

SOC 414: Race, Space, and Place
Cross-listed as AAS 414, G St 414, and S St 314

Spring 2026

Professor Ryan Parsons
parsons@olemiss.edu
Office: Lamar 561

Online/Synchronous

Office hours by appointment: <https://calendly.com/parsons-um>

Racialization and racist processes are fundamentally tied to the physical places and social spaces in which we live, work, and build community. The reverse is also true: the way that we use and create space shapes how we understand the world through lenses of race and ethnicity. Each of these processes is subject to critical examination; nothing about spatial and racial social life is “natural.” Over the course of this semester, we will consider the problem of race, space, and place from a variety of methodological and substantive angles. What does it mean to call a space home? How do we learn in spaces? What does it mean for communities to live in segregated spheres? How will all this change as the world’s climate changes? To help make sense of such large questions, we will make use of the ethnographic method as a means to explore race, space, and place in our own lives. The primary assignment for this course will be a series of ethnographic fieldnotes – short pieces of qualitative data on a social space of your choosing. By the end of this course, students will:

- Be able to articulate the processes through which race, space, and place are constructed and contested
- Describe key examples of racialized spaces in the United States (schools, neighborhoods, etc.)
- Synthesize current literature on race, space, and place
- Produce their own analyses of social space through ethnographic observation

Assignments

- Fieldnotes – Each week you will be required to collect ethnographic data on a field site of your choice. Notes should be around a page (400-500 words) and should be lightly edited (engagement with course readings is neither necessary nor expected). **Fieldnotes should be posted to the Blackboard discussion board by 8am each Saturday. You must post a comment or question on a classmate’s fieldnote by 5pm the following Tuesday.**
- Extended fieldnote memo/portfolio – At the end of the semester you will submit an extended memo based on your field notes and the course readings. Memos should be around 10 pages (3,000 words) and represent a synthesis of your observations over the course of the semester and your interpretations of relevant course readings. A rubric for this assignment will be distributed later in the semester. **Due on the last day of classes.**
 - **You must also meet with me during office hours during weeks 4-5 to discuss your project and submit a one-page outline of your paper during week 8.**
- Midterm – There will be a short midterm that will assess your mastery of key concepts. The midterm will be completed online.

- Weekly quizzes – Brief, three-question quizzes will be assigned each week as a measure of your active engagement with course material. These quizzes will serve as your participation and attendance grades. **Quizzes are always due at 8am on Saturdays.**

Readings

You will normally be required to read around 75 pages per week, though this will vary. Readings should be completed in the week they are assigned and will serve as the foundation for quizzes.

Required books:

- Anderson, E. (2022). *Black in White Space*. University of Chicago Press.
- Browne, K. E. (2015). *Standing in the need: Culture, comfort, and coming home after Katrina*. University of Texas Press.
- Edin, K., L. Shaefer, & T. Nelson (2023). *The Injustice of Place: Uncovering the Legacy of Poverty in America*. Mariner Books.

Additional readings will be posted to Blackboard.

Grading Scale

A	90 – 100%
B+	85 – 89%
B	80 – 84%
C+	75 – 79%
C	70 – 74% (minimum grade to receive credit towards the major)
D	60 – 69% (minimum grade to receive credit)
F	59% and below

Assessment

Fieldnote Portfolio (40%)

- 5% for office hours meeting
- 5% for outline
- 30% for final paper

Weekly quizzes (30%, 3 points for each of your 10 highest quiz grades)

Weekly fieldnotes (20%, 2 points for each of your 10 best fieldnotes)

Midterm (15%)

Note that the maximum percentage is 105%; thus, 5 “bonus” points are built into the grading structure of the course. There will be occasional extra credit opportunities. Borderline grades may be revised upwards based on your trajectory in the course at my discretion.

Office Hours

You were welcome to stop by to chat about the readings, talk about your field notes, or ask questions. You can make an appointment for in-person or virtual office hours here:

<https://calendly.com/parsons-um>

Communication

I will do my best to respond to all emails within 2 business days during normal business hours; if you have not had a response by then, please send a follow up message. Please do not send emails with questions about assignments fewer than 2 days before the deadline.

