The salience of race in social life and social consciousness is a historically contingent and sectorally variable outcome of ongoing classification struggles, which take place both in academia and in the larger society and polity, as interested contenders strive to impose the criterion which best fits their specific interest. It is these struggles themselves, not their final product, that must constitute the object of our inquiries.

Loic Wacquant

It can be said without contradiction both that social realities are social fictions with no other basis than social construction, and that they really exist, inasmuch as they are collectively recognized.

Pierre Bourdieu

This course offers a comparative sociohistorical analysis of race. Using a wide range of empirical and theoretical materials, we problematize what is too often considered settled, namely, what constitutes race. We explore historical and cross-national variations in the bases of racial division, as well as the mechanisms through which racial domination is (re)produced. We attempt to understand how variations in racial classification affect the structure of race relations and processes of group formation and struggle.

Our first task in attempting to gain analytical understanding of race is to deal with the prevailing assumption that race is a biological fact, rather than a social one. To address this issue, we begin the course not with social science literature on race, but rather with analyses of the biological foundations (or lack thereof) of the concept. By showing how biologists and geneticists struggle over the notion of race, we open the way toward developing the notion of race as a social construct-- one that has changed over time, and varies across societies.

Rather than employing a group-oriented approach to studying race (one that studies the history of particular groups), we adopt a problem-oriented approach (exploring what Wacquant calls “elementary forms of racial domination”, including classification, prejudice, discrimination, segregation, ghettoization, and violence).

Readings include selections from sociology, anthropology, law, history, and history of science on ethnoracial division in the US, Western Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Responsibilities

This is a seminar course, designed to allow you to think about and discuss ideas. Your class performance grade is based on your preparedness, participation and depth of engagement. You are expected to be an active participant in discussions which requires, of course, that you attend class. There is no way to make up a missed class.

One of the best ways to understand concepts is to write about them. With that in mind, you will complete a total of 10 readings responses. These responses will be letter-graded collectively in two
batches. The first five must be completed during the first 7 weeks of class (your fifth response must be completed by **Wednesday, October 20**).

There will be a final **research paper** (roughly 15 pages) or **project** (with a written component) such as a video essay, creative writing, design project, etc., in which you use the concepts we have employed throughout the semester to understand a particular instance of racial distinction, division and/or domination. For example, you might be interested in understandings of race in Tokugawa era Japan—what the recognized distinctions were, the prejudicial beliefs held by one group of other(s), the ways in which such distinctions were used (or not) to distribute or gain access to resources. Or perhaps you want to analyze the forms of group distinction employed in a racial conflict, say, the 1994 Rwandan genocide or you are curious about how intermarriage and identity reflect and shape a society’s beliefs about race. There are all too many examples you could draw on—think broadly, choose what interests you. To be sure you’re on the right track, you will hand in a **project/paper proposal** during **Week 8** (Friday, Oct 28, 2011). Papers/projects are due the penultimate week of class (**Friday, Dec 9, 2011**).

**Grading:**
Class performance: 25%
Reading Responses I: 20%
Reading Responses II: 20%
Final Paper/Project: 35%

**Dates to remember:**
**October 20:** fifth response paper due
**October 28:** paper/project proposal due
**December 9:** paper/project due
**December 14:** tenth response paper due

**Academic Integrity:** Please review the Gallatin policy on academic integrity [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html], violations of which are subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating.

**Required Books:**
Doug Massey and Nancy Denton. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*
Allen Pred. *Even in Sweden: Racisms, Racialized Spaces, and the Popular Geographical Imagination*

**Additional Readings:** Available on blackboard or online
PART I. FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

WEEK 1: Course Introduction
Sep 7

WEEK 2: (E)racing the Body
September 12
In Discover, Special Issue: The Science of Race:


September 14
Jonathan Marks. 2002. What it Means to be 98% Chimpanzee: Apes, People and their Genes (Berkeley: UC Press), Chapters 4, 5, 6, 10 and 11 (roughly 100 pages)

See eugenicsarchive.org for virtual exhibits on eugenics programs in US and elsewhere

WEEK 3: The social dimension of scientific research
Sep 19
http://sss.sagepub.com/content/38/5/695.full.pdf+html

Sep 21

Recommended:

WEEK 4: Analytical Tools to Think 'Race'
September 26

September 28
Jacqueline Stevens, Chapter 4, “Race and the State: Mail Order Brides and the Geographies of Race”, in
**WEEK 5: Ethnicity, "Race", Caste**

**October 3**


**October 5**

In class, **FILM: CASTE AT BIRTH** Color. 52 minutes; 1990. Director: Mira Hamermesh Producer: Mira Hamermesh

An exploration of the condition of the 150 million untouchables, India's lowest caste, including government attempts to improve their condition, resistance among upper caste Hindus, and the work of leaders among the untouchables to bring about change.

