

## **Sociology 370 Racism and Decolonization**

Winter 2017

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3:50PM SAB 436

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Office Hours: By appointment

### **Racism and Decolonization**

The recent presidential election in the United States has alarmed many observers around the world for the brazen-in-your-face racism and sexism of the new president-elect's campaign. Following hard on the heels of rising spasms of xenophobia in Great Britain (as manifest in the Brexit vote) and of Islamophobia across continental Europe, many commentators worry that the U.S. election is a sign of a turning point in world affairs in which dangerous populist forces are being unleashed beyond elite controls. Others see it as a symptom of deepening and looming economic, political, social, ecological and cultural crises of an Americanized global capitalism in which democracy was not only spread alongside "the market", but sold to the highest bidders on it as well. Brazen and unapologetic it may now seem to be, but neither racism nor sexism are new (certainly not in the Americas, nor in India, China, Europe, Africa and the Middle East, etc.), nor are the crises of global capitalism either, though their growing severity may be. Moreover, it is certainly the case that social inequality, in the United States and Canada, as well as on a world scale, is now greater than ever in both quantitative and qualitative terms since anytime after the Second World War and the wave of decolonization that followed after it. The innumerable ways racialized groups in the world have been made more unequal –subalternized– in the history of world capitalism, and continue to be made so now, provide crucial clues for deepening our understanding of racism in Canada and its current virulence around the world. The African-American sociologist W.E.B Dubois declared that the "color-line" would be the central problem of the twentieth century. With the intensifying crises of environmental racism, resource wars, development dispossession, refugee movements, racialized unemployment and police repression, racism appears to be a central problem of our contemporary era as well. In the thick of all this, however, the cultural politics of decolonization has won a rare and remarkable victory through the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the history and legacies of the residential school system in Canada. In the imperative it establishes for settler-immigrants to join with indigenous peoples to seek truth and reconciliation as "treaty people," a new vector of repoliticization and a new possibility for building an anti-racist collective project has emerged for the first time in many decades.

This course examines these issues along two conceptual tracks:

(1) RACISM: What is racism, how is it a constituent element of social inequality involving the accumulated violence of inequalities of gender, class, sexuality etc.? Why has racism been a central historical experience of nation-building in Canada and world-wide? Why and how is racism reproduced in what is often called a society of immigrants? How and why is racism connected to the historical emergence of a world-wide system of nation-states, and thus to nationalism?

(2) DECOLONIZATION: How has Canada's historical formation between two empires both racialized Canadian society and, at the same time, made Canadians participants in a world-wide, modern, historical process of decolonization, having in this regard much in common with others around the world, especially from an indigenous point of view? What is the truth of reconciliation and decolonization of our times?

First, we examine how the four major social institutions sociologists study –the state, the market, kinship and popular culture– are shaped by a process called racialization. Secondly, we trace the connections between the historical development of *colonial-capitalism* and processes of racialization in order to understand how racism has played such a major role in shaping not only Canada but the modern world globally and how contemporary world crises are shaped by the politics of racism and decolonizing resistances to it. Thirdly, our inquiry into the ways the past informs the present enables us to ask *how can we decolonize the sociological imagination today?*

The format of the course includes lectures, discussion based seminars, substantial course readings and writing requirements, as well as group work in our in-class *SOC370 Truth and Decolonization Commission*.

### **Course Objectives**

This course will explore the following key concepts and socio-historical processes:

Racism, racialization and subalternization: How can we theorize the historically changing and contextually variable characteristics of racism and its central role in modern-colonial politics? In taking up this question, the course explores how the racialization of social institutions (including the state, the market, the family, and the symbolic) is a central strategy of differentiating and subalternizing human groups and collectives.

Intersections of oppression: The theory of the intersection of oppressions seeks to explain how racism, sexism, class exploitation and all other forms of oppression and domination mediate each other as the accumulated violence underlying social conflict. The course explores how cultural politics and class politics mediate each other and the implications of this for building an “intersectional” social justice politics of decolonization.

Colonial capitalism and settler colonialism: Examining the history of Canadian nation-state formation, we will outline a theory of settler colonialism and develop an account of historical capitalism as colonial capitalism. The accumulation of capital, we will see, depends on the colonization of diverse modes of socio-ecological reproduction on a planetary scale.

Institutional networks of colonization: We will investigate how racialization involves subalternization and how the racialization of the global system of nation-states required (and still requires) imperial-global scale institutional networks of colonization that work through social machines of subalternization and development dispossession. We will study the Canadian residential school system and locate it in such global networks of colonization in its history and contemporary legacies. We will consider the work of the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission, itself a landmark turning point victory for the cultural politics of decolonization, and explore its lessons for us in Canada and for social justice decolonization struggles world wide.

Truth and reconciliation: We take up the question so what does truth and reconciliation mean for us now? Insofar as all contemporary social identities are racialized identities and as such have been formed by histories of subalternization and exaltation, we will explore how radical egalitarianism can be understood to be a practice of truth upon which reconciliation and decolonization depend, as does “infinite” democracy itself.

Decolonizing Sociology: We will have the opportunity to explore how the history of sociology as an academic discipline of social scientific knowledge production has been intertwined with the historical project of colonialism and with the ongoing project of the systemic colonization of diverse lifeworlds of socio-ecological reproduction. While anthropology has long reflected critically on this history, sociology has tended to evade the issue. But the convergence of social and ecological crises along with the cultural politics of decolonization and its injunction to remember and honour the treaties puts this long overdue critical reflection back on the agenda.