Etiquette and Engagement Online

Many of you have likely taken other online courses, and all of you are familiar with online social interactions. You are expected to uphold the values of the University Creed in your engagement with this course and with each other. Keep in mind that there are real people behind the discussion posts, etc., that you may engage with here. Some common principles we will uphold:

- Respect the different perspectives and identities your colleagues hold, even if you haven't met them in person.
- Respect viewpoints and ideas that are new or objectionable to you and engage in debate in good faith.
- Approach the course with an appropriate degree of professionalism. While I and your peers may be willing to tolerate informality, casual language, and sloppy writing, treat this course as practice for professional communications you'll have in the future.
- Treat this course with the professionalism and seriousness that you would any other course.

Academic Honesty and Integrity

I expect you to produce your own work for this class and cite others' ideas appropriately. In cases of inadvertent plagiarism (i.e., incorrect citations) you will be asked to edit and resubmit the assignment. Intentional plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, including copying others' ideas, paying someone to complete your assignments, or cheating during exams, will likely result in your failing the assignment.

Attendance

This is an asynchronous course and attendance will not be tracked; however, completion of weekly quizzes and posting weekly fieldnotes will serve as a measure of your progress and engagement over time. Note that it will not be possible to pass this course without doing these weekly assignments. All students are encouraged to meet with me during office hours, either over Zoom or in person.

Student Support Services

The University prepared the following information regarding mental health services:

The University Counseling Center is a professional facility offered by the University of Mississippi to assist students, faculty, and staff with many types of life stressors that interrupt day-to-day functioning, including the stressors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. They offer individual counseling, couple's counseling, group counseling, stress management, crisis intervention, assessments and referrals, outreach programs, consultations, and substance abuse services. There

is no fee for currently enrolled University students and everything you say to your counselor is confidential. You can contact the Counseling Center for information about mental health issues at <https://counseling.olemiss.edu>, counslg@olemiss.edu, 662- 915-3784, 320 Lester Hall, and <https://www.facebook.com/universitycounselingcenterolemiss/>. You can schedule an appointment or get information about appointments by calling the UCC at 662-915-3784.

Updated Contact Information

Please note the following requirement from the University:

The University must have accurate contact information, including cell phone numbers, to facilitate student communications and contact tracing. Students should check and update their University contact information available at <https://olemiss.edu/mystudentprofile>.

Disability Access and Inclusion

The following language was written by the Student Disability Services office:

“The University of Mississippi is committed to the creation of inclusive learning environments for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your full inclusion and participation, or to accurate assessment of your achievement, please contact the course instructor as soon as possible. Barriers may include, but are not necessarily limited to, timed exams and in-class assignments, difficulty with the acquisition of lecture content, inaccessible web content, and the use of non-captioned or non-transcribed video and audio files. If you are registered with SDS, you must log in to your Rebel Access portal at <https://sds.olemiss.edu/rebel-access-portal> to request approved accommodations. If you are NOT registered with SDS, you must complete the process to become registered. To begin that process, please visit our website at <https://sds.olemiss.edu/apply-for-services>. SDS will:

1. Complete a comprehensive review to determine your eligibility for accommodations,
2. If approved, disseminate to your instructors a Faculty Notification Letter,
3. Facilitate the removal of barriers, and
4. Ensure you have equal access to the same opportunities for success that are available to all students.

If you have questions, contact SDS at 662-915-7128 or sds@olemiss.edu.¹

If you feel that there are other barriers to your success in this course (including disabilities not covered by SDS or difficult personal circumstances) please feel free to reach out to me to discuss ways to improve your experience in this course. If classroom technology or other features of online learning are creating challenges for you please let me know.

¹ Student Disability Services, University of Mississippi. (n.d.). *Syllabus Statement*. Student Disability Services - Syllabus Statement. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from <https://sds.olemiss.edu/syllabus-statement/>

Class Schedule

Note: All readings aside from the books by Anderson and Browne will be on Blackboard. Video links and other media are posted to each week's content page on Blackboard. A detailed schedule with the due dates for quizzes, fieldnotes, and other assignments is posted to Blackboard.

