

**PHIL 318 Race and Racism**  
Tue-Thu 12:30 to 1:45PM, Remote  
Professor: Dana Francisco Miranda  
Email: Dana.Miranda@umb.edu  
Student Hours: Zoom or by appointment.  
M 1:00-2:00PM; W 1:00-2:00PM

## Overview

“What white people have to do is try and find out in their own hearts why it was necessary to have a nigger in the first place, because I’m not a nigger, I’m a man, but if you think I’m a nigger, it means you need it.” – James Baldwin

In this course, we will explore the philosophical assumptions behind the concept of race, its entanglement with identity, and the political consequences of racialization and racism. Students will examine how race/*raza* developed within colonial anthropology and expanded into both biological and social formulations. Because concepts of race and experiences of racism vary across cultures, we will draw from readings across historical, contemporary, and possible future racial categories. This course will also examine thick and thin notions of racism and their connections with race.

## Course Objectives

Students will interrogate various definitions of race. In doing so, students will trace the concepts development through theological, anthropological, biological, and cultural explanations. This course will also provide students opportunities to develop knowledge of how social differences are created, maintained, and challenged, with emphasis on questions of social power. Lastly, students will also begin developing their skills in reading, writing and dialoguing as required for undertaking philosophy.

## Course Unit Instruction

This hybrid course will be taught half-synchronously, half-asynchronously. In total, this class is scheduled to meet for 3 hours per week. Additional instructional activities for the course include attendance at various College events and associated writing activities/workshops distributed across the semester. Participation in these events and completion of associated activities/workshops will add an additional 14 hours of instruction. Students will be expected to come prepared with critical questions they would like to raise and be prepared to listen to others. Lastly, I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus, as necessary. Therefore, students are advised to refer to the syllabus posted on Blackboard for the most updated version.

## Policies

All UMass Boston policies are in effect. These include:

- Policy on Academic Dishonesty: As an academic community devoted to the discovery and dissemination of truth, the University of Massachusetts Boston insists that its students will conduct themselves honestly in all academic activities. Students are expected to refuse to

engage in any activity unauthorized by university policy. Please be sure to review the Student Code of Conduct for Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures.

- Students with disabilities requesting classroom or course accommodations must complete a multi-faceted determination process through the Office of Disability Services prior to the development and implementation of accommodations, auxiliary aids, and services. Each Accommodation Plan is individually and collaboratively developed between the student and the Lillian Semper Ross Center for Disability Services. If you have not already done so, please contact the Center to have a dialogue regarding your academic needs and the recommended accommodations, auxiliary aides, and services.
- If you are experiencing financial hardship, have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or do not have a safe and stable place to live, and believe this may affect your performance in this course, I would urge you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students (ODOS) or Student Support Services (SSS) for support. You may also discuss your concerns with me if you are comfortable doing so.

Some additional policies include:

- Gender Pronouns: All people deserve to be addressed in accordance with their identity, ranging from preferring a nickname to your gender pronouns. Students are encouraged to notify me of their gender pronouns so I can address you correctly (she, he, they, ze, etc.), especially if they have reason to believe I may use the incorrect pronouns. I use he/him.
- Electronic Device: Engaged listening without electronic mediation is an important skill, and this classroom will be an opportunity for those otherwise challenged in this domain to practice it. If you have important reasons (e.g., medical, disability accommodation, etc.) to use any such devices, please talk to me as soon as possible so that I can approve appropriate exceptions to this policy. Otherwise, this classroom will be free of electronic devices.
- Email Communication: At times I will communicate with the entire class using campus email systems, so it is essential that you regularly check your UMB email address or forward your UMB account email to your preferred email address. I encourage you to contact me via email with questions about the course, the material we cover in class, and assignments.
- Policy on Children: If you are a parent, you are welcome to bring your child to class. If they are interested and old enough to take part in the conversation, all the better. If they are babies, fine. If they need to breastfeed, fine. You probably have alternate arrangements, and your other professors might not have the same policy (and I respect that), but I just wanted to make my attitude about children explicit in case of preference or emergency. You are welcome here, and if you have dependents that need constant care or whose care has been interrupted, they are also welcomed.
- Everyone needs help at some point (and typically at multiple points) in their academic journey. If you or someone you know experiences academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings of anxiety or depression, we encourage you to seek support. Effective campus resources (such as Academic Support Services and Undergraduate Studies, Resources4U, the UHS Counseling Center, and the U-ACCESS Food Pantry) are here to help.
- No one will be asked to speak for a group (whether class, race, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, disability, gender, or geography).

