Sociology of Race and Racism

20 credits  
First Term 2017  
Education Building, room M37  
Mondays, 1.00-3.45pm

Lecturer: Dr Giovanni Picker

A Conversation of Girls (Two Girls with their Black Servant), 1770 by Joseph Wright of Derby

Module Leader: Dr Giovanni Picker  
Department of Social Policy and Social Work  
Muirhead Tower, Room 935 - Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12.00-13.00 (except Oct 3)  
G.Picker@bham.ac.uk

School/Institute Administrative: Emily Barrett  
College Administrative: Caroline Hetherington
Sociology of Race and Racism

*The paradox of education is precisely this - that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.*

James Baldwin

The module

Sociology has been looking at race and racism since the second half of the 19th century. This module aims at the critical understanding of race as one of the most deep-rooted principles organizing both the material and the symbolic structures of society in hierarchies of moral worth. Racism, as coterminous and direct extension of race, will be scrutinized in its most evident manifestations, from everyday circumstances to urban inequalities, textured by global capitalism. Race and racism will be presented and discussed from a historical and comparative sociological perspective, detecting both a comprehensive genealogy of racism in the various imperial colonial projects, and the key and intersectional forms of racist exclusion in the dominant manifestations of contemporary neoliberalism (e.g. recent global wars; financialization of the economy, and the pluralization and privatization of detention).

The seminar starts with a theoretical and historical overview of race and racism, and continues with a series of specific themes including “The racial state”; “Everyday racism”; “Racism and the city”, “Intersectionality”, and “(Post-)Race, racism and neoliberalism”. Parallel to these emphases runs an in-depth examination of European colonialism, which is developed in every class by watching and discussing a brief excerpt of the 3-hour BBC documentary "Racism: A history" (2007), directed by Paul Tickell. Europe as a historical and sociological formation will be a privileged focus throughout.

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<th>Module outcomes</th>
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<td>By the end of the module students should be able to:</td>
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<td>Form a theoretically and historically grounded understanding of the main ways in which race and racism operate</td>
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<td>Outline and critically discuss different dimensions of inequalities, including class, gender and race in understanding different social structures and agencies</td>
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Being able to critically deconstruct generalizations from specific racist manifestations to grand pictures, and to gain the ability of dissecting the contextual specificities of racism

Critically analyse and recognize the modalities of oblivion, neglect and denial of race, especially in post-WWII Europe, and yet to understand why many of us have a hard time accepting the centrality of race in society

Critically analyse and historicize the making of Europe as a hegemonic global power

Form a solid, contextualized and critical understanding of the ways in which racism can be opposed, both in theory and in practice

Teaching

This is course requires attentive and critical reading, as well as a disposition to elaborate each topic through actively engaging in in-class discussions. Motivation is essential. While you should come to class having read the two mandatory readings, optional readings are highly recommended. The more we all read the more engaging, pleasant and fruitful our discussions will be.

The seminar is organized neither as a structured lecture series nor as a free-floating seminar. Rather, at the beginning of each class the lecturer will provide a background summary of the theme, before starting a collective discussion. You are not expected to already have knowledge on the subject, but only background knowledge in any of the social sciences and the readiness to read and engage in discussions. Two readings per class are mandatory, other readings are recommended. You will be asked to initiate discussions on the readings by bringing to the group your critical question(s).

During class mobile phones have to remain switched off. Failure to do so may affect your final grade. There will be a 15min break in which you can use your phone.

Staff

Giovanni Picker is Senior Marie Curie Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham School of Social Policy (Institute for Research into Superdiversity), and coordinator for Central and Eastern Europe and Russia of the Black Europe Summer School (Amsterdam). Before coming to Birmingham, he was researching and teaching in Germany, Hungary and Russia. His research and teaching interests include race and
ethnicity and urban studies, with particular foci on the state, spatial segregation, urban planning, colonialism, and ethnography. Giovanni authored *Racial Cities: Governance and the Segregation of Romani People in Urban Europe* [Routledge, 2017] and co-edited *Racialized Labour in Romania: Spaces of Marginality at the Periphery of Global Capitalism* [Palgrave, forthcoming 2018]. His publications can be accessed at [https://bham.academia.edu/GiovanniPicker](https://bham.academia.edu/GiovanniPicker). He regularly tweets @GioPicker.

**Module Timetable**

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<th>Topic</th>
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<td>W1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>09/10/17</td>
<td>W2</td>
<td>Theoretical Articulations</td>
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<tr>
<td>16/10/17</td>
<td>W3</td>
<td>Historical Overview</td>
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<td>23/10/17</td>
<td>W4</td>
<td>Postcolonialism</td>
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<td>30/10/17</td>
<td>W5</td>
<td>Intersections of Race, Gender and Class</td>
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<td>06/11/17</td>
<td>W6</td>
<td>Everyday Racism</td>
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<tr>
<td>13/11/17</td>
<td>W7</td>
<td>READING WEEK - NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>20/11/17</td>
<td>W8</td>
<td>The Racial State</td>
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<td>27/11/17</td>
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<td>Racial Cities</td>
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<td>The Post-racial</td>
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<td>11/12/17</td>
<td>W11</td>
<td>Europe - Anti-Roma and Anti-Black Racism</td>
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**Assessment**

Summative Assessments: 4000 Essay designed to assess knowledge and critical engagement with the class materials, readings and discussions. Your selection of the topic specific aspect(s) must be agreed with the module leader by Week 11 at the latest. The written assignment must be submitted via CANVAS by 1pm on Wednesday, January 31st, 2018.
Reassessment: 4000 Essay designed to assess knowledge and critical engagement with the class materials, readings and discussions.

Formative Assessment: In-class discussion; Two questions per reading (to be submitted to the lecturer G.Picker@bham.ac.uk one day before class).

Please make sure your assignments are informed by a wide range of reading and NOT just websites. In particular journal articles are easy to access via e-journals and offer a range of perspectives on race and racism. Examples of journals are Ethnic and Racial Studies; Race and Class; Du Bois Review; Patterns of Prejudice; American Sociological Review; Sociology of Race and Ethnicity; Sociology. Note this is not an exclusive list. Articles on race and racism can be found in almost every social science journal. In addition, the books that are assigned and recommended in the course are a very important source - reading entire books provides you with very solid knowledge for writing your essay.

Plagiarism - i.e. taking anything from an author, including ideas, expressions and words without acknowledging this in your own paper - won’t be tolerated.

**Week 1**
**Introduction + module organization + film, Absent from the Academy, (Nathan E. Richards, 2013)**

*Highly recommended:*


**Week 2**
**Theoretical Articulations**
Mandatory:


Recommended:


Solomos, John 2013. Theorizing the Other: Race, Ethnicity and Social Theory. London: Routledge.

Week 3
Historical Overview

Mandatory


Recommended


Week 4
Postcolonialism

Mandatory


Recommended


Week 5
Intersections of Race, Gender and Class

Mandatory


Recommended


Week 6
Everyday Racism
Mandatory


Recommended


Week 7

READING WEEK. NO CLASS

Week 8

The Racial State

Mandatory


*Recommended*


### Week 9

**Racial Cities**


*Recommended*


**Week 10**
**The Post-racial**

*Mandatory*


*Recommended*


Week 11
Europe - Anti-Roma and Anti-Black Racism

Mandatory


Recommended


Documentary: A people uncounted (Aaron Yeger, 2014)