

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 401, L01
Special Topics in Communication and Media Studies

Race, Representation and the Media

Fall 2018

Sept 10 – Dec. 3, 2018 (excluding Oct. 8 & Nov. 12)

M 2:00 – 4:45

Instructor: Dr. S. Thrift
Office: SS 210
Office Phone: 403-220-5320
E-Mail: samantha.thrift@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: T 11:30-1:30

Course Description

This course critically examines representations of race and racialized identities in Canadian and American media cultures. Students are introduced to critical race and intersectional feminist frameworks for analyzing imagery, programming policy, and mediated practices generated within “post-racial” cultural contexts, as well as specific political and cultural phenomena that evidence an emergent mode of “front stage” racism in public discourse. The class also specifically considers race and identity in digital cultures; sites that, while deeply mired in racializing discourses, also provide critical networks of resistance to combat state violence and settler colonialism. Current examples from political and popular culture will be used to illustrate these issues and debates.

Additional Information

Please note that we will be studying some challenging material in this course that may involve coarse language, discussion of white supremacy and discriminatory practices and terminology, and depictions of racialized violence.

This course offers a combination of lecture, class discussion, and small group discussion. Coming to class having read the assigned readings and prepared to discuss the material in a respectful, informed manner is essential to success in this course.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- identify media practices and discourses that shape perceptions;
- recognize power relationships, including the relative privilege or marginalization of social groups, including one’s own;
- understand how notions of race have been defined and shaped in mediated forms;
- demonstrate this understanding through identification and analysis of current instances of racial politics and controversies.

Textbooks and Readings

A digital course pack has been prepared and will be made available on the COMS 401 L01 course website.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops may be used for purposes related to the course. Mobile phones and other electronic communication devices must be set to mute upon entering the classroom and should not be used in the classroom or during class time. If students engage in non-course related online activity during class, the professor will request that they power down their device for the remainder of class time.

No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

Email

When corresponding with the instructor via email, students should include the course name (ex. COMS 401 or RRM) in the subject line. If you do not include the course name in your email's subject line, your message may get overlooked in the instructor's inbox and go unread! Please maintain a respectful tone in your correspondence with the instructor.

Email is most useful for short, specific inquiries. If you have detailed questions on the course material, assignments, or grades, visit the instructor during office hours.

The instructor will respond to emails during the week, usually on a first-come, first-served basis. Emails sent in the evening or on weekends will not be read (or replied to) until the next working day.

NOTE: Email submissions of work will not be accepted unless otherwise specified.

Assignments and Evaluation

All assignments and exams must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Weight	Course components	Due
10%	<p>In-Class Participation Participation will be evaluated with 4 in-class written reflections (1-2 pages) on assigned readings, media examples/case studies, and/or discussion. These written responses will be held at any time during the class on the specified dates. Each reflection will be worth 2.5 points. A detailed, thoughtful reflection will receive full marks, while a reflection that addresses the day's work in a superficial manner or that demonstrates significant errors in understanding course material will receive 1 point. (This is an open book exercise; however the instructor will not provide copies of the readings).</p> <p>Please note that missed in-class reflections will only be accommodated in the case of illness, bereavement, or varsity team travel, and <u>will not be rescheduled due to travel and vacation plans, work obligations, or other scheduling conflicts.</u></p>	Sept. 24, Oct. 15, Nov. 5, Nov. 26

