**IDSEM-UG1724**  
**GET ME BODIED: RACE, ETHNICITY, AND POPULAR MEDIA**  
**Thursdays, 6:20-9:00pm**  
**Silver Center, Room 406**  

**Professor Frank Roberts**  
New York University  
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Official Course Blog: frankroberts.wordpress.com/nyugallatin  
Course Twitter Account: @NYURACE (twitter.com/nyurace)

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

What does it mean to use “media” as a site of cultural critique? What does critical race theory look like or sound like when we encounter it on the radio, on a dance-floor, or on a movie screen? In this course we will pay close attention to the racial politics of what neo-Marxist philosopher Theodor Adorno once famously called “the culture industries”: namely film, television, radio and popular music. More specifically, we will examine how contemporary cultural workers of color (musicians, filmmakers, artists, etc.) have utilized mass-mediated forms to resist, respond to, and reveal the conundrum of “race” in the 21st century. Our readings will include perspectives from a range of ethnic studies scholars such as Stuart Hall, Tricia Rose, Cornel West, Mark Anthony Neal and Daphne Brooks. We will also survey the more embodied or “performative” theoretical insights offered by figures such as Spike Lee, Lil Kim, R. Kelly, Tyler Perry, Jennifer Lopez, Amy Winehouse, Savion Glover and Beyonce Knowles, among others. In short, in this course we will think about media as more than simply a site for “representing” race, but rather also as a site for forming and constructing race as we know it (i.e. racial formation).

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**  
(Available at NYU Bookstore)

1. Blackboard Readings

**REQUIREMENTS**

- Weekly 2 page response paper and discussion questions (3 discussion questions per class). These papers/discussion questions must be submitted both electronically (at frankroberts@nyu.edu) and in-person (at the start of each class).
- One 20-25 minute in-class “close reading” presentation. In the context of this course, “close reading” will refer to:
  1): A detailed examination and/or interrogation of the author’s key arguments.  
  2): An application of the author’s theoretical framework to some contemporary phenomena (for example: what does Munoz’s theory of “disidentification” look like in practice, etc.?)
- One final portfolio which will compile all of your written work over the course of the semester (i.e. all of your weekly response papers) prefaced by a 4 page critical introduction.

**GRADING BREAKDOWN:**

50%: Response Papers & Final Portfolio  
25%: In-Class Presentation  
25%: Perfect Attendance and Critical Participation
**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Students are expected to be in attendance to every session. You may be absent once without penalty. Two absences will result in a start-value score of A- (in other words this is the highest grade you can receive in the course, even if you performed exceptionally well in all other areas). Three absences will result in a start-value grade of B-.

**STATEMENT OF COLLEGE POLICY ON PLAGIARISM:**

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else’s ideas, words, or artistic, scientific, or technical work as one’s own creation. Using the ideas or work of another is permissible only when the original author is identified. Paraphrasing and summarizing, as well as direct quotation, require the citation of original sources. Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Lack of dishonest intent does not necessarily absolve a student of responsibility for plagiarism.

It is the student’s responsibility to recognize the difference between statements that are common knowledge (which do not require documentation) and restatements of the ideas of others. Paraphrasing, summaries, and direct quotations are acceptable forms of restatement, as long as the source is cited. Students who are unsure of how and when to provide documentation are advised to consult with their instructors. The Library has free guides designed to help students with problems of documentation.

An asterisk (*) indicates that the reading can be found on blackboard and/or the courseblog.

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**Part I:**

**Beyond the Lure of “Post-Racial” America: The Shifting Contours of Race and Racism in the 21st Century**

**Introductions and Overview:**

The Existential Contours of Race

**September 6th:**

In-Class Listening Session:

Cornel West, “The Socratic, The Prophetic, and the Democratic” (Lecture)

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Race Matters in (Un)Democratic Times

**September 13th:**

- Cornel West, “Democracy Matters Are Frightening In Our Time,” “Nihilism in America” and “The Deep Democratic Tradition in America” in Cornel West, Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism (Penguin, 2005) *
- Cornel West, “Nihilism in Black America” in Cornel West, Race Matters *

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The Price of the Ticket: Barack Obama and the Rise of Post-Racial Liberalism

**September 20th:**

- Ta-Nahesi Coates, “Fear of a Black President” in Atlantic Magazine, September 2012 *
Racial Mourning in the Public Sphere: On The Meanings of Trayvon Martin

September 27:
Read the following essays from the special Trayvon Martin Symposium in Theory & Event, Volume 15, Issue 3, 2012:
- Christopher Lebron, “The Agony of a Racial Democracy” *
- Mark Reinhardt, “Stuff White People Know (or: What We Talk About When We Talk About Trayvon)” *
- Ange-Marie Hancock, “Trayvon Martin, Intersectionality, and the Politics of Disgust” *

Interlude:
Race and Representation, Performance and Performativity
(Theoretical Frameworks)

October 4:
- Jose Esteban Munoz, “Performing Disidentifications” *
- Stuart Hall, “The Work of Representation” *
- Diana Taylor, “The Archive and the Repertoire” *

Part II:
Suga Mamas, Politicized: Women of Color and the Racialized Female Body in U.S. Popular Culture

Dangerous Curves: Latina Bodies in the Media

October 11:
- Frances Negrón-Muntaner, “Jennifer’s Butt: Valorizing the Puerto Rican Racialized Female Body” in Boricua Pop
- Isabel Molina-Guzmán, Dangerous Curves: Latina Bodies in the Media (NYU Press, 2010)

Erotic Revolutionaries: Black Women, Sexuality, and Popular Culture

October 18:
- Daphne Brooks, “Suga Mama, Politicized” in The Nation.com, December 18, 2007*

Optional:
- Aisha Durham, “Check On It: Beyonce, Southern Booty, and Black Femininities in Music Video” in Feminist Media Studies, March 2012 *

Part III:
America’s Original Popular Culture: The Enduring Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy
The Darkest America

October 25:

November 1:

In-Class Screening: *Bamboozled*, Spike Lee (2000)

Part IV: Alternative Identities, Alternative Mediascapes

Hip Hop and the Black Culture Wars

November 8:
- Tricia Rose, *Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop—And Why It Matters* (Basic Civitas, 2008)

November 15:
- Tricia Rose, *Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop—And Why It Matters* (Basic Civitas, 2008) (Part II)

Racial Triangulation and the Politics of South Asian America

November 29:

Optional:

Whiteness, Femininity, and Popular Culture

December 6:
- J. “Jack” Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* (Beacon, 2012)

December 13:
Review of Major Themes and Unfinished Business