

ENGL 550: RACIAL CAPITALISM AND DEMOCRACY FROM RECONSTRUCTION TO THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Time: Thursday 3:30–6:00 p.m.
Classroom: Griffin 202
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 12:00–2:00 p.m.
Office: Griffin 250

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This seminar will survey how racial capitalism—the notion that “racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires,” in the words of Jodi Melamed—animates the US literary and cultural imaginary from Reconstruction (1863–77) to the Second World War (1939–45). In doing so, we’ll necessarily examine how the development of racial capitalism impacted the conception and execution of democracy in the United States, especially during westward (and later global) imperialism, Jim Crow, the Gilded Age, and the Progressive Era. If democracy is, as Fred Moten has described it, “government in which the common people hold sway,” how has racial capitalism impacted the practice of democracy? What does democracy look like in a racial capitalist nation? Attending to the work of authors such as Charles Chesnutt, Stephen Crane, W. E. B. Du Bois, William Dean Howells, María Ruiz de Burton, Sui Sin Far, Mark Twain, Ida B. Wells, and Zitkála-Šá, we’ll investigate how literary and cultural texts understood and responded to the structural inequities and liberatory potentials of one of the most tumultuous periods of US history. Thus, this seminar will introduce a variety of methodological approaches to the field of American literary and cultural studies, including methods from black studies, comparative race and ethnic studies, disability studies, Marxist studies, queer studies, and women of color feminisms. This seminar will partially prepare graduate students for the American Literature 1865–1945 exam and the Africana Studies exam.

COURSE TEXTS TO ACQUIRE

Chesnutt, Charles W. *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* 1921. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1998. Print. ISBN: 9781578067985.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk.* 1903. New York: Penguin, 2018. Print. ISBN: 9780140189988.

Howells, William Dean. *A Hazard of New Fortunes.* 1889. Ed. Philip Lopate. New York: Penguin, 2001. Print. ISBN: 9780140439236.

The Jazz Singer. Dir. Alan Crosland. Warner Bros., 1927. Rental streams available through *Amazon, YouTube, Google Play, Apple,* and *Vudu.*

Ruiz de Burton, María Amparo. *The Squatter and the Don.* 1885. Ed. Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita. 2nd ed. Houston: Arte Público, 1997. Print. ISBN: 9781558851856.

Sui Sin Far [Edith Maude Eaton]. *Mrs. Spring Fragrance.* 1912. Ed. Hsuan L. Hsu. Buffalo: Broadview, 2011. Print. ISBN: 9781554810277.

Twain, Mark. *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Other Tales*. 1894. Ed. R. D. Gooder. New York: Oxford UP, 2009. Print. ISBN: 9780199554713.

Wells-Barnett, Ida B. *On Lynchings*. 1892–1905. Mineola: Dover, 2014. Print. ISBN: 9780486779997.

Zitkála-Šá. *American Indian Stories*. 1921. New York: Modern Library, 2019. Print. ISBN: 9781984854216.

COURSE TEXTS PROVIDED ON MOODLE

Byrd, Jodi A., Alyosha Goldstein, Jodi Melamed, and Chandan Reddy. “Predatory Value: Economies of Dispossession and Disturbed Relationalities.” *Social Text* 36.2 (2018): 1–18. Print.

Chakravartty, Paula, and Denise Ferreira da Silva. “Accumulation, Dispossession, and Debt: The Racial Logic of Global Capitalism—An Introduction.” *American Quarterly* 64.3 (2012): 361–85. *JSTOR*. Web.

Crane, Stephen. *The Monster and Other Stories*. New York: Harper, 1899. *Internet Archive*. Web.

The Cheat. 1915. Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. Paramount, 1918. *Internet Archive*. Web.

Cacho, Lisa Maria. “The Violence of Value.” Introduction. *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected*. New York: New York UP, 2012. 1–33. Print.

Clover, Joshua. “A Theory of Riot.” Introduction. *Riot. Strike. Riot: The New Era of Uprisings*. New York: Verso, 2016. 35–48. Print.

Day, Iyko. “The New Jews: Settler Colonialism and the Personification of Capitalism.” Introduction. *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism*. Durham: Duke UP, 2016. 1–40. Print.

Hartman, Saidiya. “The Beauty of the Chorus.” *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals*. New York: Norton, 2019. 297–343. Print.

Hong, Grace Kyungwon. “The Possessive Individual and Social Death: The Complex Bind of National Subjectivity.” *The Ruptures of American Capital: Women of Color Feminism and the Culture of Immigrant Labor*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006. 3–29. Print.