## Assignments

**Discussion Board (30%):** For every week indicated as “Assignment Due,” students are required to comment twice on both our Tuesday and Thursday readings. Students must add at minimum one question, observation, or provocation before class begins and comment at least once on another student’s response. Students will be assigned to one of two groups (“Beacon” and “Harbor”). A Google Doc link will appear on our Blackboard homepage directing students to the proper document. Please note that students will have access to both documents, however, they are required to only participate in their respective group. Students will then receive new group assignments mid-semester so that they may converse more fully with their class. Lastly, students have the option of forgoing 1 week of the Discussion Board. This may be used anytime during the semester.

**Participation (10%):** Online attendance is mandatory. I understand that emergencies arise, so each student is allowed two absences. Each absence beyond the allotted two will result in a ten-point deduction. Please note that to receive a grade in this category one must not only show up, but also participate. This will primarily reflect a) Preparation for posing questions on discussion boards and b) Engaged listening and discussion contributions during this period; will be boosted by c) Participation and question-posing during the (ideally interactive) lecture segment. If you are at any point unsure how you are doing in participation and want to know, email me and we can begin a conversation.

For our Zoom lectures, I’m not requiring anyone to keep their cameras on. However, I suggest that students put up a profile pic and have their correct name/pronouns displayed for class. Outside of the lecture, there will also be a morning check-in and a Q&A at the end of each session. I ask that students use grid view outside of lecture mode. Please also keep your mic off when not actively speaking and using the chat function to either talk with your peers or ask additional questions. Do remember that all chats (including private chats) are recorded and saved by Zoom (even if the video isn’t). Virtual backgrounds are also encouraged. In terms of personal behavior, please know that you may eat and drink as wanted and get up to use the bathroom as needed. Lastly, there will be no dress code beyond being clothed.

**Short Paper (20%):** One essay submission of 1000-1500 words responding to prompts provided in advance. The papers will be due on the Friday of Week 6 (Mar. 5). The short essay paper must be handed in electronically by midnight. Rubric:

- 5 points: Essay addresses all aspects of the question and does so in a thoughtful way, incorporating key insights from texts and class discussions, and suggests a reasonable, though possibly somewhat open-ended, answer.
- 4 points: Essay addresses the question adequately but struggles to reconcile different positions, either through internal inconsistencies (e.g., the essay defends a contradictory position) or through failing to grapple with central dimensions of the material.
- 3 points: Essay addresses the question but doesn’t demonstrate any commitment to rigor or critical thought, or fails to relate the question to material from the reading(s) and/or class discussions.
- 2 points: Essay is substantial but does not address the prompt.
- 1 point: Essay fails to address the prompt and lacks substance or coherence.

*Essays that are late but no more than 48 hours late will be docked 1 point. Essays that are more than 48 hours late will be docked 2 points. Essays that are not turned in by the end of the semester will receive no credit. Essays receiving a grade of 3 or lower can be rewritten and submitted for re-grading if you meet with me to discuss them.*

**Term Paper (30%):** For the final paper, students must meet with me in person or must have digital approval; for group papers, all members of the group must be present at this meeting together unless extraordinary circumstances dictate otherwise. Term papers must be emailed by midnight May 17, 2021. My policy is to deduct ten points for each day late. You may choose from any of these options:

- *Position paper:* Write a paper defending a philosophical position related to topics discussed in class or in the assigned readings. Solo: 2000 words. Group of 2: 2500 words.
- *Research paper:* Either a) Read 1-2 outside works and critically examine the reading or its relation to one or more of the required readings for the course, or b) Read and criticize a full book from which one of the required readings is drawn, or c) Propose a research project of your own, subject to instructor approval. Solo: 2000 words. Group of 2: 2500 words.

**Assessments (10%):** Students will complete mid-semester and end-of-class self-assessments so that we may better focus on qualitative and not quantitative evaluations. You will be reflecting carefully on your own work and the work of your peers. If this process causes more anxiety than it alleviates, see me at any point to confer about tips for self-evaluations. Please know that if an assignment does not feel productive, we can find ways to modify, remix, or repurpose the instructions.

Mid-semester assessments must be completed by noon on March 10, 2021. Final assessments must be completed by noon on May 19, 2021, after your final paper is turned in.

