Faculty of Human, Social and Political Sciences
HSPS PART II B Tripos
Part II 2023-24

SOC11: Racism, ‘Race’ and Ethnicity

Course Organiser
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Lecturers
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Supervisors
The paper has a large group of supervisors available to supervise all topics of this paper. You will receive a link by email to a document with a list of this year’s topics and available supervisors. You will also be able to find a link to this document in Moodle. Please use this document to allocate yourself to an appropriate supervisor. If you find yourself with no options or availability or if there is any other problem do get in touch with Dr R Sánchez-Rivera (rs871@cam.ac.uk) who is supporting with supervisor’s allocation, or the course organiser, Dr Scarlet Harris (sh2232@cam.ac.uk). You should aim to do this in the first two weeks of the paper if not earlier.

Outline of the Paper

Aims and Objectives

• To introduce the key theoretical debates and analytical approaches to the study of racism, ‘race’ and ethnicity.
• To develop a critical understanding of the historical development and transformations of forms of racism and processes of racialization alongside ideas of ‘race’ and ethnicity.
• To provide knowledge and understanding of the racial and ethnic divisions that are prevalent in Britain and beyond.
• To develop an understanding of the interplay between key cultural, social and political forces and the rise of racism, racialization, ethnic division and violence.
• To develop key intellectual and analytical skills in exploring issues of racism, ‘race’, and ethnicity in different areas of the world and with reference to their intersection with gender and class.
**Brief description of the paper**

This paper explores the emergence of contemporary forms of racism, modern notions of ‘race’ and ethnicity and the social and political forces that have shaped them. A critical approach to the understanding of ‘race’ will be developed and you will be encouraged to assess the social implications of contemporary practices of racism and persistent racial and racist ideas. As well as examining theoretical approaches to notions of ‘race’, the module will explore empirical analyses of the impact of racism in contemporary society. Key questions will include: How are racial ideas conceptualized and justified through a variety of biological, social and cultural discourses? How did ‘race’ and ethnicity come to be defined and embedded in the context of colonial and post-colonial rule? What are the, often complex, relations between ideas of ‘race’, the production of difference and identity, and the pervasiveness of social exclusion? Why does ‘race’ remain such a powerful determinant of individual and collective identities? Why and how does ‘race’ and ethnicity matter?

**Mode of teaching**

The course is taught by means of 12 two-hour lectures, 6 supervisions and 2 revision sessions. Lectures are central to this paper and students are strongly advised to attend all of them. Students are advised to write at least four short essays over the year addressing the supervision questions listed in this paper guide. Students will be expected to produce a minimum of 4 essays instead of being required to write 6 essays. While still holding the stipulated 6 supervisions, individual supervisors can decide to use some supervision sessions to read and discuss an article, ask students to present on a topic, or find other ways to address the topic in ways that are stimulating and provide a learning experience for students. The reading lists and supervision topics below are meant to provide guidance for students and supervisors. Students are not expected to cover all of the topics, but to make a balanced selection in consultation with their supervisors.

**Mode of assessment**

The paper will be examined by a three-hour paper at the end of the year. Students taking the examination must answer three questions from an undivided paper.
The paper is taught in 2-hour lecture blocks throughout 13 weeks.

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<th>Michaelmas (6 Lectures: Weeks 1-7 - no lecture week 6)</th>
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<td>30 Jan 2024 8. White Hegemony and the Black middle Classes (TAA)</td>
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<td>6 Feb 2024 9. ‘Race’ and the lure of beauty (ALF)</td>
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<th>Easter - revision session</th>
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| 13 Feb 2024 10. Decolonising Sociology (tbc) |
| 20 Feb 2024 11. The Aesthetics of Anti-racism (SN) |
| 27 Feb 2024 12. Abolition and Anti-racism (SH) |

| 30 April 2024 13. Revision session (all lecturers) |
Outline of topics and reading lists (Michaelmas)

1. Racial capitalism and the making of ‘race’ (SH)

After an introduction to the course, this lecture offers an overview of the intimate relationship between the making of ‘race’, racism and the development of capitalism as a global system. We will address the centrality of colonialism and transatlantic slavery to the development of capitalism, as well as more contemporary analyses of what has come to be known as ‘racial capitalism’ and its multiple articulations.

Essential readings


Additional readings

Hall, S. (2020) ‘Race, the floating signifier: what more is there to say about ‘race’?’ in S. Hall, R. W. Gilmore, and P. Gilroy (eds.) Selected Writings on Race and Difference (Duke University Press)
Supervision questions

- What role did transatlantic slavery play in the development of racial capitalism?
- What role does racialisation play in how racial capitalism functions today?
- How does racial capitalism as an analytic framework speak to questions of resistance?

2. The Science Fiction of ‘Race’ (RSR)

This lecture will explore the nineteenth and early-twentieth century project of racial understanding that developed into what is called now “scientific racism”. This involves forms of racial measurement (i.e. anthropometrics) and taxonomy. Here, we will examine how historically specific ideas of “race” became “scientific truths”. We will also examine the legacies and contemporary implications of having the “respectability” and “objectivity” of science behind racist beliefs.

