

Technology, Capitalism & Race – MS073

TR 9:35-10:50 in Q116 (West Hall)

Professor Kouross Esmaeli

Office Hours *T 1:30-3:30 or by appointment*

This is a lecture and discussion-based class geared towards giving student the historical and theoretical tools to understand our contemporary society's continued reproduction of racial identity and ideologies. The texts in the class survey 1- the theoretical literature on the (re)production of class under a capitalist system 2- the historical literature on the racialization of the working class in the United States under industrial and post-industrial production and 3- the literature on the nature of capitalist production in the contemporary mediated world of digital technology. In the end, the students are expected to synthesize these three strands into a critical discussion of contemporary reproduction of racial identities.

Course Materials Required Text:

All course material will be posted on Sakai, or found through the H-M Library Website

Course Work and Evaluation:

Attendance – 10%

Participation – 20%

Quizzes (2) – 10%

Midterm Exam - 20%

Final Exam – 20%

Summary of weekly reading & taking class notes – 20%

Attendance & Participation:

You are expected to be on time to class. Late arrivals are discouraged. Three (3) late arrivals will count as an unexcused absence.

Two (2) unexcused absences will lower your overall course grade by 5%

Three (3) unexcused absences will lower your overall course grade by 10%

Missing more than five (5) classes will result in an F and I will ask you to withdraw from the class

If you have a legitimate excuse to miss class or be late, you need to share that with me BEFORE class. The only reason for you to miss class without telling me is in the case of an emergency for which you need a note from doctor, dean, or advisor.

This is a class divided equally between lectures and interactive discussion. The quality of the discussion rests squarely on your preparation. The readings are relatively short because I want you to read them and have an understanding of them before class. Because your active participation in discussion is the cornerstone of the class, you should come prepared to ask questions and to air your thoughts. Being prepared for class includes how carefully you have read and thought about the readings, and how often you ask and answer questions and make relevant comments. Since class discussion and activities will call for reference to reading material, you are required to bring printouts or digital copies of all assigned readings to class. Do not read the texts on your mobile device as they are not allowed in class.

Midterm & Final Exams

The midterm will be administered during class time and will be a combination of short and long response questions. Final Exam will be either on the last day of class or during the exam period after the end of semester... we will decide together which makes sense for our class.

Please be advised that no late work will be accepted, and no exam will be rescheduled without a preceding agreement with me. Delayed due dates will be rare, authorized only under truly justified circumstances such as special needs and documented emergencies.

Summary of Readings and taking class notes

You are expected to sign up to do a summary of readings and to take class notes during ONE week of the semester. You are welcome to sign up in pairs and share the work together or you can take on the task on your own during the week when there is only one class. There will be a sign-up sheet for you to choose the week that you will be completing this assignment. For the week that you have chosen, you will send me a summary of the readings on Monday before our class which will be posted on Sakai for other students to view. You will also be responsible for taking notes during class time which will also be posted on Sakai for other students to reference and use. Taking notes during class means you are expected to help clarify the main ideas of the readings for the rest of the class. On this week, you are expected to lead the class in asking questions.

Grade Appeals

Grade appeals are an important part of your experience in this class. If you feel like my grading of your quizzes, exams or final paper does not reflect the quality of your work, or if I have misunderstood parts of your arguments, or if there is any other kind of imbalance between your writing and my grading, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO SPEAK TO ME. I welcome the opportunity to meet with you and speak with you and understand your perspective and to explain mine. Only good things will come out of such interactions.

Special Circumstances, Considerations, Needs:

If you have any special circumstances, consideration or needs that you feel will either affect your ability to complete assignments or participate in recitation discussions, please let me know as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Providing documentation is critical to processing special requests. I will help facilitate your requests to the best of my abilities. In most cases, special circumstances, considerations and needs should be facilitated through the Pitzer Academic Support Services (info below).

Student Resources:

Students with physical or learning disabilities are encouraged to read about their rights and responsibilities and register with Pitzer Academic Support Services (<https://www.pitzer.edu/student-life/academic-support-services/forms/>). You are under no requirement to share your disability with me but I encourage you to do so after you register the PASS office, especially if you need extra time for assignments and exams.

Every student should be using the resources at the Writing Center (<https://www.pitzer.edu/writing-center/>) and to drop by their offices at 131 Mead, to use their help and resources in improving your writing habits and writing skills.

Covid Considerations:

During this semester, I ask that we all remain mindful of our own health and of broader community health. Pitzer College has adopted a number of policies for faculty, staff, and students in line with public health guidance; these policies are in place to keep us all safe and healthy. All Pitzer students are expected to adhere to College [COVID policies](#).

