

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 401 (L01): Special Topics in Communication and Media Studies
Race, Representation, and Media

FALL 2019: September 5 to Dec. 6 (excluding Nov. 10-16)

Lecture: Tuesday & Thursday 9:30 to 10:45am

Instructor:	Dr. S. Thrift
Office:	SS 210
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Web Page:	D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours:	Tuesdays 11:30 to 1:00 pm or by appointment

Course Description

Critical study of contemporary topics or issues related to communications media, technology, culture, or discourse.

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 representations, programming policy, and mediated practices generated within “post-racial” cultural contexts. The class also specifically considers the circulation of racialized discourses in digital culture(s), as well as anti-racist activism. Current examples from political and popular culture will be used to illustrate these issues and debates.

Additional Information

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L. Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

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

Policy on the use of Electronic Communication Devices

Laptops, tablets, and mobile phones may be used in class and tutorials only for course-related purposes and only if their use is not distracting others or negatively impacting the learning environment. No audio or video recording is allowed in any class without the instructor's explicit permission.

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

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
30%	<p>Reading Reports</p> <p>Students are expected to prepare for and actively engage in class discussion activities. This includes doing the readings! To help motivate consistent reading practice, students will complete three 500-word reading reports during the semester.</p> <p>Each report is worth 10%. More details provided in class.</p>	Sept. 17; Oct. 17; Nov. 26
15%	<p>Media Report</p> <p>For this assignment, students will submit a brief critical synopsis of a documentary or other audio-visual media text from the list provided (on D2L). The synopsis should include a short summary of the topic and issues examined in the piece as well as discussion of how it speaks to themes and debates discussed in course readings: whose perspectives were represented in the piece? What was the overall thesis (or argument) of the text? Was your understanding of an issue deepened or clarified by this text? How so?</p> <p>Students will work in small groups (3-5) and, as a group, must decide</p>	Oct. 8

	<p>what format their media report will take:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. written report – essay style report (4pp), co-authored by all team members; ii. video report – a video file submission (5min), co-authored by all team members; iii. podcast report – an audio file submission (10min), co-authored by all team members; <p>Note 1: If students wish to write on a media text not already on the list provided, they must secure written permission from the instructor.</p> <p>Note 2: The final submission must be accompanied by a “task list” that details the individual contributions made by each team member. The task list must be signed by all team members.</p>	
<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/feminist perspective. “Media 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 media 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 critical 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 scholarly sources. The assignment will be completed in four steps:</p>		
5%	<p>Essay Ignite Session</p> <p>Class time will be given for students to work in groups to brainstorm their essay topics and proposals. Students must bring TWO copies of a rough draft proposal to the session, and be prepared to discuss their topic (ex. solicit feedback, answer and ask question). One copy of your draft proposal will be submitted to the instructor the day of the brainstorming session, to evidence your participation.</p>	Oct. 24
10%	<p>Proposal & Bibliography</p> <p>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</p>	Oct. 31

	<p>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, 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>	
10%	<p>Work-in-Progress Workshop 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. The draft will be evaluated for its level of completeness and overall quality (more details to be provided in class).</p> <p><u>Workshop attendance is important, as your grade is based on your attendance and participation.</u></p>	Nov. 19
30%	<p>Final Essay Submission 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>	Dec. 3

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

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

If you miss a required course component, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Submission of Assignments

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments and hand in your essays directly to your instructor or tutor. If you are unable to do so, please use the drop box 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.

Note: It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission).

Be prepared to provide photo ID to pick up assignments in SS 320. Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the ***Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act***. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recorded for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter 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); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation 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) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses 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 and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, assignments will be assessed using percentage grades, with the exception of draft workshops and reading reports, which will be evaluated with point scores.

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%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

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.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

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, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