Essential readings


[https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501727481-005](https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501727481-005)

Stern, A. 2005. Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America, 
University of California Press, Berkeley. (Introduction)

Turda, M & Gillette, A. 2014. Latin Eugenics in Comparative Perspective, Bloomsbury: 
London and New York. (Introduction and Chapter 6: Eugenics in Interwar Latin America)

### Additional Readings

and the United States Between the World Wars, Cambridge: Cambridge University 
Press. (Introduction)

York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press). (Introduction and Conclusion) SOC11 / 
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(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press). (Introduction)

Mottier, V. and N. Gerodetti (2007), ‘Eugenics and Social Democracy: Or, How the 
European Left Tried to Eliminate the ‘Weeds’ From Its National Gardens’, New 
Formations, 20, pp.35-49.

Fund. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press).

Reproductive Justice. Chicago: Haymarket (Chapter 1: Women of Color and their 
Struggle for Reproductive Justice and Chapter 6: Native American Women Resist 
Genocide and Organize for Reproductive Rights)

Routledge, pp 37-52.

(Introduction and chapters 1 to 3)

### Supervision questions

- What are the ableist or gendered consequences of scientific racism?
- Why is eugenics so important to the history of scientific racism?
- How do different acts of resistance against mainstream scientific racism set the bases 
for post-racialism after the 1960s?

### 3. Legacies of Scientific Racism: Eugenics Racial Projects, Assimilation 
& Segregation (RSR)

This lecture will explore the legacies of what we know now as scientific racism, during the 
second-half of the twentieth and twenty-first century. It will examine how these seemingly or 
assumed scientific truths slip in contemporary academic, cultural, social, and nationalistic 
understandings of science, medicine, and politics.
Essential readings


Additional readings


Hering Torres et al. (eds) (2013) Race and Blood in the Iberian World. Lit Verlag


Supervision questions

- Why is it important to talk about the legacies of scientific racism? (Mention two relevant examples)
- What is the link between scientific racism and contemporary forms of segregation practices?

4. Problematising Whiteness (SH)

When and how did whiteness emerge? What role does whiteness play in society today? This lecture takes a broad historical view to critically assess the development of whiteness in the making of ‘race’, racial capitalism, and attendant identities. We will consider the social, political and historical contingency of whiteness as well its relationship to questions of class and gender.

Essential readings


Additional readings


Ware, V. (1992) *Beyond the pale: white women, racism and history*. London: Verso

Supervision questions
• How have various scholars theorised the ‘wages of whiteness’?
• How does an analysis of whiteness contribute to our understanding of ‘race’ and racism?
• To what extent does whiteness structure contemporary society?

5. Antisemitism: exploring anti-Jewish hatred through the lenses of race and racism (JH)

This lecture will explore the concept of antisemitism from historical, empirical and a range of political perspectives. A series of giant leaps through the last two millennia will offer an historical overview of the emergence of the tropes and stereotypes that sustain anti-Jewish racism - opposition and hostility to Jews as Jews - in contemporary society. Modern notions of ‘race’ will be examined through the lens of ‘blood and soil’, the twin nineteenth century concepts of biological race and nationalism, and the emergence of the term ‘anti-Semitism’ in the 1870s. The lecture will introduce a series of recent empirical studies that have attempted to transform the sociological study of antisemitism and challenge the domination of historical studies within the field. Finally, the lecture will discuss the controversial and highly contested role of the Israel-Palestine conflict in shaping our understanding of contemporary antisemitism.

**Essential readings**


[https://archive.jpr.org.uk/object-uk450](https://archive.jpr.org.uk/object-uk450)

[**NB. All of the materials above and many of those below are available online.**]

**Additional readings**


¹ Please note that this reading reproduces some antisemitic tropes and ideas, including references to ‘Jewish power’ and ‘Jewish money’. Please engage with this text from a critical perspective and with this in mind.


**Supervision questions**

- How can antisemitism be understood through sociological concepts of race and racism?
- How have empirical studies of antisemitism shaped our conceptualisation of anti-Jewish hatred and discrimination?
- The line separating legitimate criticism of the state of Israel from antisemitism is highly contested. How might we balance our right to protest and our protection of Jewish communities? Answer with reference to empirical examples.

**6. Orientalism, Islamophobia and the ‘War on Terror’ (SH)**

In this lecture, we build on Edward Said’s influential concept of Orientalism to examine Islamophobia in the context of the ‘war on terror’. We will critically interrogate Islamophobia’s relationship to ‘race’, racism and processes of racialisation. In particular, we will consider the role of gender in constructing notions of Muslim difference and ‘threat’ in different global contexts.

**Essential readings**

Reflections on Cultural Relativism and its Others” American Anthropologist. 104(3): 783-790


Additional readings


Supervision questions

- How has the reproduction of Muslim difference changed over time?
- Why might Islamophobia be difficult to identify as a form of racism?
In what ways is gender central to the functioning of contemporary Islamophobia?

