

The Racial and Ethnic Landscape: American Geographies of Power and Difference

Wednesdays, 5:35-8:35PM

Ruth Adams Building, Seminar Room 018

Professor Andrew Urban

aturban@rci.rutgers.edu

Office: **Ruth Adams Building 205**

Office Hours: **Wednesday, 1-4 PM and by appointment**

* Please email me in advance if you plan on coming by during office hours.

Course Description

This seminar provides an in-depth look at how the categories of race and ethnicity are spatially formed, and, in turn, how the politics of race and ethnicity shape different American landscapes. We will explore how race and ethnicity are “embedded,” as the philosopher Henri Lefebvre argues, in architecture, urban planning and design, access to land and resources, and in the everyday choreography of movement and social interaction. Throughout the semester, we will grapple with spatial concepts such as “the color line,” “the ghetto,” “Chinatown,” “Little Italy,” and “the border,” and the cognitive work that these various concepts do. Looking at a range of sources – histories, novels, films, and music – we will examine the different ways in which scholars have tried to map and make sense of the geography of race and ethnicity in the United States and the Americas more broadly, and how we navigate landscapes of power and difference as well.

Readings

PLEASE BRING ALL READINGS TO CLASS. The failure to bring readings to class will result in deductions from your participation grade.

- Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2007), ISBN: 9780143114253.
- Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), ISBN: 9780520226296.
- Pietro di Donato, *Christ in Concrete* (New York: Penguin Press, 1993 [1939]), ISBN: 9780451214218.
- Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), ISBN: 9780520266414.
- Junot Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (New York: Penguin Press, 2007), ISBN: 9781594483295.

In addition to the above books, there are also individual chapters and articles that have been posted as .pdf files on the course's SAKAI site, under the heading "Resources" (the readings appear on the syllabus followed by a *). **You are required to bring a copy of these readings to class for the week they have been assigned.**

Grading Summary

- *Final Seminar Paper – 25%*
- *Seminar Paper First Draft – 10%*
- *Seminar Paper Abstract and Bibliography – 5%*
- *Seminar Paper Peer Review – 5%*
- *Discussion Questions and Response Papers – 25%*
- *Class Participation – 20%*
- *In-Class Presentation – 10%*

Grading Scale:

92-100=A; 87-91=B+; 81-86=B; 77-80=C+; 70-76=C; 60-69=D; 0-59=F

Note: there are no minus grades at Rutgers.

Response Papers

Students will be divided into two groups, A & B, and will alternate writing response papers and posting discussion questions for class each week. Both response papers and discussion questions need to be posted in the discussion section of our class's SAKAI site by 10AM on Wednesday.

Response papers should be approximately 400 words in length. Your response papers should highlight the readings' main arguments, the evidence the author uses, and your own personal assessment of the author's successes and/or failures in getting across her or his main point. During the weeks where we are reading the novels *Christ in Concrete* and *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, your response papers should present an argument about the novel, and use evidence from the text to support the points you want to make.

Discussion questions should provide at least three questions per student, with the aim of facilitating classroom discussion. Use the questions to highlight issues, problems, or connections to other texts that emerge from the readings.

Attendance / In-Class Policies

This is a discussion seminar. **Students are expected to attend all classes.** Attendance and participation are crucial to your success in the course. You are allowed one absence for any reason whatsoever; each subsequent absence will result in a 3-point deduction from the grade on your final seminar paper and will lower your participation grade as well. If you continually turn up late to class, you will be marked absent.

If you have to miss class due to sickness or an emergency, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

All cell phones and hand-held devices must be turned off. **NO TEXTING** – if I catch you texting, you will be counted as absent that class.

NO COMPUTERS ARE ALLOWED IN THE SEMINAR. I have found time and time again that computers distract from discussions, and provide too many temptations in terms of email, web-surfing, and so on.

Unexcused late assignments will receive a deduction.

Important Dates

2/1 – Abstract and Annotated Bibliography for Seminar Paper Due

3/21 – First Draft of Seminar Paper Due

4/4 – Peer Reviews Due

4/25 – In-Class Presentation

4/30 – Final Seminar Paper Due

Departmental Learning Goals Met By Course

Students will be able to understand key concepts pertaining to the study of racial and ethnic landscapes. We will use an interdisciplinary methodology and lens to interpret and analyze how different American spatial formations are created, governed, and contested. Students will explore history, politics, literature, and arts in the Americas as spatial concepts. Students will endeavor to write concisely, speak articulately, and think critically and creatively.