In addition, and for this class, I expect that all of us will remain masked at all times, and even if we meet outdoors or engage in class-related activities or trips. I also ask that any student who is experiencing COVID symptoms, who has been placed in any form of quarantine, or who believes that they have been exposed to COVID-19 please refrain from attending class until they receive clearance from Student Health Services. I will work with students who are unable to attend class on accommodations so that they can keep up with coursework. Students should contact Pitzer Academic Support Services ([PASS](#)) for more information on accommodations. Students from other Colleges should seek accommodations through the Office of Student Affairs on their respective campus.

PZ: <https://www.pitzer.edu/pathway-forward/covid-19-symptoms-protocol-support/>

SC: <https://www.scrippscollege.edu/scripps-strong/for-students/>

PO: <https://www.pomona.edu/return-to-campus/public-health-guidelines>

HMC: <https://www.hmc.edu/covid-19/>

CMC: <https://cmc-returns21.cmc.edu/>

Miscellaneous:

As in all of your courses, good faith, respect and trust are crucial to enabling class discussion. The ideas and concepts we'll be discussing may challenge or conflict with our commonly held beliefs and perspectives. Such challenges should not be construed as value judgments nor should anything discussed in class be construed as a personal offense. Our goal (and that of the college more generally) is to get us thinking critically about the things we often take for granted and to enable us to support our beliefs intelligently and thoughtfully. If you experience any discomfort with material discussed in class, please talk with me directly, and we'll work together to resolve the situation effectively.

READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS & SCHEDULES

Key Texts (available through the Claremont Libraries Website or on Sakai):

-Ruha Benjamin, *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*
<https://ccl.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1091294625>

-Simone Browne, *Dark Matters*
<https://ccl.on.worldcat.org/oclc/895338023>

-W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America*
<https://ccl.on.worldcat.org/oclc/24847840>

-Fredrick Engels, *Condition of the Working Class in England*
<https://ccl.on.worldcat.org/oclc/70748291>

-Cristian Fuchs, *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age*
<https://ccl.on.worldcat.org/oclc/4586758341>

-Karl Marx, *Capital, V. 1*, International Publishers/Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1967

-Dorothy Roberts, *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-Create Race in the Twenty-First Century*
<https://ccl.on.worldcat.org/v2/oclc/656451607>

-Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*
<https://ccl.on.worldcat.org/oclc/62153886>

-Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*
<https://ccl.on.worldcat.org/oclc/936362488>

	Week & Date	Theme	Readings - Viewings - Assignments
	W1 T8/30		-Introductions -Discussion of the syllabus -Discuss: "Capitalism"
	R 9/1	What is Capitalism:	-Marx, V. 1, <i>Ch. I</i> , Sections 1-4, "Commodities" concentrate on pp. 35-46 & 71-83 <i>Key terms:</i> Commodity (Use value & Exchange value) Labor Fetishism of Commodities
	W2 T 9/6	What is Capitalism 2	-Marx, V. 1, Ch. XXVI & XXVII "The So-Called Primitive Accumulation" (713-733) [SKIM THIS TO GET THE GENERAL IDEA OF "PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION"]

				-Marx, V. 1, Ch. XXXI Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist (750-760) <i>Key terms:</i> Enclosure, Primitive Accumulation, imperialism
		R 9/8	Racial Capitalism - 1	-Robinson, <i>Black Marxism</i> , pp.26-32, 206-209, 346-357 -Marable, "Introduction: Inequality and the Burden of Capitalist Democracy: A Point of View on Black History" in <i>How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America</i>
		W3 T 9/13	Racial Capitalism - 2	-DuBois, <i>Black Reconstruction in America</i> Ch. 1. "The Black Worker" pp. 1-13 (skim) Ch. 2 "The White Worker" pp. 14-27 (skim) Ch. 16 "Back Towards Slavery" pp. 599-631(READ)
		R 9/15	Defining Race Today	-Bonilla-Silva, "Rethinking Racism" -Bonacich et al, "The Racialization of Global Labor"
		W4 T 9/20	Technology & Capital	-Heilbroner, "Technology & Capitalism"
		R 9/22	Technology & Modernity	-Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" in <i>The Whale & the Reactor</i> -McLuhan, "Automation" in <i>Understanding Media</i> (only pp. 346-358 on the PDF)
		W5 T 9/27	20 th C. Racial Capitalism	-Nakamura, "Indigenous Circuits"
		R 9/29	Contempor ary Capitalism	-Harvey, <i>Condition of Postmodernity</i> , part II, pp. 121-197
		W6 T 10/4	Neoliberalis m	-Friedman, Ch. 7 in <i>Capitalism & Freedom</i> , "Capitalism and Discrimination" -Johnson, et al., "Introduction", <i>Race in the Marketplace: Crossing Critical Boundaries</i>
		R 10/6		MIDTERM REVIEW