The index number at Bobst is VCA5731

**Recommended**


FILM: "Garbage Dreams" : watch this film to better understand the connection between social classification and occupational status; specifically how stigmatized bodies are often relegated to stigmatized job sectors which tend to reinforce their stigma. See pbs.org website

**PART II. "RACE" AS CATEGORIZATION AND PARTITION**

This section of the course will explore race as a form of social classification in which human beings are divided and ranked with reference to selected biological properties (visible or invisible, real or imputed) that are deemed socially significant. We compare the varied bases of racial division across societies to prepare us for the next section of the course, which draws connections between how these classifications are structured and the relations they both reflect and engender between groups.

**WEEK 6: Racial Classification as Form and Tool of Power**

**October 10 (no class, Columbus Day / Indigenous Peoples Day)**

**October 12**

J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Indigeneity and Sovereignty*

**Recommended**


The New Race Question: How the Census Counts Multiracial Individuals (NY:Russell Sage), Mary C. Waters and Joel Perlmann, editors.

WEEK 7: Classifying Mixed Populations

October 17

Martha Hodes, “Fractions and Fictions in the US Census of 1890” in Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History, (ed. Ann Laura Stoler) pp 240-270 (30 pages)

October 19


Recommended

Anthony Marx. Making Race and Nation


PART III. MAKING CONNECTIONS: Elementary Forms of Racial Domination

Having explored how concepts of race vary across societies, we move to understanding how systems of racial classification reflect and direct relations between groups. We explore what Wacquant calls "the elementary forms of racial domination": prejudice/stigma, discrimination, segregation, ghettoization and violence and the linkages between them.

WEEK 8: Prejudice and Discrimination
October 24

October 26

Recommended

WEEK 9: Segregation
October 31, November 1
WEEK 10: Racialized Spaces
November 7, November 9

WEEK 11: EXCLUSION AND SECLUSION: Ghettoes, Camps, and Reservations
November 14, 16
Richard Sennett, “Intro: Body and City” and Chapter 7, “Fear of Touching: The Jewish Ghetto in Renaissance Venice” in *Flesh and Stone* (about 60 pages)
Loic Wacquant, Class, Race and Hyperincarceration in Revanchist America *Daedalus Summer 2010*

WEEK 12:
November 21
FILM in class: “We Shall Remain”, American Experience, pbs online
Peter Matthiessen, Chapter 1, Thieves Road, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*

[November 23: NO CLASS, keep reading: Thanksgiving Holiday/ National Day of Mourning (look it up)]

Recommended
Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice
Beth Epstein. 2011. *Collective Terms: Race, Culture and Community in a State-Planned City in France* (Berghahn Books)
James Baldwin, “Sonny’s Blues”
Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (Owl Books)
*Thunderheart*, 1992, director, Michael Apted
“Homeland”, by Jilann Spitzmiller and Hank Rogerson

WEEK 13: Genocide
November 28, 30

Recommended
Philip Gourevitch. 1998. *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (entire)

**WEEK 14: Race and War**
December 5, 7

**WEEK 15: Resistance and Retribution/Justice and Reconciliation**
December 12, 14
What are the kinds of responses individuals, groups and governments can, do or do not, should or should not make in response to racial domination? What have societies done once the brutality of racial domination is accepted by at least some segments of the society? How do truth commissions, criminal prosecution and reparations differ in terms of the rationale given for them; their effectiveness; eligibility requirements, etc.?

James Baldwin, *Unnameable Objects, Unspeakable Crimes*

**Recommended**
Aeschylus’ *The Oresteia*
Octavia Butler, *Kindred*
James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*
Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell, entire, esp. chapters 6-10, pp.87-389 [approx. 200 pages]*
http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2009/oct/31/nazi-ghetto-poland-escape