Theme Seminar
RACE AND NATION IN THE AMERICAS

This course will examine the formation of racial, ethnic and national identities in different American contexts in the modern era. We will begin with broad synthetic approaches to the history of racial discourses and their sociopolitical uses in the formation of modern nations, empires, and market economies. In this course, I want to look at the plural Americas as a collection of postcolonial, modernizing societies trying to come to terms with the stark legacies of colonialism and slavery—namely, large (often, unruly) popular cultures of Africans, Indians, and all variety of *mestizos* and *mamelucos*. We will see how concepts of race and ethnicity got constructed in particular historical moments of national flux and need, and how racial-cultural discourses infiltrated and shaped specific forms of power, social reform, and domains of knowledge and identity.

The scholarly literature on race and ethnicity in western (and specifically, North and Latin American) societies is sprawling, so we can only sample a few historical approaches and draw limited comparisons. The aim is to identity some of the prominent questions, themes, and approaches in the historical literature that can be brought to bear on your own specific research interests and case studies.

**Course Requirements.**
The usual: show up for every class with a smile, lots of notes (or at least, some critical questions) on the assigned readings, and an eagerness to wade knee-deep into the class discussion. 😊

Writing and seminar leading: 1) a short essay (5-6 pages) on questions derived from the early readings and discussions, due on October 6th. 2) Starting on week 4, a joint seminar presentation/discussion on the week’s case study, to be organized with me the week before your session is due. 3) A final paper (12-15 pages) in which you pursue your own research interests. This paper should be based on both primary and secondary sources (and, in fact, may be based almost entirely on secondary literature, if it is sufficiently rich and available for your specific historical case or problem). Make sure the topic, question, or debate is well defined and the argument well supported by the appropriate sort of (primary/secondary) evidence. I would like to have a one-page paper topic statement and bibliography on Oct. 13th. Plan to circulate a draft of your final paper on the Monday or Tuesday before your paper presentation is due in class, during the final two weeks of the course. Finished drafts are due on Tuesday, December 13th.

**Required Books:**


There is also a packet of articles available, marked by the sign, ***.

**Course Schedule.**

**Week 1.** Sept. 1. Introductions. Race and the writing of History.

**Week 2.** Sept. 8. Historicizing race and culture in the post-Enlightenment West.


Complementary readings:

**Week 3.** Sept. 15. Historicizing race and culture concepts in Latin America.


Complementary readings:

**Week 4.** Sept. 15. Republicanism, Labor, and Racial Formation in the post-abolition US.

Complementary readings:

**Week 5.** Sept. 22. Slavery, nationalism, and the myth of racial democracy in Brazil.


Complementary readings:

**Week 6.** Popular insurgency, race, and nationalism in Cuba.


Complementary readings:

**Week 7.** Oct. 6. Papers due by 4 pm, please. No class discussion held.

**Week 8.** Oct. 13. Yom Kippur. No classes, but tentative research topic statement is due this week.

**Week 9.** Oct. 20. Visual languages of race and gender in Peru.

Complementary readings:
Blanca Muratorio, ed., *Imágenes e imagineros. Representaciones de los indígenas ecuatorianos, siglos XIX-XX.*

**Week 10.** Oct. 27. National Varieties and Uses of official mestizaje.

José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race. La raza cósmica.* Excerpts.***
Dario Euraque, “The Banana Enclave, Nationalism, and Mestizaje in Honduras, 1910s-1930s,” *ibid.*, 151-168.***

Complementary readings:

**Week 11.** Nov. 3. Race, Gender, and Sexuality: comparative politics of ‘good breeding.’


Complementary readings:
**Week 12.** Nov. 10. Race, Hegemony, and Social Movements: revisiting the racial democracy myth and plotting the politics of blackness in Brazil.


Complementary readings:
Omi and Winart, *Racial Formation in the US, from the 1960 to 1990s.*

**Week 13.** Nov. 17. Readings and class discussion to Be Announced.

**Week 14.** Nov. 24. Thanksgiving. No classes.

**Weeks 15 and 16.** December 1 and 8. Final research papers circulated on the Monday or Tuesday before class, and presented/discussed in class.

**Final research paper due: December 13th.**