POLITICAL SCIENCE 353
WOMEN’S STUDIES 353
Identity Politics in the US
Section XX
Course date & time, Course Location
Fall 20XX Syllabus

Name: Dr. Jennifer Ring
Office: Mack Social Science #227
Office Hours: Tuesdays after class and by appointment.
Email: jring@unr.edu
Webcampus: https://wcl.unr.edu
Department Website: www.unr.edu/cla/polisci

Course Description:

A course about cultural pluralism in the American democracy. Rather than the usual approach to diversity in the United States through race, class and ethnicity, this course will explore our multicultural heritage through the lens of what we have in common: a history of displacement, loss of home, and loss of a language. These issues have impacted American emotional life because of our history of slavery, immigration, and the colonization of native Americans. Loss of home and language is more than loss of a physical place: people can feel homeless from the isolation that accompanies any sort of “otherness,” as, for example, being female in a “male” world, identifying as LGBT in a hetero-normative world, being the “wrong” religion in a Christian nation. By focusing on the common traumas that accompany both physical and emotional displacement, the hope is that issues such as race, ethnicity, religion and class will become more accessible, able to be discussed without the usual defensiveness that inhibits productive conversation.

The course emphasizes student discussion, with readings, films and assignments structured to facilitate conversation. Student input will be responsible for the specific construction of assignments, with credit for attendance weighing heavily. Showing up is required and rewarded as we embark on a study of the most challenging subjects that have plagued American society from its inception. It’s not all trauma, though: knowing who we are is also the basis for strength, joy, humor, and a sense of well-being.

This class does not have any prerequisite or co-requisite requirements.
Required Texts and Course Materials:

There are four required books and three optional books. Additional required readings are on e-reserve at the Knowledge Center. The three optional books are available for the final assignment, which requires that a student choose a book to focus on and make a presentation to the class as part of a student panel on the particular book. This final assignment will be run like a professional conference. (I'll explain as the time approaches). Note that extracts from some of the optional readings have been placed on e-reserve, while the entire book has also been made available for purchase. This is because the class as a whole will read a portion of the book, while only some of the students will choose to read the entire book.

Required Books:

Optional Books:
- Bell hooks, *Where We Stand: Class Matters* (This book has been ordered for students who may want to focus on economic class in more depth. Only the first two chapters have been duplicated for the entire class, and placed on electronic reserve at the Knowledge Center.)
- David Treuer’s book *Rez Life* has been listed as required, because we will all read a segment of it together that was too large to duplicate. However, it is one of the “optional” books that students may choose to focus on for their final project.
- Toni Morrison’s *Home* is required reading for the entire class, and may also be used for the final paper, read with Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. 
• Danzy Senna’s *Caucasia* may be used for a final project, and/or combined with either of the other two novels: *Home* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

**Materials on Electronic Reserve at The Knowledge Center:**

• Hannah Arendt:
  o “We Refugees”
  o “‘What Remains? The Language Remains’: A Conversation with Gunter Gaus”

• Alberto Rios:

• Bell hooks, *Where We Stand: Class Matters*, pp. 1-38


Additional required readings noted in the syllabus will be available via WebCT ([https://wcl.unr.edu](https://wcl.unr.edu)) AND/OR All books are available at the UNR Bookstore.

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:**

Students will develop a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate attentiveness to and analysis of diversity and equity. This is achieved through the themes of home, place, and language as they apply to displaced peoples (immigrations, banishment, segregated housing, removal). This is true of all peoples who have come to North America, including the Native Americans who were already here. It has applied most violently and destructively to people of color. Recognition of gender difference within this context is also part of the learning experience.

This is achieved and assessed through the various writing components of this course.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

• Identify the complex elements important to members of diverse American groups in relation to its/their history, values, and politics
• Select an apply appropriate methods of inquiry to analyze complex questions about cultural difference and/or equity

• Articulate an awareness of some of the central historical and present diversity issues addressed in the course, including race, ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, sexual identity, ability, national origin, or other identities

• Analyze and interpret information about cultural differences, cultural rules, and cultural biases in their own society or about non-dominant or marginalized groups

• Analyze ways in which the history of cultural groups in the United States differ and how such differences position them in relation to one another

• Articulate ways in which social identities such as race, class, and gender intersect in order to influence individual life experiences and/or perspectives

• Integrate, synthesize, and apply knowledge of other cultures in both focused and broad interdisciplinary contexts.

Class Policies and Procedures:

• Students with disabilities: Please see me to make appropriate accommodations. Please refer to disability services section below for more information.

• Zero tolerance for plagiarism or cheating. All written words must be your own. Using the internet, previously published, or another student’s words instead of your own will result in failing the assignment, which is tantamount to failing the class. Please see the academic dishonesty section below.

• No open laptops in class unless you require one to take notes and request permission to use it. You will be asked to sit at the front of the class if you’re required a laptop for notes. No phones, no texting, no tweeting, no facebook, no earbuds during class time.

