

Racial and Ethnic Minorities In The United States (SOC 255.01)
101 Buttrick Hall • MWF 10:10p-11:00p • <http://majorsmatter.net/race>

Dr. Richard N. Pitt, Professor
311 Garland Hall
Office Hrs: 12a – 1p Monday/Wednesday

*“A fully functional multiracial society cannot be achieved without a sense of history
and open, honest dialogue” Cornel West*

*“I hope that people will finally come to realize that there is only one race—the human race—and
that we are all members of it.” Margaret Atwood*

COURSE DESCRIPTION. This course is an introduction to the sociological study of race in the United States of America. The main purpose of this course is to broaden our understanding of racial and ethnic relations in the United States. Any sociological approach to this topic begins with the assumption that race and ethnicity are socially and politically constructed phenomena. This course will take that approach. In the first section of the course, we'll address three broad categories of explanations for race relations in the United States: macro approaches emphasizing class relations and internal colonialism, interactionists and social-psychological approaches the look at the role of face-to-face relations and other micro-level processes, and middle-range structuralist approaches that emphasize ethnic competition, ethnic enclaves, and the cultural division of labor. In the second half of the course, we will analyze ethnic relations within the context of major American institutions, including politics, education, and the family.

TEXTS. There are seven required texts for this course, all autobiographies written by and about the experiences of racial/ethnic minorities in the United States. The books are available in the bookstore. I recognize that students read at their own pace, so rather than list a reading schedule for you, I will just encourage you to begin reading each book as soon as the next one is concluded. Trust me, you do not want to fall behind and have to scramble to catch up for the days we'll discuss each text.

Adam Eagle. (2010). *Pipestone*
John Griffin. (1962). *Black Like Me*
Mary Gruenwald. (2005). *Looking Like The Enemy*
David Maldonado. (2001). *Crossing Guadalupe Street*
Elaine Soloway. (2006). *Division Street Princess*
Gregory Williams. *Life On The Color Line*
John Edgar Wiseman. (1984) *Brothers and Keepers*

I have also ordered copies of Desmond and Emirbayer's *Racial Domination, Racial Progress* (2009). While I encourage you to buy this book as a reference for the course, it is not required. I will not be assigning readings from this text and you will not be tested on the material from this text.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING. The grade in this class is based on your performance on the following forms of evaluation. Each of you starts with an "A" (500 points) and you move down from there. The buffer for each letter grade is 50 points (10%). Pluses and minuses are earned in the 15 point margins at the top/bottom of the letter grade range. **You will receive an A- at 469 points (94%).** Once you go below the threshold for any given grade, there is no way to move back up unless you've managed to earn extra credit points (see below in *Engaging The Blog*). Your continued enrollment means that you understand and accept this grading policy. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments should be single-spaced, 1" margins, in Times or Times New Roman font, and have no more than a one line header with your name, the date, and the assignment.

A=450-500

B=400-449

C=350-399

D=300-349

F=0-299

Attendance: As much of the learning taking place in this class will happen during the two and a half hours we have together each week, I take attendance very seriously. We will, therefore, take roll in each class session within the first five minutes of class. Each of you is allowed three (3) absences this semester. No other absences—whatever the reason, excuse, or emergency—will be accepted. If you miss class beyond those three absences, your grade in the class will drop 50 points automatically for each additional absence.

Autobiography Quizzes (175 questions worth 200 total points): You will take seven quizzes. These will consist of 25 multiple-choice questions taken from the biographical readings; each question will be worth 1.15 points. These are given to ensure that students have enough familiarity with the books to contribute to the in-class discussions about them. You will have until 10:20am to complete the quiz, so be on time.

Engaging The Blog (100 points): Everyone doesn't talk in class but everyone's contribution to the class discussions is still necessary. In order to make sure that everyone has a voice (and uses it), I am requiring every student to write comments about the course conversations or lectures. Every student is required to initiate 10 threads on the course web-blog. These threads will each be worth up to 10 points. A thread can be a link to an interesting and relevant webpage (with an explanation), a link to a relevant report or article (with a summary), your comments on the class discussion or lecture, or questions that you might have for me or other students in the class. Every thread will start at 8 points and work up from there based on how much interest it garners. Yes, that means you should make your contribution worth our while. In order for you to get credit for all of your contributions, you must ALSO comment on 10 other students' contributions. For each comment you're missing, we will take away 3 of your points for your initiated threads. In addition, one extra credit point will be earned for every week of the semester you've initiated a meaningful blog thread. Please note that the blog will be inaccessible after April 20th.