Johnson, Walter. “To Remake the World: Slavery, Racial Capitalism, and Justice.” *Boston Review*. Boston Review, 20 Feb. 2018. Web.

Karuka, Manu. “The Prose of Countersovereignty.” *Empire’s Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad*. Oakland: U of California P, 2019. 1–19. Print.

Lowe, Lisa. “The Intimacies of Four Continents.” *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham: Duke UP, 2015. 1–42. Print.

Melamed, Jodi. "Racial Capitalism." *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1.1 (2015): 76–85. JSTOR. Web.

Moten, Fred. "Democracy." *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*. Ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler. New York: New York UP, 2007. 76-79. Print.

Puar, Jasbir K. "The Cost of Getting Better." Introduction. *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. Durham: Duke UP, 2017. 1–31. Print.

Reddy, Chandan. "Freedom's Amendments: Race, Sexuality, and Disposability under the State Form." *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State*. Durham: Duke UP, 2011. 1–52. Print.

COURSE COMPONENTS

Presentations: You'll complete two presentations over the course of the term aimed at developing your confidence in leading academic discussion and speaking about your academic work.

Leading Class Discussion: During one class this term, you'll lead discussion on the primary text assigned that day. You may draw our attention to particular passages, introduce supplementary materials via handout or the classroom's multimedia equipment, have us work individually or in small groups—whatever you like. A sign-up sheet will be circulated on the first day of seminar.

Research Essay Presentation: During our final class, you'll briefly present the argument of your research essay to the class. You should plan to speak and field questions for roughly five minutes.

Writing: You'll undertake a variety of writing assignments over the course of the term aimed at developing your professionalization within and outside of the discipline. By the end of the seminar, you'll have a draft abstract, conference paper, research article, and public-facing project ready to be revised for submission, presentation, and publication to/in specific venues identified by you. Please use MLA or Chicago guidelines, and submit the written assignments in hard copy. A formal prompt for each assignment will be distributed two weeks in advance of its due date.

Conference/Journal Selection and Abstract: In your first assignment, you'll select a conference and journal to which you will submit your conference paper and research article and write a short rationale of no more than 500 words for why you've chosen each venue. You'll also write a short abstract of no more than 250 words that identifies your research question (and potentially your suspected answer to that question), your methodology, the critical conversation to which you're responding, and the stakes/implications of your project.

Annotated Bibliography and Revised Abstract: In your second assignment, you'll compile an annotated bibliography with fifteen secondary source entries of roughly 150 words each. For each source, list a complete citation as well as a summary of the source's argument, how its argument relates to your other sources' arguments, and how you plan to position your argument in response. At this time, please also submit a revised abstract.

Conference Paper and Revised Abstract: In your third assignment, you'll complete a roughly 2,000-word conference paper that employs a clear methodology, responds to a critical conversation in American literary and cultural studies, and performs a new and original close reading of a primary text in this field. At this time, please also submit a revised abstract.

Research Article and Revised Abstract: During Finals Week, you'll submit a roughly 6,000-word research article that revises and expands the ideas articulated in your conference paper. At this time, please also submit a revised abstract.

Public-Facing Project: While the above presentation and writing assignments prepare you for the academic job market, to prepare for broader job markets, you'll also complete a public-facing project of your choosing. By public-facing project, I mean a project that conveys the insights of humanistic thinking to audiences beyond the academy. Here's a tentative, non-exhaustive list of possibilities: an annotated (potentially crowd-sourced) syllabus (like the #Charlestonsyllabus); a book review or review essay of new work(s) in the field (check out *AAIHS*); a suite of blog posts or a journalistic piece on a topic in the field (think of what you see on *Slate*); a proposal for a public or digital humanities project on a topic in the field (see successful examples at the *NEH*); curriculum or lesson plans for a public series at a local library or school; or a podcast or YouTube episode (something in the vein of *1619*, for example). Ideally, the public-facing project would extend or supplement the work of your research article.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Leading Class Discussion	10%
Research Article Presentation	10%
Conference/Journal Selection and Abstract	10%
Annotated Bibliography and Revised Abstract	10%
Conference Paper and Revised Abstract	10%
Research Article and Revised Abstract	35%
Public-Facing Project	15%

GRADE SCALE

- A: 100%–90%
- B: 89%–80%
- C: 79%–70%
- D: 69%–60%
- F: 59%–0%

While individual assignments may receive half letter grades (pluses or minuses), final grades are calculated according to the above scale.

