

AAS 320/AMS 321/RTF 359 – Race, Internet & Social Media Spring 2019

M/W/F 11:00am-12:00pm

GDC 4.304

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Course Overview

From its earliest incarnations, the internet has been celebrated as a place where bodily concerns such as race “don’t matter.” A sizable body of research and recent popular online trends have since proven otherwise. This course gives students the vocabulary to critically articulate the relationships between online technologies and embodied cultural practices that affiliate around “race” (with an emphasis on Asian American). In doing so, this course will contextualize the topic of “race and social media” within wider histories and theories of race, technology and the social. Broad topics include internet identities, online communities, and social media activism, covering everything from early text-based internet identity tourism, to the phenomenon of Asian American YouTube stars, to contemporary cultural discourses of “Black Twitter” and the politics of social media manipulation and “Fake News.”

Note: This course adopts an intersectional approach that includes attention to gender, sexuality, ability and nation, in addition to race/ethnicity. This course also, like social media, is participatory by design and will require students to explore topics through both individual critical thought and applied group projects.

Course Goals

By the end of the semester, students should:

- Have an understanding of the multifaceted relations between race and technology.
- Appreciate wider histories and theories of race, technology and the social.
- Be able to analyze internet technologies and practices from a critical race perspective.
- Appreciate intersections of race, gender, sexuality, ability and nation as related to social media.
- Gain practical experience in the use of various online technologies, in concert with critical reflection on the racialized uses and possibilities of these technologies.

Course Materials

All readings will be posted on Canvas. Students are responsible for retrieving and printing them.

Evaluation

Journals	20%
Quizzes	20%
Group Creative Projects	20%
Final Paper	20%
Attendance/Participation	20%

Quizzes: At the end of "lecture weeks" (Fridays, unless otherwise stated), there will be a short quiz on that week's reading assignments and related themes. These quizzes are designed to test your comprehension of fundamental concepts and may take a variety of forms, from multiple choice to short answers. With advanced notice, a take-home quiz may be substituted for an in-class quiz.

Film Journals: During "screening weeks," in lieu of reading assignments, in 250 words (or more) students will compose critical responses to class screenings. These "journals" should be thoughtful and specific—and should include both "factual" details and critical insights. Generally, you will be given a specific question(s) to address. However, at times you will be at liberty to write about what interests you most. Journal entries are due by Noon on Thursday during screening weeks. Journal entries will be reviewed throughout the semester. Students are encouraged to read and engage each other's work.

Group Creative Projects: In the spirit of *social* media, this class will include a series of collectively produced creative projects, which will be housed and shared with the class via a group blog. Early in the class, students will form into groups and, throughout the semester, these groups will be responsible for collaborating on creative assignments. These creative assignments will be assigned during class on "lab" weeks. Many of these projects can be completed during class time but, as needed, students are also expected to work on these projects at home (no readings will be assigned during lab weeks). At the end of each lab week, groups will present their projects to the class. Creativity and concept comprehension will be rewarded—as will honest, active effort. These projects are designed to be fun, but also of practical educational value—giving students the opportunity to engage a wide range of social media technologies from a critical race perspective—including Tumblr, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.

Final Paper: Students will write a 5-7 page paper on a topic related to the course (specific prompt and instructions forthcoming). Pursuant to the writing flag, this assignment will occur in two stages, with students being required to revise and resubmit an earlier draft of their work. Papers will be presented during the final week of class.

Class Participation/Attendance is a grade that must be earned; it requires more than being a warm body in class. For a high grade, you must be an active participant. This means asking and answering questions, and listening attentively and respectfully to the instructor and your classmates.

Students who are repeatedly disruptive will receive a poor class participation grade. This includes but is not limited to: talking/whispering to your neighbor, talking/text-messaging on a phone, checking email/playing computer games, sleeping, and noisily packing your books before class has ended.

NOTE: Missing class means missing crucial material and assignments, thus impacting your grade.

About the Course

Reading assignments should be done prior to the class period for which they are listed. Students who fall behind in the readings will find it difficult to succeed in this course.

Class Flow: Generally speaking, “film weeks” (with film journals) will be followed by “lecture weeks” (with quizzes), which will be followed by “lab weeks” (with group creative projects). This trajectory will repeat throughout the course.

Computers: Please bring your laptops/Ipads/IPhones to class during lab weeks. If you don’t have one, talk to me, and we will devise an alternative arrangement.

Cultural Diversity Flag: This course carries the Cultural Diversity flag. Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of U.S. cultural groups that have experienced persistent marginalization.

Writing Flag: This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers’ work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Difficult Course Content: At times this semester we will be discussing material that may be upsetting to some students. In a class dedicated to race, the internet and social media, engagement, discussion and critique of significant, but sometimes difficult, issues related to race, gender, sexuality, etc., is to be expected. If you ever feel the need to step outside during one of these discussions, you may do so without academic penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss.

Services for students with disabilities: The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY.