Additional Learning Goals Met By Course

The Junior Seminar will focus on providing students with preliminary training in analytical and methodological skills necessary to pursue a research project in American Studies. As a result, we will devote special attention to learning how to identify and frame engaging and significant problems, locate sources, interpret and deploy evidence, draw from useful analytical and methodological approaches, develop persuasive narrative strategies, revisit and sharpen our ideas through the writing of multiple drafts, and critique each others' work in a constructive and mutually supportive environment.

Academic Policies

Please review the following policies. Should a situation arise where a violation occurs, it will be assumed that you were aware of this information and its ramifications.

Special Accommodation Requests

All special accommodation requests must be brought to my attention the first two weeks. Full disability policies and procedures are at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html>

Academic Integrity Policy

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>

Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.

Honor Pledge

I pledge on my honor that I will adhere to all aspects of the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy

Take an interactive tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

<http://sccweb.scc-net.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/Intro.html>

Consult Don't Plagiarize: Document Your Research! For tips about how to take notes so you don't plagiarize by accident.

http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib_instruct/instruct_document.shtml

Class Schedule

Week 1: January 18, 2012 - Introduction: The Cultural Production of Space

Week 2: January 25, 2012 – Spatial Inclusions and Exclusions, Part One

Discussion Questions: Group A

Response Papers: Group B

- Gaston Bachelard, “The Dialectics of Outside and Inside,” in *The Poetics of Space* (Beacon Press, 1994), 211-31.*
- Dolores Hayden, “Invisible Angelenos,” in *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (MIT Press, 1997), 82-96.*
- Mike Davis, “Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space,” in *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (Hill and Wang, 1992), 154-80.*

Week 3: February 1, 2012 – The Geography of Race and Labor

Discussion Questions: Group B

Response Papers: Group A

- Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, Introduction through chapter 5

Week 4: February 8, 2012

Discussion Questions: Group A

Response Papers: Group B

- Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, chapter 6 to conclusion

Week 5: February 15, 2012 – Colonized Spaces

Discussion Questions: Group B

Response Papers: Group A

- Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides*, introduction through chapter 4

Week 6: February 22, 2012

Discussion Questions: Group A

Response Papers: Group B

- Shah, *Contagious Divides*, chapter 5 to conclusion

Week 7: February 29, 2012 – Spatial Inclusions and Exclusions, Part Two

Discussion Questions: Group B

Response Papers: Group A

- Matthew Jacobson, "The Immigrant's Bootstraps, and Other Fables" in *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Harvard University Press, 2006), 177-205.*
- Laura Briggs, "Making 'American' Families: Transnational Adoption and U.S. Latin America Policy," in *Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Duke University Press, 2006), 344-65.*
- Tram Nguyen, "Becoming Suspects: Brooklyn and New Jersey," in *We Are All Suspects Now: Untold Stories from Immigrant Communities after 9/11* (Beacon Press, 2005), 1-19.*

Week 8: March 7, 2012 – Narrating the Immigrant Landscape

Discussion Questions: Group A

Response Papers: Group B

- Pietro di Donato, *Christ in Concrete* (entire book)

Week 9: No Class, Spring Break

Week 10: March 21, 2012 – Enforcing Borders

Discussion Questions: Group B

Response Papers: Group A

- Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *La Migra* (entire book)

Week 11: March 28, 2012 – Interpreting Indigenous Landscapes

Discussion Questions: Group A

Response Papers: Group B

- Ben McGrath, “Strangers on the Mountain,” *New Yorker*, March 1, 2010.*

In-Class Film: *Smoke Signals*, dir. Chris Eyre, 1998

Week 12: April 4, 2012 – The Political Economy of Space

Discussion Questions: Group B

Response Papers: Group A

- Joseph Heathcott and Máire Agnes Murphy, “Corridors of Flight, Zones of Renewal: Industry, Planning, and Policy in the Making of Metropolitan St. Louis, 1940-1980,” *Journal of Urban History* 31 (2005): 151-189.*

In-Class Film: *Sunshine State*, dir. John Sayles, 2002

Week 13: April 11, 2012 – Identity and Belonging in a Global Context

Discussion Questions: Group A

Response Papers: Group B

- Junot Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, 1 - 165

Week 14: April 18, 2012

Discussion Questions: Group B

Response Papers: Group A

- Díaz, 166 - conclusion

Week 15: April 25, 2012 – In-Class Presentations; Conclusions