experiment, etc.)?

*Analysis and Reflection:* Discuss what parts of the arguments you find convincing, provocative, or weak (~1 paragraph per reading). In this section, reflect on whether the author's argument provoked you to agree or disagree, reflect on a similar experience, or introduced you to a new or surprising reality of inequalities or identities related to race, class, and gender. Explain clearly and include specific references to the text with direct quotations or paraphrasing.

*Connections:* Explain how the articles relate to one another and to the broader themes of the class discussed up to that point.

*Format:* Papers should be 3–4 pages long, double-spaced with 12-point font and 1-inch margins. No cover pages or works cited pages needed. Include the course topic and response paper number (e.g. "Social Construction of Race, Response Paper 1 of 3") at top of the first page, along with your name, the course number, and the date.

**Course Paper (49%):** The course paper will be an 8–10 page research paper due on May 9th at the start of class. You can write this paper on any topic related to the course that you choose, although the instructor reserves the right to veto or suggest alterations to topics. This paper will be due in stages throughout the term. Students will receive feedback on each stage of the research paper. You are expected to take the feedback provided seriously to grow as a thinker and writer. With each progressive stage of the assignment, students will be required to submit a paragraph or two explaining how the revision addresses the concerns/comments made previously.

- *Paper Proposal (5%):* Due on February 28th. A one-page proposal of the research topic, research question(s), and goals of the paper. This proposal should also explain how the paper

is related to the course.

- *Final Paper Draft (10%)*: Due on April 4th. A full rough draft for comment and revision.
- *Final Paper (34%)*: Due on May 9th. 8–10 pages in length, 1-inch margins, 12-point font, double spaced. Minimum 8 sources. Your choice of citation style, though you should have in-text citations.

### Letter Grade Distribution:

$\geq 93.00$	A	73.00 - 76.99	C
90.00 - 92.99	A-	70.00 - 72.99	C-
87.00 - 89.99	B+	67.00 - 69.99	D+
83.00 - 86.99	B	63.00 - 66.99	D
80.00 - 82.99	B-	60.00 - 62.99	D-
77.00 - 79.99	C+	$\leq 59.99$	F

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### Course Policies:

- **Submissions:** All assignments must be uploaded to Moodle in PDF format. Use standard formatting: double-spaced, 12-point font.
- **File Naming:** Please name files using the convention: `lastname_assignmentname.pdf`.
- **Late Policy:** Late work will be accepted with a 10% grade dock for each day it is late.
- **Grade Disputes:** If you wish to dispute a grade, take 24 hours after receiving said grade, and contact the instructor to discuss it.

### Course Outline:

<b>Week</b>	<b>Content</b>
Week 01	<b>Introduction to Course, Methods for Sociological Analysis</b> (January 17th)
Week 02	<b>Historical/Contemporary Understandings of Race</b> (January 24th) Yudell, “A Short History of the Race Concept”; Omi and Winant, “Racial Formation”
Week 03	<b>Historical/Contemporary Understandings of Class</b> (January 31st) Marx, “The Communist Manifesto”; Mantsios, “Class in America”; Fischer et al., “Inequality by Design”
Week 04	<b>Historical/Contemporary Understandings of Gender</b> (February 7th) de Beauvoir, “The Second Sex”; Lorber, “Night to his Day”; Firestone, “The Dialectic of Sex”; Young, “The Five Faces of Oppression”; Bonilla-Silva, “Rethinking Racism”
Week 05	<b>Race and Capital</b> (February 14th) Bonilla-Silva, “Racism without Racists”; Goldin and Rouse, “Orchestrating Impartiality”; Granfield, “Making It By Faking It”; Fields, “Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America”
Week 06	<b>Labor Market</b> (February 21st) Wilson, “When Work Disappears”; Brown et al., “The Bankruptcy of Virtuous Markets”; Williams, “The Glass Escalator”
Week 07	<b>Mass Incarceration</b> (February 28th) Alexander, “The New Jim Crow” <i>Due: Final Paper Proposal</i>
Week 08	<b>Studying Discrimination</b> (March 7th) Maass, D’Ettole, and Cadinu, “Checkmate?”; Yinger, “Measuring Racial Discrimination with Fair Housing Audits”; Granfield, “Making It by Faking It”
Week 09	<b>SPRING BREAK</b> (March 14th)
Week 10	<b>Education</b> (March 21st) Bowles and Gintis, “Schooling in Capitalist America”; Weil, “Teaching Boys and Girls Separately”; Mickaelson and Smith, “Can Education Eliminate Race, Class, and Gender Inequality?”
Week 11	<b>The Family</b> (March 28th) Coontz, “Historical Perspectives on Family Diversity”; Lareau, “Invisible Inequality”; Pyke, “The Normal American Family”
Week 12	<b>The Media</b> (April 4th) Mantsios, “Media Magic”; Wood et al., “Gendered Media”; Butsch, “Five Decades and Three Hundred Sitcoms about Class and Gender” <i>Due: Final Paper Draft</i>
Week 13	<b>TBD</b> (April 11th)
Week 14	<b>TBD</b> (April 18th)
Week 15	<b>Imperialism</b> (April 25th) Césaire, “The Discourse on Colonialism”; Fanon, “Black Skin, White Masks”
Week 16	<b>TBD</b> (May 2nd) <i>Final paper due on May 9th</i>