## Course Requirements

<u>Course Work</u>	<u>Relative Weights</u>
In-class, short essay format mid term exam	30% On February 16th 2017
Term paper	30% Due on April 11th 2017
Class participation	10%
Take-home final exam	30% Due April 21st, 2017

Note that in the evaluation scheme presented above, numerical figures represent percent relative values of each piece of course work; these figures are NOT marks. For more information and guidelines regarding the mid-term exam, the course term paper and the take home final exam see the course e-class website.

## Evaluation & Grading

As you know, the University of Alberta, Faculty of Arts uses a letter grade system. Over the semester I will evaluate your work by assigning letter grades to each requirement you complete. Along with verbal feedback, letter grade evaluations will give you a clear idea of the level of your performance in the course, individually or as a group member per requirement. After I have evaluated all of your course work, including your final exam paper, I will submit a letter grade from the scale described below based on my judgement of your overall level of performance considered in itself and compared with the work of other students past and present, using the relative weights of each requirement described above.

Your final grade will therefore be determined by whether your work over the term can be characterized overall as either:

- A+ Original, exceptional and outstanding in all respects
- A Distinctly outstanding work
- A- Careful, thorough and insightful work
- B+ Excellent, insightful work in most respects
- B Very Good solid work
- B- Good work in most respects
- C+ Good work in some respects
- C Satisfactory work
- C- Satisfactory but significant flaws
- D+ Substantial incomprehension of course material
- D Minimal Pass
- F Fail

## Course Readings

*Race and Racialization: Essential Readings*. Eds. Das Gupta, Tania et al. Canadian Scholars' Press Inc. Toronto. 2007.

Readings on reserve at Rutherford Library (see course bibliography).

## Course Policies

**Academic Responsibility:** Enrolment in this course means that you hereby agree to conduct yourself according to the following statement on academic responsibility:

Students' academic responsibility consists of the following:

- (i) Preparedness.
- (ii) Respect for the learning needs and processes of others.
- (iii) In debate and discussion, criticisms and commentary are to be directed at ideas and arguments, not persons.
- (iv) That you accept the contributions of others in a generous spirit, understanding them to be directed at ideas and arguments, not your person.
- (v) That you are always responsible for what you say and this responsibility goes beyond merely expressing your opinion to include a generous contribution to the creation of a positive environment for learning for everyone in the class.

**Late Work:** Late exam papers, assignments and project work will be penalized. Students will be eligible for a grace period of three days extension provided that you request an extension from me at least one day in advance of the due date. After the grace period, your evaluation will be marked down one evaluation rank per late day at my discretion. No course work will be accepted beyond two weeks past the last day of classes. If you are ill and are unable to complete your work by the due date, you must contact me immediately and at most within 3 days after the due date.

**Plagiarism and Fraud:** Plagiarism, cheating and fraud (including misrepresentation of reasons for missed exams and assignments) will be considered a serious violation of academic responsibility and can result in expulsion from the university. (See the Calendar for details, in particular: [www.ualberta.ca.secretariat/appeals.htm](http://www.ualberta.ca.secretariat/appeals.htm)). I will strive to protect the integrity and value of your work from being undermined by cases of plagiarism. If you are unsure of how to appropriately cite the ideas, work, arguments of others in an academic context, please ask me for assistance.

Re-evaluation of submitted course work The following conditions apply for students requesting that their course work be re-evaluated. (1) You must present an argument explaining why your work should be re-evaluated. (2) You must make your request for re-evaluation within one week of having your work returned or marks posted.

#### Missed Term Work

If you miss the midterm or other course requirements due to illness, it is your responsibility to convince me reasonably that this is an excusable absence, and provide me with one of the following documents within two working days of the scheduled exam or course requirement:

For medical illnesses, students can present one of the following:

"University of Alberta Medical Statement" signed by a doctor

"Medical Declaration Form for Students" (for Faculty of Arts students)

"Statutory Declaration" (for students in Faculties other than Arts, to be obtained from home Faculty or the Office of the Registrar)

For other acceptable absences, provide documentation appropriate to the situation. For example:

For a death in the family - a copy of the death certificate

For a car accident - a copy of the accident report

For other serious afflictions - consult with Instructor or Department about appropriate documents

Note that I, as your instructor, am not allowed to grant you a deferral for a missed final exam. If you need to defer the final exam you will have to apply to your home Faculty to be granted a deferral.

#### Registered?

Make sure you are correctly and accurately registered in the courses you are taking by checking beartracks. I am not given up-to-date student registration information until it is too late.

University Services for Students

"Students who require accommodations in this course due to a disability affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning, or mental or physical health are advised to discuss their needs with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) located in 1-80 Students' Union Building, 492-3381 (phone) or 492-7269 (TTY)."

## **Required Official University Policy Notices**

1. Note the University's policy on missed exams:

23.5.6 Absence from Exams (University Calendar §23.5.6)

"Excused absence for a missed exam is not automatic and is granted at the discretion of the instructor (in the case of term exams) or the student's Faculty (in the case of final exams).

Instructors and Faculties are not required to grant excused absences for unacceptable reasons that include, but are not limited to personal events such as vacations, weddings, or travel arrangements. When a student is absent from a term or final exam without acceptable excuse, a final grade will be computed using a raw score of zero for the exam missed. Any student who applies for or obtains an excused absence by making false statements will be liable under the Code of Student Behaviour."

2. Re: Plagiarism, once more:

"The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at [www.governance.ualberta.ca](http://www.governance.ualberta.ca)) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University."

"Don't Do It" sheet at <http://tinyurl.com/cheating-plagiarism>

"Don't Cheat" sheet at [www.governance.ualberta.ca/StudentAppeals/DontCheatsheet.aspx](http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/StudentAppeals/DontCheatsheet.aspx).

3. "Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s)."

4. "Policy about course outlines can be found in §23.4(2) of the University Calendar."