### **Guidance on Late Work**

Missing a deadline is a stressful experience. Sometimes it's just the result of an acute situation, but sometimes it's the result of something more persistent—struggling with the material, life circumstances, or one's mental state—and the source of trouble is not always obvious from the inside. Students in these situations often blame themselves and as a result incur late penalties. Students sometimes even fail classes because they get paralyzed and ultimately never submit the assignment. If you are in this situation, I can help. If you are going to miss a deadline:

1. Email me *whatever you have* before the deadline. If I get something from you, no matter how incomplete, the first day's late penalty will be halved.
2. Stay in contact with me until you finish. We will make a plan to get you back on track.

### **Readings**

There is no text for this course; all readings will be provided online.

### **Schedule**

#### Week 1:

Jan. 26: Introductions. What is this course and who's in it? *No Reading.*

Jan. 28: Of the Different Races of Human Beings + Determination of the Concept of a Human Race by Immanuel Kant

Week 2:

Feb. 2: Apologetic History of the Indies by Bartolomé de Las Casas + Democrates Alter, or the Treatise on the Just Causes of War Against the Indians by Juan de Ginés Sepulveda

Feb. 4: Is “Race” Modern? Disambiguating the Question by Adam Hochman

*Assignment Due*

Week 3:

Feb. 9: “The Theory of Racial Formation,” Racial Formation in the United States by Michael Omi and Howard Winant

Feb. 11: A Social Constructionist Analysis of Race by Sally Haslanger

*Assignment Due*

Week 4:

Feb. 16 + Feb. 18: Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life, Chapters I + VII by Karen Fields and Barbara Fields

*Assignment Due*

Week 5:

Feb. 23: The Racial Contract, Chapter I by Charles Mills

Feb. 25: The Linguistics of Color Blind Racism: How to Talk Nasty about Blacks without Sounding “Racist” by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva

*Assignment Due*

Week 6:

Mar. 2: What Is Racial Domination? By Matthew Desmond and Mustafa Emirbayer

Mar. 4: What is Racism? By Ramon Grosfoguel

*No Assignment. Short Paper Due Friday*

Week 7:

Mar. 9: Racism as Self-Love by Grant Silva

Mar. 11: Can Blacks Be Racist? By Lawrence Blum

*Assignment + Mid-Semester Assessment Due*

Spring Break (Mar. 14 - Mar. 21)

Week 8:

Mar. 23: The Whiteness Question by Linda Martín Alcoff

Mar. 25: At Home In Blackness: How I Became Black by Efa Etoroma + Passing by Langston Hughes

*Assignment Due*

Week 9:

Mar. 30: DNA, Blood, and Racializing the Tribe by Kimberly TallBear

Apr. 1: Invisibility in the Color-Blind Era: Examining Legitimized Racism against Indigenous Peoples by Dwanna Robertson

*Assignment Due*

Week 10:

Apr. 6: *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking*, Chapters I, II by Michael Keevak

Apr. 8: *The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans* by Claire Jean Kim

*Assignment Due*

Week 11:

Apr. 13: *Latinos and the Categories of Race* by Linda Martín Alcoff

Apr. 15: *White Latinos* by Ian Haney López + *Encancaranublado* by Ana Lydia Vega

*Assignment Due*

Week 12:

Apr. 20: “The Politics of Purity: Colonialism, Reason, and Modernity,” *The Creolizing Subject* by Michael Monahan

Apr. 22: *Mixed Black and White Race and Public Policy* by Naomi Zack + *Race, Biraciality, and Mixed Race—In Theory* by Lewis Gordon

*Assignment Due*

Week 13:

Apr. 27: *Islands of Sexuality: Theories and Histories of Creolization in Cape Verde* by Isabel Féo Rodrigues

Apr. 29: *Necessarily Black: Cape Verdean Youth, Hip-Hop Culture, and a Critique of Identity*, Chapters I + II by P. Khalil Saucier

*Assignment Due*

Week 14:

May 4: *In Defense of Transracialism* by Rebecca Tuvel + *Why We Shouldn’t Compare Transracial to Transgender Identity* by Robin Dembroff and Dee Payton

May 6: “Mestizaje,” *The Cosmic Race* by José Vasconcelos

*No Assignment Due*

Week 15 By Way of Conclusion

May 11: Class Review + Term Paper Workshop

*Remember:* Term Paper and Final Self-Assessment due next week.