COURSE VALUES

Basic Needs: I'm committed to ensuring that you have access to the living conditions that you need to succeed in this course. If you face challenges securing food or housing, please contact the Dean of Students and me, if you feel comfortable doing so, for support. That way, I can provide you with

any resources I have access to.

Cancellations: Please check your email regularly in case of class cancellations. If class is cancelled, I'll send information about completing our planned class work via email.

Disabilities: I'm committed to ensuring that you have access to the learning conditions that you need to succeed in this course. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please contact me as well as the Office of Disability Services as soon as you're able. More information can be found at <https://disability.louisiana.edu>.

Late Assignments: I encourage you to submit assignments on time. That being said, life happens. If you're having trouble submitting an assignment on time, please contact me as soon as you're able so that we can make alternate arrangements.

Participation: Attendance and participation are acts of solidarity with your classmates. Because discussion is a collective enterprise, your active participation is vital to everyone's intellectual growth. Please strive to: 1) be on time to and actively present in class; 2) prepare for and meaningfully contribute to communal inquiries and discussions; and 3) show mutual respect for your classmates. If electronic devices are fundamental to your learning process, please feel free to use them in seminar. That being said, please be mindful of your ability to distract yourself and others when using electronics for other purposes during class time.

Plagiarism: Because academic writing creates new knowledge, plagiarism is considered a serious ethical violation. For this reason, plagiarism results in, at a minimum, a failing grade for the assignment, and, at a maximum, dismissal from the university. The university's official definition of plagiarism is: "a specific type of cheating. It occurs when a student claims originality for the ideas or words of another person, when the student presents as a new and original idea or product anything which in fact is derived from an existing work, or when the student makes use of any work or production already created by someone else without giving credit to the source. In short, plagiarism is the use of unacknowledged materials in the preparation of assignments." If you have any questions or concerns about plagiarism, please contact me as soon as you're able.

Safety: Your physical, mental, and emotional safety are of the utmost importance to me. In this COVID-19 crisis, please put yours and your loved ones' safety first. If you're in need of alternate arrangements for any aspect of this seminar, please contact me as soon as you're able. In addition, for everyone's health and wellbeing, please strive to adhere to social distancing standards when you're in our classroom, including maintaining six feet of distance from your classmates and wearing a face covering at all times. We will try to meet outside whenever possible. If you're feeling even a hint of illness, please stay home.

COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	READINGS	DEADLINES
Thursday 8/20	Syllabus, Ruiz de Burton, <i>The Squatter and the Don</i> (55–197), Melamed, "Racial Capitalism" (Moodle), and Moten, "Democracy" (Moodle)	

Thursday 8/27	Ruiz de Burton, <i>The Squatter and the Don</i> (198–344) and Byrd, Goldstein, Melamed, and Reddy, “Predatory Value” (Moodle)	
Thursday 9/3	Howells, <i>A Hazard of New Fortunes</i> (5–228) and Chakravartty and da Silva, “Accumulation, Dispossession, and Debt” (Moodle)	Conference/Journal Selection and Abstract
Thursday 9/10	Howells, <i>A Hazard of New Fortunes</i> (229–449) and Clover, “A Theory of Riot” (Moodle)	
Thursday 9/17	Wells-Barnett, <i>On Lynchings</i> and Cacho, “The Violence of Value” (Moodle)	
Thursday 9/24	Twain, <i>Pudd’nhead Wilson</i> and Johnson, “To Remake the World” (Moodle)	Annotated Bibliography and Revised Abstract
Thursday 10/1	Crane, <i>The Monster</i> and Puar, “The Cost of Getting Better” (Moodle)	
Thursday 10/8	Du Bois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> and Lowe, “The Intimacies of Four Continents” (Moodle)	
Thursday 10/15	Sui Sin Far, <i>Mrs. Spring Fragrance</i> and Day, “The New Jews” (Moodle)	Conference Paper and Revised Abstract
Thursday 10/22	DeMille, <i>The Cheat</i> and Reddy, “Freedom’s Amendments” (Moodle)	
Thursday 10/29	Chesnutt, <i>Paul Marchand, F. M. C.</i> and Hong, “The Possessive Individual and Social Death” (Moodle)	
Thursday 11/5	Zitkála-Šá, <i>American Indian Stories</i> and Karuka, “The Prose of Countersovereignty” (Moodle)	Public-Facing Project
Thursday 11/12	Crosland, <i>The Jazz Singer</i> and Hartman, “The Beauty of the Chorus” (Moodle)	
Thursday 11/19		Research Essay Presentation
Finals Week (exact date and time to be determined)		Research Article and Revised Abstract