Spring 2014  
ANTH-UA [333] 320 The Color of Race in the Americas: Post-Racial Mythologies  
Professor Aisha Khan  
Mon/Wed 12:30-1:45  
25 Waverly Place, room 706

Course description

The problems of identity—what they are made of, why they are significant, and who gets to claim, decline, or reject them—have been vital issues in human history, not the least being the past half a millennium in the Americas. Such distinctions as “self”/“other,” “us”/“them” comprise notions of similarity and difference that are fundamental to the way social relations are organized. With the rise of European colonialism in the Americas, however, ideas about identity and difference took on new debates and in some cases more diverse expression, shaped by the development of capitalism, the encounters among peoples unfamiliar to each other, unfolding ideas about modernity, and the spread of new forms of knowledge based on scientific inquiry.

This seminar will look in particular at race and color as fundamental social and epistemological building blocks of the Americas. Emphasizing ethnographic approaches, but also drawing on a variety of interdisciplinary sources (classics and recent works of non-fiction, film, and fiction), this course will explore such key questions as:
* If race and color are ways of *categorizing* identity rather than being inherited *essences* of identity (according to most scholars and activists), then how and why are race and color still so powerful in shaping social life and experience?
* Do race and color signify the same things? Are they mutually dependent classifications?
* What is the relationship of race and color to other kinds of social differentiation, such as gender, class, sexuality, or citizenship?
* How do race and color become embedded parts of the cultural landscape of countries, regions, and hemispheres?
* Do “mixed race” and “color continuums” democratize social hierarchies?
* Does a “post-racist” world require a “post-racial” world?
**Required reading**

**Books**
- *Bengali Harlem* (Vivek Bald, 2013)
- *Cuban Color in Tourism and La Lucha* (L. Kaifa Roland, 2011)
- *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Ginetta E.B. Candelario, 2007)
- *Passing* (Nella Larsen, 2002 [1929])

**Other required reading**: Articles and book chapters will be provided in a course pack available at Unique Copy (Green Street, corner of Waverly).

**Course requirements**

**Response essays**: In order to facilitate class discussion, each Monday you will bring to class a 1 to 2 page (double-spaced) response to at least two of that week’s reading assignments. You will post your response essays on NYU Classes by 11:00am on Monday morning, which will give us time to read them before class (12:30pm). These essays are meant to highlight key issues in the course material as you identify and understand them: for example, what is the author’s theoretical argument, what is the methodology, are the two (theory and methodology) connected, do you agree or disagree with the author’s conclusions, how does the reading relate to previously assigned class reading and/or films? The objective is to think probingly about what you are reading before you come to class. *Two discussion leaders will be assigned each week to lead discussions*. The response essays will total 1/3 (33%) of your grade for the course. With the exception of a verifiable emergency, **no late responses will be counted**.

**Mid-term exam**: One take-home, 5 page essay, based on a prompt which I will give you that covers course material up to that point in the semester, due on W Feb 26th. Students will have one week to work on it. The mid-term exam will be 1/3 (33%) of your grade for the course. With the exception of a verifiable emergency, **no late papers will be accepted**.

**Term Paper**: One 8 page paper will be due at the end of the semester. I will hand out guidelines about approaching a problem or issue, specifically reviewing relevant literature, creating an argument, and devising methodology appropriate to your project. But the topic will be one of your own choosing that reflects the themes and questions of this course. At least once during the semester you will meet with me so to discuss your paper (dates to be set up in advance). The term paper is due on Mon May 12th and will be 1/3 (33%) of your final grade. With the exception of a verifiable emergency, **no late papers will be accepted**.

**Participation and Attendance**: You are expected to attend every class and to be prepared to participate in a meaningful way—this includes posting your response essays every Monday. You will be allowed two “free” absences during the semester. More than two, without a verifiable emergency, will count against your final grade total.
Topics and assignments

M Jan 27 Overview and introduction to the course

W Jan 29 Identifying “Race” and “Color”

M Feb 3 Identifying “Race” and “Color” continued
Reading: (1) continue above

W Feb 5 Identifying “Race” and “Color” continued
Film: “Motherland: A Genetic Journey”

M Feb 10 Identifying “Race” and “Color” continued

W Feb 12 Identifying “Race” and “Color” continued

M Feb 17 No class (Presidents Day)

W Feb 19 Identifying “Race” and “Color” continued

M Feb 24 The Body Beautiful
W Feb 26 The Body Beautiful continued

Mid-term exam due!

M Mar 3 Case Study: Brazil
Reading: continue Pretty Modern (Edmonds), pp. 37-120

W Mar 5 Brazil continued
Reading: continue Pretty Modern, pp. 123-174

M Mar 10 Brazil continued
Reading: finish Pretty Modern, pp. 177-252

W Mar 12 Case Study: Cuba
Reading: begin Cuban Color in Tourism and La Lucha

Mar 17-23 Spring break
Reading: Finish Cuban Color in Tourism and La Lucha

M Mar 24 Cuba continued
Discuss Cuban Color in Tourism and La Lucha

W Mar 26 Case Study: Dominican Republic
Reading: begin Black Behind the Ears, pp. 1-83

M Mar 31 Dominican Republic continued
Reading: continue Black Behind the Ears, pp. 84-176

M Mar 31 Dominican Republic continued
Reading: finish Black behind the Ears, pp. 177-263

W Apr 2 Asians and Diasporas

M Apr 7 Asians and Diasporas continued

W Apr 9 Asians and Diasporas continued
M Apr 14 Asians and Diasporas continued 
**Reading:** begin *Bengali Harlem*, pp.1-48

W Apr 16 Asians and Diasporas continued 
**Reading:** continue *Bengali Harlem*, pp.49-136

M Apr 21 Asians and Diasporas continued 
**Reading:** continue *Bengali Harlem*, pp.137-188

W Apr 23 Asians and Diasporas continued 
**Reading:** finish *Bengali Harlem*, pp.189-229

M Apr 28 **Whiteness, Marked and Unmarked**
**Film:** clip from “The Sopranos”

W Apr 30 Whiteness, Marked and Unmarked continued 

M May 5 Whiteness, Marked and Unmarked continued 
**Reading:** (1) continue above, (2) begin *Passing*, part I 
**Film:** “Multi-Facial”

W May 7 Whiteness, Marked and Unmarked continued 
**Reading:** continue *Passing*, parts I and II

M May 12 Whiteness, Marked and Unmarked continued 
**Reading:** finish *Passing*, part III
**Term paper due!**