Description of Assignments:

Three major assignments are required in this class, in addition to other requirements:

• The first and second assignments will be group presentations based on selected chapters from Takaki, A Different Mirror. Students may choose to submit a written midterm paper on one of the presentations, but must present orally on at least one chapter.
• The final assignment requires that each student choose one additional book to focus on from the optional books, to present to the class during the last three weeks of the semester. The book chosen by the student will be used as a vehicle to discuss the themes of the course: home, place, language and their relation to race, class, ethnicity, identity. This presentations will be organized like a professional academic conference, with panels of presenters, each making a short individual presentation, and time for response and discussion.

• A third ongoing assignment is to participate in class discussions. Participation is 10% of the grade.

• There will be three required “response papers.” These will be ungraded, but required, and will contribute to your participation grade. They will be very short (1-2 page) reactions to readings, films, class discussion, or even something in the news that directly relates to what we have been reading and viewing. The goal is to focus your thoughts on a given reading assignment, class discussion, or theme currently being studied.

• Attendance is 30% of the grade: one point for each class attended throughout the semester. Please notify me if you are ill: don’t come to class if you will risk getting the rest of us sick. I will make allowances for an occasional illness.

**Grading Criteria:**

The breakdown of your grade is based on the following:

- Attendance: 30%
- Midterm Assignments: 30% (15% each)
- Final Assignment: 30%
- Class participation, including reading responses: 10%

All grading will be on a 0-100 scale. The following correspond to the approximate letter grades in my class:

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Late assignments will be graded down 1/3 of a letter grade for a maximum of a week late.
Course Calendar / Topics and Readings:

PART I: INTRODUCTION: IMMIGRATION, LANGUAGE AND CLASS

Week 1
Introduction, including a standpoint exercise about identity.

Reading: e-reserve, Hannah Arendt, “We Refugees,” and “What Remains? The Language Remains”

Film: “What’s Race Got to Do With It?”

Week 2
Loss of language, Being a refugee, What makes a home?
Discussion of the Arendt articles and Rios poems.

From e-reserve: Alberto Rios, from The Smallest Muscle in the Human Body: “Day of the Refugios,” “A Simple Thing to Know” and “Holding My Shirts.”

From e-reserve: bell hooks, Where We Stand: Class Matters, chapter 1, “Making the Personal Political”

*****Response Paper 1 *****

PART II: KIDNAPPED, DISPLACED, EXILED, SILENCED
American history from the standpoint of displaced peoples.

Week 3
The Construction of Race and Removal of Place

Takaki, pp. 3-97, chpts 1-4, Slavery and Indian Removal check pages
Film: The History of Racism (BBC)
Class Discussion

Week 4
Students will choose to read one of the following chapters and prepare a presentation to facilitate class discussion. All students will read the Rodriguez chapter on e-reserve (from Mongrels, Bastards, Orphans and Vagabonds).

Takaki, chapters 6,7,8, pp. 131-205
Irish, Mexicans, Chinese, the closing of the American Frontier.

Rodriguez, chapter 1, pp. 1-32
Weeks 5 & 6
Native Americans
Takaki, pp. 209-231
Native Americans

Truer, Rez Life, pp. 1-110
Film: Reel Indians

*****Response Paper 2 *****

Weeks 7 & 8
Students will choose one of the following groups and prepare a presentation to facilitate class discussion. All students will read Rodriguez chapter on e-reserve.
Takaki, chapters 10, 11, 12, 13, pp. 232-335
Japanese, Jews, Mexicans, Blacks

Rodriguez, chapter 4, pp. 80-97

PART III: WHAT RACE MEANS
How the concept of race was constructed, how it continues to affect the way we look at each other.

Weeks 9 & 10
Haney Lopez, White By Law Chapters 1, 2, pp. 1-34, and 4, 5, 6, pp. 56-138
Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich, Color-blind Racism


***** Response Paper 3 *****

PART IV: WHAT IS HOME?
A novel and a film: Is home a physical place, a state of mind, a loved one?

Toni Morrison, Home

Film: Banished

PART V: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS
Weeks 13-16
Your choice: Read one of the following books completely…
• Danzy Senna, *Caucasia*
• David Treuer, *Rez Life*
• Gregory Rodriguez, *Mongrels, Bastards, Orphans and Vagabonds*

…and make a presentation to the class about Home, Race, Ethnicity, Class, Language as revealed to you in the book you read. Specifics of this assignment, which will be modeled after a professional academic conference, will be explained in class.

**Academic Dishonesty:**

Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses" constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student’s enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment. For more details, see the University of Nevada, Reno General Catalog and the Office of Student Conduct ([http://www.unr.edu/student-conduct/policies/university-policies-and-guidelines/academic-standards/policy](http://www.unr.edu/student-conduct/policies/university-policies-and-guidelines/academic-standards/policy))

**Disability Services:**

Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me and the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations. You can refer to the Disability Resource Center website at [http://www.unr.edu/drc](http://www.unr.edu/drc).

**Academic Success Services:**

Your student fees cover usage of the Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring-center) and University Writing Center (784-6030 or http://www.unr.edu/writing-center). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.

**Audio and Video Recording:**

Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may have been given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.