Examinations (2 @ 100 points each): I would like for you to master the theoretical underpinnings of this class at the following levels of understanding: (1) basic knowledge, (2) comprehension and understanding, (3) application, and (4) analysis and comparison. With that in mind, there will be two examinations. The first will be a take-home essay exam on the material from the theory unit of the course. The second will be cumulative and composed of multiple choice, fill-in, and essay questions. Six questions will appear on the first exam and students will be required to choose a subset of them to answer. Because this is an open-book exam, appropriate citation will be required and expected. The exam will be posted on the website on February 24 and will be due in Dr. Pitt's mailbox by 12pm on March 2. The second exam will take place at 9am on April 27th, the day scheduled for this course's final.

OTHER IMPORTANT THOUGHTS

Academic Excuses: With the astonishing incidence of sickness and death that invariably occurs just around due dates, my policy is to let you know in advance that anything turned in late will lose 20 points for every day it is late. The first 20 points are lost when the assignment—in your case, the midterm exam—is due. I **will not respond** to emails requesting extensions. It would be a mistake for you to wait until the weekend before an exam or quiz to begin preparing for it. In my experience, ANYTHING can and often does go wrong.

Academic Etiquette: As a sign of respect to your fellow classmates, please avoid walking in late or leaving early. Please TURN OFF CELL PHONES and PAGERS before class. Respect the views and opinions of others. Avoid talking when others are making a point. You will have your chance. Try to avoid destructive criticism. However, constructive criticism is welcomed. Don't read the paper, check your Facebook page, talk to your friends, etc. during class. If we discover you abusing your freedom to use laptops, we will disabuse you of that freedom and bar their use in class. DO NOT LEAVE CLASS UNTIL CLASS HAS ENDED! Not only are those things disrespectful and disruptive to your classmates and me, but they also limit your ability to understand the material.

Academic Integrity: Vanderbilt's Honor Code governs all work in this course. Any Honor Code violation will be taken up with the Honor Council and it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the provisions of the Code. If you have any doubts about applications of the Honor Code, please ask me and/or consult the Honor Council's web page. Uncertainty about the application of the Honor Code does not excuse a violation. Plagiarism is easily detected and WILL NOT be tolerated. If I suspect that plagiarism has taken place, you will receive no credit for the assignment.

“I’ll Do Anything”: Don't wait until the last minute to ask questions about the material covered in this class. Also, please come by our offices to review your exams/quizzes. Don't wait until the end of the session to worry about your grade. An emergency on your part does not constitute one for us.

Final Thoughts on Respect: People often have strong opinions about the topics discussed in a race and ethnic relations course. Many people have ideas about race and ethnicity that are based on misinformation and prejudices which are very prevalent in the society in which we live. We will try to help each other come to a better understanding of racial and ethnic relations. In the process it is possible that members of the class will make comments which are based on misinformation or an interpretation that other members of the class find objectionable. Given this, it is essential that we treat each other with respect, that we do not demean or devalue the comments of class members, and that we stick to the issues rather than engage in personal attacks. If something is said in class that makes you uncomfortable and you want to discuss it, you can either address it in class or you can speak to me personally. When you discuss such comments, remember to do so in a way which meets the ground rules described here.

Curricular Units

Unit 1: Introduction To The Class

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| <p>January 9: Course Introduction January 11: Getting On The Same Page: Labels January 13: Prejudice - Positions As Attitudes</p> | <p>January 16: MLK Holiday January 18: Discrimination - Positions As Actions January 20: Minority/Majority Identity Development</p> |
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Unit 2: Theories of Ethnic Relations

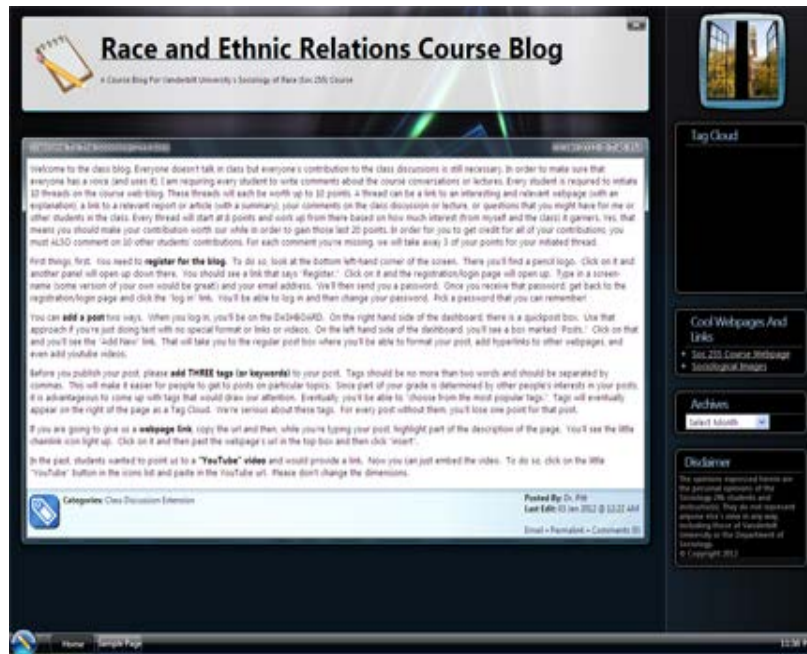
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| <p>January 23: <i>Life On The Color Line Discussion</i> January 25: Social Psychological Theories January 27: Social Psychological Theories</p> <p>January 30: Ideological Racism and Merton February 1: Status Expectation Theory February 3: Contact Theory</p> <p>February 6: <i>Black Like Me Discussion</i> February 8: Split Labor/Class Theory February 10: Split Labor/Class Theory</p> | <p>February 13: Competition Theory February 15: Competition Theory February 17: Colonialism Theory</p> <p>February 20: <i>Brothers and Keepers Discussion</i> February 22: Assimilation Theory February 24: The Twilight Of Ethnicity</p> <p>February 27: Sociohistorical Construction of Race February 29: Sociohistorical Construction of Race March 2: <i>TAKE HOME EXAMINATION DUE!</i></p> |
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***** **March 5-9: Spring Break - No Class** *****

