**COMM 458m: Race & Ethnicity in**

**Entertainment and the Arts**

**4 Units**

**Fall 2021 – Wednesday – 9:30am-12:20pm**

**Section:** 20673

**Location:** ASC 328

**Instructor: Dr. Robeson Taj Frazier**

**Office:** ASC 326D

**Contact Info:** [rfrazier@usc.edu](mailto:rfrazier@usc.edu)

**Office Hours:** via Zoom onThursdays, 11am-noon (email to schedule a time)

**Zoom info:** Meeting ID: 641 313 6451; Passcode: 676040



**Course Description**

This course explores race and ethnicity (as social categories and markers of identity/identification), and systemic racism/racial capitalism (as a structure of power, inequality, and domination) from the lens of popular culture, media arts, and communication media. We interrogate the role that entertainment media and the arts play in shaping and transforming ideas, perceptions and ideologies concerning race and ethnicity and consider the impact of art and media within struggles over racial capitalism, most especially within the entertainment, fine arts, and media industries.

We begin by examining histories of racism and racial capitalism, race, and racial/ethnic/national formation and identity in the United States of America (certainly one of the much-discussed, yet misunderstood, aspects of history, subjectivity, identity and identifications) through the portals of, primarily, American and European entertainment, media, art, and popular culture. Of concern to us are:

1. The vital role that media, art and entertainment institutions have played historically and continue to play in the cultivation and maintenance of racial hierarchy and racial hegemony.
2. How social movements and communities of artists, storytellers, producers, entrepreneurs, and executives of past and present have treated these institutions as important sites to:
   * Contest structural and representational inequity, injustice, and oppression.
   * Create works of art, entertainment and culture that challenge us, and give us pleasure and joy.

Throughout the course, we decipher how racism, race and ethnicity operate historically, materially and discursively, that is within institutions of power and representation, as well as within systems of signs and symbols that are both persistent and shifting – all of which work to structure, influence, and impact our experience and perspectives in the world. By interrogating a range of historical and contemporary representations and examining various contexts of change within U.S. and global life, we will develop conceptual and theoretical tools to analyze media, entertainment, and the arts, and moreover the work of racism, race and ethnicity in buttressing and transforming American power and identity/subjectivity-making.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

From this course students develop a more enhanced and critical historical understanding of popular culture and entertainment and media industries in the U.S. and elsewhere, in particular as it relates to:

1. The pervasive role these sectors of business and cultural life have played in histories and current day dynamics of systemic racism.
2. The important work that different groups have played in confronting and upending such systems of power and domination.

Through different activities – critical reading of texts, viewing of films and media content, writing response papers and critical inquiries, producing short form media content, class discussions and debates, thinking aloud, active and compassionate listening, and conversing and networking with guest speakers which include media scholars, executives, and media/art practitioners – students build confidence, empathy, and critical consciousness, and increase their capacity to confront racial injustice as engaged members of civic life, media/art/communication professionals, solution-generators, and agents of change.

**Course Requirements, Participation, and Attendance**

1. **Lecture**

This course will mix lectures, discussions, and group presentations/summaries. Class will begin with a 5-10 minute check-in, and then shift to a 10-15 minute “hot topics” discussion where we will consider a recent event or issue from political, pop cultural or community life, which intersects with the themes of the course and the previous week’s readings or assignment. This will be followed by 30-45 minute lecture. After the lecture, we will take a 5-10 minute break. The second half of class (45-60 min) will be dedicated to collective discussion, viewing films, student presentations, and/or guest speakers.

This course will require you to actively and critically read, view, listen, and engage different kinds of course materials (readings, videos, media art, film, music, media platforms) and focus on developing your research and analytical skills. This is an upper division seminar, and there is a significant reading load, thus students are required to attend class regularly, to contribute to class discussions, and to do all weekly readings/viewings/listening/assignments. My lectures will distill the main ideas and help you make concise study notes; therefore, attendance in lecture is vital.

***A Note About Course Modality***—This course has been designed to transition to fully online, should the need arise due to local, state or federal guidelines. In the event that the delivery method is altered, please be assured that the learning goals and outcomes of the course will not change; however, some aspects of the course will change in terms of its modes of address/presentation, participation/engagement/interaction, and evaluation.

1. **Participation**

You are expected to critically analyze the readings and attend class prepared to contribute and share your ideas and opinions. Students are also encouraged to use the classroom as a space and community to voice their opinions and share their theoretical concerns and areas where their research and scholarship can be enhanced. It is vital that we create a space where diverging points of view and mutual respect are celebrated, so disrespect of any kind will not be tolerated. Lastly, there are several writing assignments for this class, and because the lectures, discussions, reading assignments and course assignments are all vitally linked, it is critical that you keep up with the schedule.