		W7 T 10/11		MIDTERM IN CLASS
		R 10/13	Ideology	-Barbrook & Cameron, "Californian Ideology" -Watch Zizek on ideology: "They Live" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVwKjGbz60k
		W8 T 10/18		NO CLASS
		R 10/20	New enclosures	-James Boyle, "The Second Enclosure Movement and the Construction of the Public Domain" concentrate on part I, pp. 33-52
		W9 T 10/25	Society of Control	-Deleuze, "Postscript on Societies of Control" -Cheney-Lippold, John. "A new algorithmic identity: Soft biopolitics and the modulation of control." <i>Theory, Culture & Society</i> 28, no. 6 (2011): 164-181
		R 10/27	Racelessness as Virtual Utopia	-Wendy Chun, Control & Freedom, Ch. 3 "Scenes of Empowerment" -Watch: MCI's Advertisement: "Anthem" http://www.criticalcommons.org/Members/JLipshin/clips/Anthem.mp4/view
		W10 T 11/1	Digital Epidermalization	-Noble, Safiya Umoja. "Google search: Hyper-visibility as a means of rendering black women and girls invisible." <i>InVisible Culture</i> 19 (2013). Olla, "Are AI-powered virtual rappers just a strange new form of blackface?" https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/sep/01/are-ai-powered-virtual-rappers-just-a-strange-new-form-of-blackface?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other -Cottam, "Where Platform Capitalism & Racial Capitalism Meet"
		R 11/3	Asian-ness as Identity	-Kim, "Racial Triangulations" -Nakamura, "'Alllooksame?': Mediating Asian American Visual Cultures on the Web"

		W11 T 11/8	Algorithmic Policing [Samson]	<p>-Benjamin, Ruha, <i>Captivating Technology</i>, "Introduction"</p> <p>-Wang, <i>Carceral Capitalism</i>, Ch. 4</p> <p>- Balko, <i>Rise of the warrior Cop</i>, Ch. 3, access at: https://ccl.on.worldcat.org/oclc/811598826</p> <p>- Ferguson, <i>Policing Predictive Policing</i>. [concentrate on 1123-1144]</p>
		R 11/10	Surveillance as extraction	-Zuboff, <i>Age of Surveillance Capitalism</i> , Introduction
		W12 T 11/15	Souveillance	-Browne, <i>Dark Matters</i> , "Introduction and other Dark Matters"
		R 11/17	Contemporary US racial politics	<p>-Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, <i>From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation</i>, Ch. 7</p> <p>-Smith, "Black Feminism and Intersectionality"</p>
		W13 T 11/22 [Remote?]	What is Identity Politics?	-Taiwo, "Elite Capture"
				THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY BREAK
		W 14 T 11/29	Afro-futurism & -pessimism	<p>-Wilderson, <i>Afropessimism Reader</i>, Ch. 1 "Blacks and Master/Slave Relation"</p> <p>- <i>Watch: Sorry to Bother You</i>, Boots Riley, 2018</p>
		R 12/1	Our DNA	-Roberts, Ch. 9 "Race and the New Biocitizen" and "Conclusion: The Crossroads" in <i>Fatal Invention</i> [also skim Ch. 10 "Tracing Racial Roots]
		W 15 T 12/6	Immigration, Race & Technology	<p>-Delara, "Race, Algorithms and the work of border enforcement."</p> <p>Understanding the phenomenon of migration and labor: NAFTA</p> <p>- What is NAFTA: https://nacla.org/news/2014/4/8/mexican-workers-continental-crucible</p>

			<p>- NAFTA's effects on labor & migration: https://nacla.org/article/displaced-people-nafta%E2%80%99s-most-important-product</p> <p>- NAFTA's effects on Mexican labor: https://nacla.org/news/2019/10/03/maquiladores-exploitation-migrants-border</p> <p>- NAFTA's effects on US immigration policies: https://nacla.org/news/2014/4/10/immigrant-labor-immigrant-rights</p> <p>- <i>Watch: Sleep Dealer</i>, Alex Rivera, 2008</p>
		R 12/8	<p>Various concluding readings [no discussants]</p> <p>Hanna and Brennan, "Big Tech Public Ownership Surveillance Capitalism and Platform Corporations", Jacobin, December 2020</p> <p>And choose one of the following:</p> <p>-Roberts, <i>Fatal Invention</i>, ch. 11 "<i>Genetic Surveillance</i>"</p> <p>or</p> <p>-Tawil-Souri, "Digital Occupation of Gaza"</p> <p>or</p> <p>-Terranova, "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy"</p>