Unit 3: Race Relations And Sociological Institutions

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| <p>March 12: <i>Looking Like The Enemy Discussion</i> March 14: Race and Politics March 16: Race and Politics</p> <p>March 19: Race and Education March 21: Race and Education March 23: Race and Education</p> <p>March 26: <i>Pipestone Discussion</i> March 28: Race and Religion March 30: Race and Religion</p> | <p>April 2: Race and Economics/Housing April 4: Race and Economics/Housing April 6: Race and Economics/Housing</p> <p>April 9: <i>Division Street Princess Discussion</i> April 11: Race and The Family April 13: Race and The Family</p> <p>April 16: <i>Across The Wire Discussion</i> April 18: Race and The Media April 20: Race and The Media</p> |
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April 23: Is It Possible To Get Past Race?



Instructions For The Course Blog

Everyone doesn't talk in class but everyone's contribution to the class discussions is still necessary. In order to make sure that everyone has a voice (and uses it), I am requiring every student to write comments about the course conversations or lectures. Every student is required to initiate 10 threads on the course web-blog. These threads will each be worth up to 10 points. A thread can be a link to an interesting and relevant webpage (with an explanation), a link to a relevant report or article (with a summary), your comments on the class discussion or lecture, or questions that you might have for me or other students in the class. Every thread will start at 8 points and work up from there based on how much interest (from myself and the class) it garners. Yes, that means you should make your contribution worth our while in order to gain those last 20 points. In order for you to get credit for all of your contributions, you must ALSO comment on 10 other students' contributions. For each comment you're missing, we will take away 3 of your points for your initiated thread. The blog will be inaccessible after April 20th.

The blog can be found at <http://majorsmatter.net/raceblog2012> or from a link on the course webpage.

First things, first. You need to **register for the blog**. To do so, look at the bottom left-hand corner of the screen. There you'll find a pencil logo. Click on it and another panel will open up down there. You should see a link that says "Register." Click on it and the registration/login page will open up. Type in a screen-name (some version of your own real name would be great!) and your email address. We'll then send you a password. Once you receive that password, get back to the registration/login page and click the "log in" link. You'll be able to log in and then change your password. Pick a password that you can remember!

You can **add a post** two ways. When you log in, you'll be on the DASHBOARD. On the right hand side of the dashboard, there is a quickpost box. Use that approach if you're just doing text with no special format or links or videos. On the left hand side of the dashboard, you'll see a box marked "Posts." Click on that and you'll see the "Add New" link. That will take you to the regular post box where you'll be able to format your post, add hyperlinks to other webpages, and even add youtube videos.

Before you publish your post, please **add THREE tags (or keywords)** to your post. Tags should be no more than two words and should be separated by commas. This will make it easier for people to get to posts on particular topics. Since part of your grade is determined by other people's interests in your posts, it is advantageous to come up with tags that would draw our attention. Eventually, you'll be able to "choose from the most popular tags." Tags will eventually appear on the right of the page as a Tag Cloud. We're serious about these tags. For every post without them, you'll lose one point for that post.

If you are going to give us a **webpage link**, copy the url and then, while you're typing your post, highlight part of the description of the page. You'll see the little chainlink icon light up. Click on it and then past the webpage's url in the top box and then click "insert".

In the past, students wanted to point us to a **"YouTube" video** and would provide a link. Now you can just embed the video. To do so, click on the little "YouTube" button in the icons list and paste in the YouTube url. Please don't change the dimensions.