***An Important Note About Zoom Participation***—If for some reason, we need to convene class online via Zoom, make sure to turn on your video when possible. It is helpful to be able to see each other, just as in an in-person class. However, we do recognize that if you have limited Internet bandwidth or no webcam, it may not be possible. If you are unable to find an environment without a lot of visual distractions, it is okay to turn off your video. In order to maximize collaboration in the delivery of courses in remote learning, I am strongly encouraging the use of tools such as cameras, mics, and chat features in order to mimic the face-to-face classroom experience environment as much as possible. Keep in mind that while you are encouraged to use your webcam and mic whenever possible/appropriate during the classes conducted via Zoom, **you are not required to do so**. Also, one more additional point regarding Audio: **Please mute your microphone when you are not talking.** This helps eliminate background noise. If you can, use a headset when possible. This will improve audio quality. And if you are not able to find a quiet, distraction free spot where you can use your microphone, use the chat window for questions and comments relevant to the class.

1. **Attendance**

While it is expected that students will make every effort to attend classes, it is recognized that personal circumstances will arise which preclude class attendance. In such circumstances, you are responsible for obtaining the materials presented in missed lasses and for making up missed tests and other assignments. It is expected that students attend class in personas required unless alternative arrangements have been made due to illness, medical reasons, or the need to isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19. **You are allowed one absence without explanation**, after which there **may be** a **deduction of half a grade off your final grade** for each additional unexcused absence. If you have to miss more than one class, please make sure to communicate with the instructor.

**However, in the event that you find yourself experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms, in keeping with university recommendations, you should: Stay home!** This is the best way to prevent spreadingCOVID-19 as supported by scientific evidence; Please do not come to an in-person class if you are feeling ill, particularly if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. Nothing we do in our class is worth risking your health, my health, or the health or your peers. Contact the Instructor to identify options available for keeping up with course requirements and content.

1. **Masking and Face Covering**

To protect the health and well-being of the University and wider community, USC has implemented a policy requiring all people, including students, faculty, and staff, to wear a face mask that covers the mouth and nose while indoors. USC’s current mandate is that everyone is required to wear a face mask in university buildings, including classrooms. Hence, you MUST wear a mask appropriately (i.e., covering both your mouth and nose) the entire time you are in class. There is a no eating or drinking allowed classroom policy; however, students may briefly remove their masks to sip on a beverage, but masks must be worn between sips. Anyone attending class in-person without a mask will be asked to put one on or leave. Students who refuse to wear masks appropriately or adhere to stated requirements will face disciplinary action.

Ultimately, our classroom is a community, and as a community, we seek to maintain the health and safety of all members by wearing a face mask when in the classroom. Removing your mask for an extended period to eat or drink in class violates the masking directive and endangers others. Failure to comply with this policy is interpreted as disruptive classroom behavior and may be a violation of USCs’ Student Code of Conduct.

**Description and Assessment of Assignments & Assignment Submission Policy**

Details about most assignments can be found below under the **“Assignments”** tab on Blackboard. All assignments (group presentations, analytical and response papers, cultural reviews/critiques, and final assignment/projects) will be detailed in separate documents. All assignments must be submitted via **Turn-it-in on Blackboard** (unless the instructor advises differently) and must be turned in on time to avoid a grade reduction (1/3 of a grade per day including weekends). If you are unable to turn in an assignment due to illness or a personal emergency, please provide written documentation, or reach out to the instructor in a timely manner to discuss your situation. Do not wait until the end of the term to sort things out.

You are responsible for the material covered in class and in the reading. You will be evaluated on the following:

1. the level of your engagement with the class materials (as evidenced in your written work, research, efforts in multimedia argumentation and design, and class participation)
2. your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in articulate forms (whether written or visual)
3. your ability to creatively explore those theories and methodologies

All of your work will be graded on two primary evaluative scales:

1. how well it demonstrates an understanding of the theories and methodologies of the class
2. how well it articulates and structures its argument

**A more clear and detailed description of how your assignments will be graded and evaluated will be handed out at a later date.**

**Grading**

1. **Final Grade Distribution**

Class participation (not based solely on attendance) 10%

Response and Analytical Papers (3) 45%

Group Presentations (2) 15%

Pop Quizzes (3; will drop lowest score) 10%

Final Paper/Project 20%

1. **Grading Scale**

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores on the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