Academic misconduct: Cheating will not be tolerated. Expect me to pursue every instance of suspected academic misconduct in this course. Two kinds of academic misconduct are **cheating** on quizzes and exams, and **plagiarism** (such as turning in someone else’s work, downloading a paper from the Web in part or in whole, or paraphrasing or quoting sources without citation). Penalties range from a zero on the assignment to expulsion from school.

The work that you turn in should honestly and accurately demonstrate your own academic efforts. Your assignments should also reflect work done for this course. Do not turn in assignments done for another course or attempt to pass off as “research” readings or screenings from another course.

I expect all of you to know the University’s full definition of academic misconduct and its possible penalties. Information on academic integrity and disciplinary action is available online at <<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/academicintegrity.html>>. Please see me if you have further questions.

A word about grades: I try to design the course so that diligence is rewarded. If you are working hard and feel your grades aren’t reflecting this, meet with me so we can talk about studying strategies. Also, please come talk to me if there are unresolvable issues regarding the dynamics of your blog team. Please do not wait until the end of the semester to address this.

Grading Scale: This class will use the standard +/- system.

Course Schedule

Note: Readings should be completed *prior* to the class period for which they are assigned.

SECTION 1: SETTING THE TERMS: IDENTITIES AND INVENTIONS

Week 1 The Invention of Race (Lecture Week)

- 1/23 Class Introductions
- 1/25 Read: Omi and Winant, "Racial Formations"
Screening: Section of *Race: The Power of an Illusion*

Week 2 The Invention of the Internet (Lecture Week)

- 1/28 Read: Nakamura, "Head Hunter on the Internet"
- 1/30 Read: Chun, "Orienting Orientalism, or How to Map Cyberspace"
- 2/1 Group formation and initial blog set-up
Quiz 1

Week 3 Film Week

- 2/4 Screening: *People's Republic of Desire* (Wu, 2018)
Read: "2019 Social Media Trends and Statistics" (online at business2community) and
"Is Social Media Addiction Worse than Cigarettes" (online at Forbes)
- 2/6 Screening: *People's Republic of Desire* (Wu, 2018)
Journals due by Noon Thursday
- 2/8 Discussion

SECTION 2: REPRESENTATION AND RESISTANCE

Week 4 The Intersectional Internet (Lecture Week)

- 2/11 Read: Tanksley, "Education, Representation and Resistance: Black Girls and Popular Instagram Memes"
- 2/13 Read: Washington, "Asian/American Masculinity: The Politics of Virility, Virality and Visibility"
- 2/15 Read: Lopez, "Asian American YouTube Celebrities"
Quiz 2

Week 5 Lab Week

- 2/18 Group Project Assignment
- 2/20 Group Project Assignment
- 2/22 Group Project Presentation

SECTION 3: PUBLICS, PRACTICES, POLITICS

Week 6 Film Week

2/25 Screening: *We Live in Public*
Read: “Facebook Data Scandals Stoke Criticism” (NYTimes Online)

2/27 Screening: *We Live in Public*
Journals due by Noon Thursday

3/1 Discussion

Week 7 Communities and Connections (Lecture Week)

3/4 Gandy, “Matrix Multiplication and the Digital Divide”

3/6 Mallapragda, “Desi Networks”

3/8 Mason, “Tinder and Humanitarian Hookups”
Quiz 3

Week 8 Lab Week

3/11 Group Project Assignment

3/13 Group Project Assignment

3/15 Group Project Presentation

MIDTERM BREAK: March 18-23

SECTION 4: ACTIVISM AND ANGER

Week 9 Film Week

3/25 Screening: *Whose Streets?*
Read: “The Truth About Black Twitter” (online at The Atlantic)

3/27 Screening: *Whose Streets?* Cont’d

3/29 Discussion

Week 10 Online Activist Strategies (Lecture Week)

4/1 Carney, “All Lives Matter, But So Does Race”

4/3 Lopez, “The Role of Asian American Media Activism”

4/5 Lopez, “Utilizing Skills and Passion to Spread Online Activism”
Quiz 4

Week 11 Lab Week

4/8	Project Assignment
4/10	Project Assignment
4/12	Project Presentation

SECTION 5: ACTIVISM CONT'D: TRANSNATIONAL TAKES

Week 12 Film Week

4/15	Screening: <i>#ChicagoGirl</i> Read: "Social Media Made the Arab Spring" (online at Wired)
4/17	Screening: <i>#ChicagoGirl</i>
4/19	Discussion Recommended Reading: Bulut, "The Nation-State in Intersectional Internet"

Week 13 Activist Case Studies (Lecture Week)

4/22	Read: Nault, "The Spectre of Filipinx Femmepire"
4/24	TA Lecture: The Peter Liang Campaign
4/26	First Draft of Final Paper Due

Week 14 Lab Week

4/29	Group Project Assignment
5/1	Group Project Assignment
5/3	Group Project Assignment

Week 15 Final Papers

5/6	No class
5/8	Group Project Presentation
5/10	Final Papers Due