Lecture Date	Topic & Reading	Deadlines
Sept 5	Course Introduction	
Sept 10-12	<p>Motivated Representations Stuart Hall. "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media." In <i>Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader</i>, edited by Gail Dines and Jean Humez, 89-93. Thousand Oaks: Sage.</p> <p>Raka Shome. 2000. "Outing Whiteness." <i>Critical Studies in Media Communication</i> 17, no. 3: 366-371.</p>	
Sept 17-19	<p>Trolls, Memes, and Dog Whistles Whitney Phillips. 2015. "Race and the No-Spin Zone." In <i>This is Why We Can't Have Nice Things: Mapping the Relationship between Online Trolling and Mainstream Culture</i>, 95-115. Cambridge: MIT Press.</p> <p>Dawn Chmielewski. 2016. "Internet Memes Emerge as 2016 election's dog whistle." <i>USA Today</i>. Available: https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/news/2016/09/30/internet-memes-white-house-election-president/91272490/</p>	Reading Report 1 (Sept. 17)
Sept 24-26	<p>Controlling Images Patricia Hill Collins. 2004. "Get Your Freak On: Sex, Babies, and Images of Black Femininity." In <i>Black Sexual Politics</i>, 119-148. New York: Routledge.</p> <p>Roxane Gay. 2014. "The Politics of Respectability." In <i>Bad Feminist</i>, 257-260. New York: HarperCollins.</p>	
Oct 1-3	<p>Eating the Other bell hooks. 2015[1992]. "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance." In <i>Black Looks: Race and Representation</i>, 21-40. New York: Routledge.</p> <p>Sasli B. 2015. "Flirting with Blackness." <i>Feministing</i>. Available: http://feministing.com/2015/07/17/flirting-with-blackness/</p>	
Oct 8-10	<p>Commodity Activism Lamiyah Bahrainwala & Erin O'Connor. 2019. "Nike Unveils</p>	Media Report

	<p>Muslim Women Athletes.” <i>Feminist Media Studies</i> doi: 10.1080/14680777.2019.1620822</p> <p>Sarah Banet-Weiser. 2018. “Nike, Colin Kaepernick, and the history of ‘commodity activism’.” <i>Vox</i> (Sep 7). Available: https://www.vox.com/first-person/2018/9/7/17831334/nike-colin-kaepernick-ad</p>	(Oct 8)
Oct 15-17	<p>Citizenship Discourses</p> <p>Yasmin Jiwani. 2006. “Mapping Race in the Media.” In <i>Discourses of Denial: Mediations of Race, Gender, and Violence</i>, 30-64. Vancouver: UBC Press.</p>	Reading Report 2 (Oct. 17)
Oct 22-24	<p>“Multicultural” Programming</p> <p>Kyle Conway. 2014. “Little Mosque, Small Screen: Multicultural Broadcasting Policy and Muslims on Television.” <i>Television & New Media</i>, 15, no. 7: 648-663.</p> <p>Recommended:</p> <p>Ishani Nath. 2017. “We Asked the Creator of <i>Little Mosque on the Prairie</i> What the Show Would Be Like Today.” <i>Flare</i>, June 15, 2017, n.p.</p> <p>Adrian Lee. 2016. “Convenient Truth: An All-Asian-Canadian sitcom breaks new ground and brushes off baggage.” <i>Maclean’s</i>, Oct. 24, 2016, p.59.</p>	Essay Ignite Oct. 24
Oct 29-31	<p>Indigenous Media</p> <p>Augie Fleras. 2011. “Unsilencing Aboriginal Voices: Toward an Indigenous Media Gaze.” In <i>The Media Gaze: Representations of Diversities in Canada</i>, 215-228. Vancouver: UBC Press.</p>	Proposals due Oct. 31
Nov 5-7	<p>Visibility & Grievance</p> <p>Tasha G. Oren. 2005. “Secret Asian Man: Angry Asians and the Politics of Cultural Visibility.” <i>East Main Street: Asian American Popular Culture</i> (eds. Shilpa Dave, LeiLani Nishime, and Tasha G. Oren), 337-359. New York: NYU Press.</p> <p>Jenn Fang. 2018. “Yellowface, Whitewashing, and the History of White People Playing Asian Characters.” <i>teenVogue</i> (Aug 8). Available: https://www.teenvogue.com/story/yellowface-whitewashing-history</p>	
Nov 12-14	No Class (Reading Break)	

Nov 19-21	<p>Digital Counterpublics Marc Lamont Hill. 2018. "Thank you, Black Twitter": State Violence, Digital Counterpublics, and Pedagogies of Resistance." <i>Urban Education</i> 53, no. 2: 286-302.</p>	WiP Session Nov. 19
Nov 26-28	<p>Lemonade Ytasha L. Womack. 2013. "The Evolution of a Space Cadet." In <i>Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture</i>, 3-24. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books.</p>	Reading Report 3 (Nov. 26)
Dec 3-5	<p>Wild Card!</p>	Essay due Dec. 3