A = 100-94 C = 76-74

A- = 93-90 C- = 73-70

B+ = 89-87 D+ = 69-67

B = 86-84 D = 66-64

B- = 83-80 D- = 63-60

C+ = 79-77 F = 59-0

1. **Grading Standards**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Letter Grade | Description |
| A | Excellent; demonstrates extraordinarily high achievement; comprehensive knowledge and understanding of subject matter; all expectations met and exceeded. |
| B | Good; moderately broad knowledge and understanding of subject matter; explicitly or implicitly demonstrates good, if not thorough understanding; only minor substantive shortcomings. |
| C | Satisfactory/Fair; reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject matter; most expectations are met; despite any shortcomings, demonstrates basic level of understanding. |
| D | Marginal; minimal knowledge and understanding of subject matter; more than one significant shortcoming; deficiencies indicate only the most rudimentary level of understanding. |
| F | Failing; unacceptably low level of knowledge and understanding of subject matter; deficiencies indicate lack of understanding. |

1. **Grading Timeline**

All grades will be provided via Turn-in-in within two weeks post-submission (my goal is to provide grades within one-week to ten days). An email will be sent to all students making them aware when grades are available online.

If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must appeal it in writing/email, stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate, within one week of receiving the graded assignment. No late appeals will be accepted for review.

Once an appeal is received, the student should also schedule a meeting with the instructor to discuss the grade. After review of the appeal and discussion with the student, the instructor will determine whether or not the appeal should be granted.

**Required Texts**

* All Readings and Content can be found on Blackboard (<https://blackboard.usc.edu/>) under the designated “Weekly Reading” folder in the “Content” tab.

**Land Acknowledgement**

USC occupies unceded land of the Tongva/Gabrielino peoples. It is integral to acknowledge these people’s and their elders’ past, present, and future, and to call attention to the history of settler colonialism in this place, to the ongoing struggles for recognition and justice and to the living culture of the Tongva/Gabrielino peoples.  This course acknowledges the many indigenous peoples also residing in this place, including other peoples indigenous to the greater Los Angeles area, to California, to the Americas, and the wider world, who share a history of conquest, violence and enslavement. To learn more about the indigenous history of our region go to <https://native-land.ca/> and [https://mila.ss.ucla.edu/.](https://mila.ss.ucla.edu/) To connect to on-campus resources and programs for indigenous or interested students go to the Native American Student Union: <https://nasu.usc.edu/>.

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

**Academic Integrity Policy:**

The School of Communication maintains a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication. There are no exceptions to the school’s policy.

**Academic Conduct:**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course, without approval of the instructor.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university’s site on [**Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness**](http://safety.usc.edu/).

**Support Systems:**

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call*

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call* [studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault/)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298*

[equity.usc.edu](https://equity.usc.edu/), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu/)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*

[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\_report](https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report/)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*

[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu/)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

[campussupport.usc.edu](https://campussupport.usc.edu/)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](https://diversity.usc.edu/)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu/), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu/)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu/)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Annenberg Student Success Fund*

[https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources](https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards)

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

**Course Schedule: Classes, Topics & Readings**

## **Week 1 (Aug. 25th): Introduction to Race/Racism & Popular Culture**

## James McBride, excerpts from *Kill Em’ and Leave*

* Robert G. Lee, “Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture.”

**Week 2 (Sept. 1st): The Turn of the Century—Media Industries and Inventing the Other**

* Watch “Stuart Hall: Race the Floating Signifier” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PodKki9g2Pw>
  + To read transcript of the lecture, go to the link below or see document posted on Blackboard (Hall’s lecture begins on page 5): <https://www.mediaed.org/transcripts/Stuart-Hall-Race-the-Floating-Signifier-Transcript.pdf>
* Amiri Baraka, “African Slaves/American Slaves: Their Music.”
* Cedric Robinson, “In the Year 1915” from *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning:* Blacks *and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film before World War II*

**Week 3 (Sept. 8th): The Twenties & Thirties—Blues Cultures and American “Pop”**

* Karl Hagstrom Miller, “Race Records and Old Time Music: The Creation of Two Marketing Categories in the 1920s,” from *Segregating Sound*
* Angela Davis, excerpts from *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*
* John Kear, “Venus noire: Josephine Baker and the Parisian Music-hall.”