Outline of topics and reading lists (Lent)

7. Critical race theory: from legal studies to illegality (TAA)

In this lecture we will examine critical race theory and assess its usefulness in analysing contemporary US society. We will question what is theoretical about critical race theory, and whether its focus on post-racialism means that it is outdated – or in need of revision – in Trumpamerica. We will also question the US-centricity of critical race theory, and whether – as a theoretical paradigm – it can be deployed elsewhere.

Essential readings


Additional readings


Supervision questions

- Is critical race theory US-centric?
- Consider the possibilities of a global critical race theory.
- Is critical race theory a social theory?
- Critically assess the relation between early critical race theory in legal studies with its more recent iterations.
8. White Hegemony and the Black middle Classes (TAA)

This lecture will analyse race and class by focusing on the Black middle classes in a comparative perspective. We will discuss how dominant middle class identity, cultural practices, and cultural membership, are all expressions of hegemonic whiteness (even in countries where Whites are not a majority demographic group). We will then consider Black middle class strategies used to respond to this ongoing structural racism.

Essential Readings


Additional readings


**Supervision questions**

- What is the relationship between whiteness and Black middle class identities?
- To what extent can we understand middle class spaces as ‘white spaces’?
- Does strategic assimilation offer a convincing account of Black middle class identity?

9. ‘Race’ and the Lure of Beauty (ALF)

In this lecture, we will explore how ‘race’ is often considered to be ‘marked’ on the body in the form of physical characteristics. We will focus on the relationship between parameters of beauty, appearance, physical features, and racialised perceptions of skin colour. We will reflect on beauty and its impact and materialisation in the labour market, the lived experience of multiple sexualities and gendered bodies located in different geographical areas where the skin is both witness and bearer of history.

**Note:** some bibliography can be downloaded on Moodle.

**Essential readings:**


Additional readings:


Videoconferences:


Films and TV Shows:


Supervision questions:

- Why does beauty matter to the study of racism?
- How do concerns with femininity and masculinity relate to racism?
- How are gendered processes of beauty work interlocked with the racialisation of bodies? Discuss with reference to specific case studies.
To what extent are sexuality and nation key to understanding the relationship between beauty and race?

10. Decolonising Sociology (tbc)

This topic will explore the ‘decolonial imperative’, and its applicability in sociology. We will look at the importance of epistemic, temporal, and spatial links in decolonial thought, as well as the larger struggle for cognitive justice against the colonial matrix of power.

Essential readings


Additional Readings


https://doi.org/10.1177/07352751221106199

Itzigsohn, J. (2023) On Decolonizing Sociology. TRANSILVANIA. Available at: https://revistatransilvania.ro/on-decolonizing-sociology/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=on-decolonizing-sociology


Newfield, C. J. and Meranze, M. Remaking the University, available at: http://uotherescue.blogspot.com


Supervision questions

- What does it mean to ‘decolonize’ sociology?
- To what extent does the decolonial option transform the sociological imagination?
- Can universities in the Global North ‘delink’?

11. The Aesthetics of Anti-Racism (SN)

This topic will encourage students to conduct original research into anti-racist aesthetics, the ties between aesthetics and activism, and the role of cultural production in anti-racist struggle. The lecture will focus mainly on music, using case studies ranging from the role of music in the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa to rap music in France and the UK in the 2010s, but the aim will be to equip students with critical tools to analyse the links between anti-racism and other forms of cultural production (film & TV shows, visual arts, literature, etc.) as well.

Essential readings and resources


http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.cttttv5w (choose one chapter to your own discretion)


Additional readings and resources


Supervision questions

• “Far from needing theory’s help, music today is already more conceptual than at any point this century, pregnant with thought probes waiting to be activated, switched on, misused” (Eshun (1998), -003). Discuss with reference to two case studies.

• To what extent can cultural production be considered social theory?

• Using at least two case studies, critically discuss the mobilisation of anti-racist aesthetics in popular culture?
12. Abolition and Anti-racism (SH)

In this lecture we will explore the historical and contemporary uses of abolition as a concept and praxis, asking what abolitionist accounts offer for thinking through questions of racism and resistance. We will begin by focusing on the development of the US prison abolition movement, its theorising of the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) and its radical vision for a world without prisons, police and borders. We will take an expansive and intersectional approach, addressing feminist and queer abolitions, and reflecting on how an abolitionist framework emphasises not only the dismantling of racist systems, but the (re)making of new ways of relating to ourselves and each other.

Essential readings


Additional readings

Bradley, G. M. and de Noronha, L. (2022) “Border Abolition and the Struggle Against Capitalism” Soundings, 82: 47-60 https://doi.org/10.3898/SOUN.82.03.2022
Perry, K. H. (2022) “Black Futures Not Yet Lost: Imagining Black British Abolitionism” The South Atlantic Quarterly, 121(3): 541-560

Supervision questions

- What can an abolitionist perspective tell us about ‘race’ and racisms?
- Critically discuss W.E.B Du Bois’ concept of ‘abolition democracy’ and its contribution to movements for police and prison abolition.
- What would an intersectional approach to police/prison abolition look like?