The Idea of Race
HIST 3390: Special Topics
CRN 22592, Spring 2024
University of Texas at El Paso
MW 1:30-2:50
Liberal Arts Bldg. 207

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Office hours: Mon. 10:30 am--12:00pm; Wed. 12:15-1:15; and by appointment

Course Description
This course explores the history of the idea of race, as well as certain moments in the history of racism. During the early modern period (1400-1800), “race” became understood as a biological category whose members shared certain inherited physical and mental characteristics. Such thinking usually included a hierarchical ranking of races. During the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, race-thinking was often accompanied by the belief that race was tremendously important and was the key to understanding history and identity. These beliefs helped justify various forms of exclusion and oppression, with catastrophic consequences. Much of the readings, discussion and lecture will involve intellectual history and the history of science. But we will place these ideas in their social contexts (colonialism, slavery, national and religious identity), and will consider how three countries became overtly racist regimes: the United States after Reconstruction, Nazi Germany, and South Africa under apartheid. For history majors and minors, this course may be used to fulfill either field I (United States) or field IV (Europe).

Readings
Available in bookstore:
Other readings will be available on Blackboard.

Course Requirements
20% Attendance and participation. Read assigned material, attend class, pay attention and take notes, and participate in class discussions. Ideally, you should complete the reading listed for each class before that class occurs. But if you run out of time, you should still come to class!
15% Informal responses on Blackboard. About every other week you will answer a question about the reading. Instructions will be provided for each of these informal writing assignments. Due dates will be announced as we go along.
15% 5-page paper using primary sources from week 4, due on Feb. 16.
5% Research exercise using 19th-century newspapers, on either Gobineau or Latin races, due on Feb. 28 or March 4.
20% Midterm exam, March 6. It will consist of a few essay-type answers to some pre-circulated questions involving the readings and material from the first half of the class.
5% Lead discussion on one of the readings on the syllabus during second half of course.
20% Take-home final exam. Will consist of essays and short-answer questions based on readings and lectures.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments (Subject to Change)
1/17 Introduction: Parameters and themes of the class
1/22 Definitions and significance
Fredrickson, *Racism*, introduction (pp. 1-13)
Staum, Martin S. *Labeling People: French Scholars on Society, Race, and Empire, 1815-1848* (2003), Chapter 1, pages 3-10

**EARLY MODERN EUROPE AND THE INVENTION OF RACISM**
1/24 Iberian Roots

1/29 The New World
Fredrickson, *Racism*, chap. 1, pp. 35-42
T. Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, excerpt

1/31 Transatlantic slavery and views of Africans

2/5 Racial Bodies in the Colonial World
Read one of these:

2/7 Racial Mixing in the Atlantic World
Read one of these:

**THE RISE OF MODERN RACISM**
2/12 La Peyrère, Bernier, Lamarck, Voltaire
Fredrickson, *Racism*, chap. 2, pp. 51-64 (up to 1780s)

Recommended: Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 24-36.

2/14 Buffon, Kant, Blumenbach
Antonello Gerbi, *The Dispute of the New World*, 3-8.


**Paper on Bernier, Voltaire, Kant, Blumenbach, Bordeaux due Feb. 16, midnight.**

2/19 Age of revolution
Fredrickson, *Racism*, chap. 2, pp. 64-75 (up to 1840s)
Staum, Martin S. *Labeling People: French Scholars on Society, Race, and Empire, 1815-1848* (2003), pages 13-22 (ch. 1) and 23-48 (ch. 2)

2/21 Nation and race
Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* (1820), p. 1-6 of chapter 1 (not the 30-page dedicatory epistle!):

https://books.google.com/books?id=zzQJAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0 - v=onepage&q&f=false

2/26 Measuring skulls and contesting race
Recommended: one of these:

2/28 1850s: Gobineau, Knox, Degeneration

**Research exercise using 19th-century newspapers is due, if choosing Gobineau**

3/4 Latin races, “Latin America”, and other forms of whiteness
Michel Chevalier, *Society, Manners and Politics in the United States* (1839), introduction only (pages 9-18):
https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/S0KfXK0GCBMC?hl=en&gbpv=1


**Research exercise using 19th-century newspapers is due, if choosing Latin races**

3/6 **Midterm**

3/18 **Darwin and Social Darwinism**

3/20 **China and Japan**
Dikötter, Frank.

3/25 **The Global Color Line**


3/27 **Comparing the United States and Germany (1830s-1890s)**
Fredrickson, *Racism*, chap. 2, pp. 75-95
[Dreyfus Affair?]

**TWENTIETH CENTURY**

4/1 **Overtly racist regimes vs. imperialism**
Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, selection.

4/3 **Eugenics**
José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, TBA

4/8 **Jim Crow and South Africa between the world wars**
Franz Boas, “Instability of Human Types” (1911) in *The Idea of Race*, 84-88
Alain Locke, “The Concept of Race as Applied to Social Culture” (1924) in *The Idea of Race*, 89-99
[Barkan or Conklin]

4/10 **Nazi Germany and Interwar Europe**
Fredrickson, *Racism*, chap. 3, pp. 117-128
Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century*, chapter 3: “Healthy Bodies, Sick Bodies.”

4/15 United Nations and the Cold War
Ashley Montagu, “The Concept of Race in the Human Species in the Light of Genetics” (1941) in *The Idea of Race*, 100-107

4/17 Post-war Europe: decolonization and immigration

4/22 South Africa: apartheid

4/24 Social construction and identity
Read one of these:

4/29 Twenty-First Century
Fredrickson, *Racism*, chap. 3, pp. 139-150

5/1 Critical race theory
TBA

Final exam due on Wed. May 8 at midnight.