**Week 4 (Sept. 15th): The Forties and Fifties—Ethnicity, Music and Youth Culture**

* Rachel Rubin & Jeffrey Melnick. “Los Angeles, 1943: Zoot Suit Style, Immigrant Politics,” pg. 49-83
* Robert Lee, “The Cold War Origins of the Model Minority Myth,” pg. 145-161
* Mark Anthony Neal, “Legislating Freedom, Commodifying Struggle: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Struggle for Black Musical Hegemony,” pg. 64-96 (from *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture)*

**Week 5 (Sept. 22nd): The Sixties & Seventies—Social Movements and Lifestyle Marketing**

* Jeff Chang, “‘The Real Thing’: Lifestyling and its Discontents” from *Who We Be: The Colorization of America*
* Mark Anthony Neal, “Legislating Freedom, Commodifying Struggle: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Struggle for Black Musical Hegemony,” pg. 96-116 (from the previous week’s readings*)*
* Mark Anthony Neal, “Soul for Sale: The Marketing of Black Musical Expression.”

**Week 6 (Sept. 29th): The Eighties—Hip Hop, MTV, and the Youth Market**

* Watch “Jean Michel Basquiat: The Radiant Child (2010),” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GZDEzchusE>
* Tricia Rose, “*All Aboard the Night Train*: Flow, Layering and Rupture in Post-Industrial New York” from *Black Noise*
* Dan Charnas, “Hip Hop Nation – East Side,” from *The Big Payback: The History of the Business of Hip Hop*

**Week 7 (Oct. 6th): The Nineties—Media Consolidation and Racial Fetish/Appropriation**

* bell hooks, “Eating the Other.”
* Naomi Klein, “Alt Everything” from *No Logo*
* Herman Gray, “Where Have All the Black Shows Gone,” from *Cultural Moves*

**Week 8 (Oct. 13th): The 2000s—Identity Politics and Media Representation**

* Issa Rae, “Leading Lady.”
* Watch “Margaret Cho: Notorious C.H.O,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EkMNnNnYFI>
* Michaela D. E. Meyer, “‘MAYBE I COULD PLAY A HOOKER IN SOMETHING!’: Asian American Identity, Gender, and Comedy in the Rhetoric of Margaret Cho.”

**Week 9 (Oct. 20th): The 2000s—Fashion, Beauty, and Reality Television**

* Hilton Als, “The Only One,” From *White Girls*
* Catherine Squires, “The Conundrum of Race and Reality Television.”
* Alexandra Sastre, “Hottentot in the age of reality TV: sexuality, race, and Kim Kardashian’s visible body.”

**Week 10 (Oct. 27th): The 2010s—The Internet and the Spectacle of Black Death and Trauma**

* Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression* excerpt
* Emily Hoerner, “Q&A with Prof. Leigh Raiford: The history of imagery in Black social movements,” <https://www.injusticewatch.org/news/2020/qa-the-history-of-imagery-in-black-social-movements/?fbclid=IwAR1tDMZd1rO65OIznBnMw0BVCZFLx_nIlYDiZBv0P6Lh9Zk3_gKlX2-ArhQ>
* Watch“Dave Chapelle: 8:46,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tR6mKcBbT4>
* Safiya Noble, “Teaching Trayvon.”

**Week 11 (Nov. 3rd): The 2010s – Blogging, the Personal Essay, and Cultural Criticism**

* Hanif Abdurraquib
  + “My Favorite Thing About Don Shirley.”
  + “A Night in Bruce Springsteen’s America.” <http://www.mtv.com/news/2740249/a-night-in-bruce-springsteens-america/>
* Roxane Gay
  + “Beyond the Struggle Narrative.”
  + “Cancel Culture Does Not Exist.” (podcast interview and transcript): <https://www.motherjones.com/media/2021/03/roxane-gay-says-cancel-culture-does-not-exist/>
* Tressie McMillan Cotton
  + “Brown Body, White Wonderland” <https://slate.com/human-interest/2013/08/miley-cyrus-vma-performance-white-appropriation-of-black-bodies.html>
  + “Lizzo, “Body Positivity,” and the Impossible Expectations for Black Women’s Bodies.” <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/art-books-music/a34992690/lizz-body-positivity-smoothie-cleanse-essay/>
* Damon Young
  + “How to Make the Internet Hate You in 15 Steps.”

**Week 12 (Nov. 10th): The 2010s—Cybercultures and Surveillance**

* Watch “André Brock, Jr. Discusses African American Cybercultures on the Web,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTF4jFcSNus>
* Lisa Nakamura, ““Alllookthesame”?: Mediating Asian American Visual Cultures of Race on the Web.”
* Sangita Shresthova, “Between Storytelling and Surveillance: The Precarious Public of American Muslim Youth,” in “By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism.” (go to chapter 4 on the link): <http://opensquare.nyupress.org/books/9781479829712/read/>

**Week 13 (Nov. 17th):**

* TBD

**Week 14 (Nov. 24th): CLASS CANCELLED – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**

**Week 15 (Dec. 1st)**

* TBD

**Final Paper/Project due 12/8-12/15 (Exact Date TBD)**