Course Overview

This course interrogates the foundational role of race in the development of modern technologies and media theory. Moving across different periods and media formations, we will address how race as a social category and cultural fantasy has been materialized through specific film technologies, representational norms, and institutional networks. At the same time, we will also look at a range of films and television shows that challenge protocols for constituting race as an object of knowledge and control. Focusing on North American media, this course will include films, television shows, and artworks by Oscar Micheaux, Cheryl Dunye, Barry Jenkins, and Alex Rivera, among others; consider stars like Sessue Hayakawa, Anna May Wong, and Janet Jackson; and will explore issues ranging from the racial bias built into visual technologies, digital surveillance, race and digital cinematography, and the role of media technologies in organizing resistance movements. Throughout the course, we will situate the imbrication of race and audiovisual culture in its wider cultural contexts, such as the histories of capitalism, the Civil Rights movement, and questions of gender and sexuality.

Grading

1) Midterm (20 percent)
2) Class Participation, including brief precis (15 percent)
   a. You will be responsible for briefly presenting one of the readings to the class and submit a 1.5-2 page double spaced summary/synthesis of the text.
3) 8-10 page paper (25 percent)
4) Final Presentation (10 percent)
5) Final (20)
6) Brightspace Response (10)

Required Readings
- James Baldwin, The Devil Finds Work (Vintage International)
- All other assigned essays will be available online through Brightspace

Midterm
You will be asked to respond to particular film clips based on the readings and in-class discussion and answer one essay question (out of two choices)

Paper and Presentation
You may develop a paper on any topic related to issues we will explore in class and through the readings. At the end of the semester, each student will give a 10 minute presentation of their research.

Please be advised that the screenings on occasion contain representations of violence or sexually explicit material. If you do not wish to work on this material, this course may not be for you. I am more than happy to discuss any concerns prior to taking this class.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: The Epidermal Schema

Tuesday, January 7
Introduction

Thursday, January 9 – The Epidermal Schema
Frantz Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness”

Screening: Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask: The Life and Work of Philosopher Frantz Fanon (Isaac Julien, 1995)

Week 2: Cinematic Movement and the Materialization of Race/Archive Fever

Tuesday, January 14
Elspreth Brown, “Racialising the Virile Body: Eadweard Muybridge’s Locomotion
Studies 1883–1887
Alyson Nadia Field, No Blackface… just #Blacklove
https://domitor.org/no-blackface-just-blacklove/

Thursday, January 16
Michael B. Gillespie, Intro to Film Blackness

**Screening: The Watermelon Woman** (Cheryl Dunye, 1997) (Available on Kanopy)

**Week 3: Race as/and Early Cinema, Afterlife of the Race Film**

**Tuesday, January 21 – The Race Film and The Public Sphere**
Jacqueline Stewart, “We Were Never Immigrants” from *Migrating to the Movies*

**Thursday, January 23 –**
Jane Gaines, extract *Fire and Desire: Mixed Raced Movies in the Silent Era*

**Screening: Within Our Gates** (Oscar Micheaux, 1920)

**Week 4 – Ornamentalism/Orientalism**

**Tuesday, January 28 – Orientalism and Objecthood**
Daisuke Miyao, extract from *Sessue Hayakawa*

**Thursday, January 30 – Ornamentalism**
Anne Cheng, “Ornamentalism”
“Asian Male Sexuality, the Money-Phallus, and Why Asian Americans Need to Stop Calling *Crazy Rich Asians* the Asian Black Panther”

**Screening: Crazy Rich Asians** (Jon M. Chu, 2018)

**Week 5 – Whiteness**

**Tuesday, February 4 - Whiteness and Lighting**
Richard Dyer, extract from *White: Essays on Race and Culture*

**Thursday, February 7 – Projection and Identification**
Homay King, extract from *Lost in Translation*

**Screening: Shanghai Express** (Josef Von Sternberg, 1932)

**Week 6 – Color and Film**

**Tuesday, February 11 – Film Color and Race**
Rosalind Galt, extract from *Pretty: Film and the Decorative Image*
Shari Roberts, “The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat”
Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez, extract from *Creating Carmen Miranda*

**Thursday, February 13 – Racial Melodrama**
Laura Mulvey, “Imitation of Life: New Forms of Spectatorship”

**Screening:** *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959)
*Life of Imitation* (Ming Wong, 2009)

**Week 7 - Animation**
**Tuesday, February 18 –**
Sianne Ngai, “Animatedness”

**Thursday, February 20 -**
Nicholas Salmon from *Birth of an Industry*

**Screening:** *The PJs* (S1, E2 and S1, E4)

**WEEK 8**
**Tuesday, February 25 –**
Review

**Thursday, February 27 –**
midterm

**SPRING BREAK!!!!!**

**Week 10 – Race and New Media**
**Tuesday, March 10**
Simone Browne, “B@anding Blackness: Biometric Technology and the Surveillance of Blackness” extract from *Dark Matter*

**Thursday, March 12**
Lisa Nakamura, extract from *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet*

**Screenings:**
*It’s in the Game* (Sondra Perry, 2017)
*The Matrix* (Lana and Lilly Wachowski, 1999)

**Week 11 – Spatial and Temporal Borders**
**Tuesday, March 17**
Maria Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, "'No Country for Old Mexicans': The Collision of Empires on the Texas Frontier."

**Thursday, March 19**
“Alex Rivera interview with Malcolm Harris,” *The New Inquiry* [https://thenewinquiry.com/border-control/](https://thenewinquiry.com/border-control/)
China Medel, “The Ghost in the Machine: The Biopolitics of Memory in Alex Rivera’s *Sleep Dealer*”

Screening: *Sleep Dealer* (Alex Rivera, 2008)

**Week 12**
**Baldwin and Spectatorship**

**Tuesday, March 24 – Race as Affect**
James Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work*

**Thursday, March 26 – Masks for Mascs, Networked Intimacy**
Extract from Patricia White, *Uninvited*
Extract from José Esteban Munoz, *Disidenfictions*

Screening: *I Am Not Your Negro* (Raoul Peck, 2016)

**Week 13**
**Race and the Digital Image (Television)**

**Tuesday, March 31 – Shirley Cards**

Lorna Roth, “Looking at Shirley, the Ultimate Norm: Colour Balance, Image Technologies, and Cognitive Equity”

**Thursday, April 2 –**


Michael Gillespie, Kristen Warner, Rebecca A. Wanzo, and Jonathan W. Gray “Thinking about Watchmen: A Roundtable”

Screening: *Watchmen*
“*It’s Summer and We’re Running Out of Ice*” (S1, E1)
“*This Extraordinary Being*” (S1, E6)
Week 14
Race and the Digital Image (Cinema and the Visual Arts)

Tuesday, April 7 – The Digital Epidermis
Alessandra Raengo, extract from *On the sleeve of the Visual*
Jared Sexton, extract from *Black Masculinity and the Cinema of Policing*

Thursday, April 9 – Motherhood and the Acoustic
Rizvana Bradley, “Vestiges of Motherhood: The Maternal Function in Recent Black Cinema”
Kevin Quashie, extract from *The Sovereignty of Quiet*

Screening: *Moonlight* (Barry Jenkins, 2016)

Week 15

Tuesday, April 14
Presentations

Thursday, April 16
Presentations