15%	<p>Media Report</p> <p>For this assignment, students will write a brief (500 word) critical synopsis of a documentary or other audio-visual media text from the list provided (on D2L). The synopsis will offer a short summary of the topic and issues covered in the piece as well as discussion of how it speaks to themes and debates discussed in course readings. Note 1: If students wish to write on a media text not already on the list provided, they must secure written permission from the professor or T.A.. Note 2: This assignment may be undertaken individually or in pairs.</p>	Oct. 1 (on or before)
20%	<p>Online Discussion</p> <p>Students are required to engage each other in online discussion about the topics covered in the class as they relate to current examples, instances, reports, and controversies of racial politics and discourse in the public/political sphere (news, popular culture, institutional policies, court rulings, etc.). This discussion will be facilitated through the discussion board on the course D2L site.</p> <p>Each student will be required to post and respond to at least 1 discussion (2 posts total) to achieve a passing grade. Each post should include a current link to a news/opinion article, video or some other form of publicly accessible media that illustrates some aspect of racial discourse in today's public sphere. The posted link should be accompanied by an explanation of why you posted it – what you find significant, interesting, exemplary, controversial, objectionable, etc. about the content of the link. Each discussion response should respond directly to something posted by one of the other members of the class. Your response should be substantive – that is, present at least one full argument in response to the post you've chosen to discuss. Your one response post may be a response to someone who responded to your posted link.</p> <p>Students' participation in the online discussion will be evaluated accordingly: 1 post <u>or</u> 1 response: D 1 post, 1 response: C 2 posts, 2 responses: B 3 (or more) posts, 3 (or more) responses: A</p> <p>Note: Do not use derogatory language in your discussion posts or assignments. Everyone deserves a safe environment in which to participate in class discussions. Therefore, while expressing what you feel about a particular issue, be respectful in your discussion posts and peer interactions. Disrespect towards other students, direct or covert, will not be tolerated under any circumstances. If you have questions about the use of specific words or language that may be deemed derogatory, obscene, or biased in some way, clarify with the instructor via email before including such words/phrases in your post.</p>	Post 1 due: Oct. 1 Post 2 due: Nov. 5 Post 3 due: Nov. 26
	<p>Media Analysis Essay</p> <p>The main piece of writing for this course is an 8-10 page (2500 word) essay that analyzes a media artifact from a critical race perspective. "Media</p>	Proposal: Oct. 22 Draft due: Nov. 19

<p>artifact" can refer to any of a wide variety of cultural objects, including videos, advertisements, film, a meme or hashtag, or even product packaging. The artifact can be activist or otherwise "critical" of racial politics in its self-presentation, or not.</p> <p>Your task is to analyze the artifact drawing on the tools of media analysis and racial politics developed in this course. Your paper must explain and argue a thesis (that is, it must have a point to demonstrate). Ideally, your thesis will investigate the construction of racialized identity (-ies) or racial politics, as manifested by your chosen artifact. You must use at least two readings from the course and two external sources. The assignment will be completed in three steps:</p> <p>1. Proposal & Bibliography (15%) Submit a 2-3 page essay <u>proposal</u> that presents your planned topic in concise, theoretically informed terms. In the proposal, you must present a clear research question, propose a preliminary thesis statement that answers the research question, and briefly describe how your chosen media example will illustrate or support your argument. You must also identify 3 main areas (or, sub-arguments) to be addressed in the analysis. These should stem from ideas and concepts discussed in the assigned course readings. Your proposal must be accompanied by a <u>bibliography</u> of four, relevant academic sources – two of which are from the course. You will not receive credit for Wikipedia entries or popular and/or news stories (although you may include those, as they pertain to your project). The bibliography is not included in the overall page count for this assignment.</p> <p>2. Essay Draft Submission & Workshop (10%) In-class time will be provided for sharing and discussing a draft version of your final paper in peer groups. Students need to prepare a complete (intro, body, conclusion, bibliography) draft of their final essay and bring TWO copies to class. You will keep one copy to work with during the workshop and submit the other copy to the instructor & T.A.</p> <p>The draft will be evaluated for its completeness and overall quality (more details to be provided in class).</p> <p><u>Workshop attendance is critical, as your grade is based on your attendance and participation.</u></p> <p>3. Final Essay Submission (30%) The final essay is the culmination of your media analysis, stemming from the proposal, essay draft, and feedback received during the workshop from your peers. The final essay must be 8-10 pages in length, double-spaced (Times New Roman font), and include a complete bibliography. Both the essay and the bibliography must be properly formatted using MLA or APA style guides (see "Plagiarism" section below for links to online citation style guides).</p>	<p>Final Essay: Dec. 3</p>
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Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Submission of Assignments: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Final grades are reported as letter grades. In this course, point scores will be used for in-class reading responses and letter grades will be used for online discussion posts and responses. All other assignments will be assessed using percentages.

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* **
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

** These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. Research and citation resources are also available on the website of the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/> If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Counselling Services• Health Services• Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE• Online resources and tips	<p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</p> <p>403-266-HELP (4357)</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</p> <p>If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.</p>
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