Week 1: Introductions

Readings:

- Neely, B., & Samura, M. (2011). Social geographies of race: Connecting race and space. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 34(11), 1933-1952. [20 pages]
- Goffman, Irving. (2001). On fieldwork. In *Contemporary Field Work*, Robert Emerson (ed.). Long Grove, Il.: Waveland Press. Pp. 153-158. [5 pages]

Week 2: The Conflict

Readings:

- McKittrick, Katherine and Clyde Woods. "No One Knows the Mysteries at the Bottom of the Ocean" in McKittrick, Katherine and Clyde Woods (eds.), *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*. [13 pages]
- Chapter 8 from Anderson, Eli. (2011). *The Cosmopolitan Canopy*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. [25 pages]

Week 3: Creating "White" Spaces

Note: February 2nd is the last day to add classes.

Readings:

- Kruse, Kevin. (2007). Introduction and Chapter 3: From Community to Individuality: Race, Residence, and Segregationist Ideology. *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [43 pages]
- Anderson, Eli. (2015). The white space. *Sociology of race and ethnicity*, 1(1), 10-21. [10 pages]
- SKIM: Geertz, Clifford. (2001). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In *Contemporary Field Work*, Robert Emerson (ed.). Long Grove, Il.: Waveland Press. Pp. 55-76 [25 pages]

Week 4: The Ghetto

Readings:

Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 5 from: Clark, Kenneth. (1965). *Dark Ghetto*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press. [92 pages]

- Note: Sometime during Week 4 or Week 5 you should meet with me during office hours to discuss your field note assignment.

Week 5: The Ghetto

Readings:

- Introduction through Chapter 5. Anderson, Eli. (2022). *Black in White Spaces*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [94 pages].

Note: Sometime during Week 4 or Week 5 you should meet with me during office hours to discuss your field note assignment.

Week 6: Home

Readings:

- Introduction, Chapter 1, and Conclusion of: Taylor, K. Y. (2019). *Race for profit: How banks and the real estate industry undermined black homeownership*. UNC Press Books. [62 pages]
- Chapter 12 from *Black in White Spaces* [18 pages]

Week 7: The University of Mississippi

Note: Deadline for dropping classes – March 6

Note: The midterm is due this week!

Readings:

- Combs, B. H., Dellinger, K., Jackson, J. T., Johnson, K. A., Johnson, W. M., Skipper, J., ... & Critical Race Studies Group, University of Mississippi. (2016). The symbolic lynching of James Meredith: A visual analysis and collective counter narrative to racial domination. *Sociology of race and ethnicity*, 2(3), 338-353. [16 pages]
- Johnson, K. A., Johnson, W. M., Thomas, J. M., & Green, J. J. (2021). Mapping microaggressions on a southern university campus: where are the safe spaces for vulnerable students? *Social problems*, 68(1), 1-18. [18 pages]

Week 8: Work

Readings:

- *Black in White Space*, Chapters 6-11 [119 pages]
- *Black in White Space*, Chapter 13, Conclusion [26 pages]

Week 9: The Injustice of Place

Reading:

- Edin, K., L. Shaefer, & T. Nelson (2023). *The Injustice of Place: Uncovering the Legacy of Poverty in America*. Mariner Books. Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, and 3 [about 93 pages]

Week 10: The Injustice of Place

Reading:

- Edin, K., L. Shaefer, & T. Nelson (2023). *The Injustice of Place: Uncovering the Legacy of Poverty in America*. Mariner Books. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 [about 75 pages]

Week 11: The Injustice of Place

Reading:

- Edin, K., L. Shaefer, & T. Nelson (2023). *The Injustice of Place: Uncovering the Legacy of Poverty in America*. Mariner Books. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 [about 76 pages]

Week 12: Environmental Racism

Readings:

- Chapters 1-6 from Browne, K. E. (2015). *Standing in the need: Culture, comfort, and coming home after Katrina*. University of Texas Press. [106 pages]

Week 13: Environmental Racism

Readings

- Holifield, R. (2001). Defining environmental justice and environmental racism. *Urban geography*, 22(1), 78-90. [13 pages]
- Chapters 7-11 from *Standing in the Need*

Week 14: The Future of Space and Race

Readings:

- Racism in Space: <https://www.sapiens.org/culture/space-colonization-racism/> [9 pages]
- <https://digital.law.fordham.edu/faculty-spotlight-2020/afrofuturism-critical-race-theory-and-policing-in-the-year-2044/> [22 pages]
- Chapter 9 in Bell, Derrick. (2018). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York: Basic Books [37 pages].