

Racial and Ethnic Relations/SOCY 240
Course Syllabus
Prof. Tricarico

Course description (from catalogue)

SOCY240 is a study of racial and ethnic groups with emphasis on American society. Focuses on (a) nature of racial and ethnic differentiation; (b) assimilation, pluralism, and stratification as outcomes of intergroup contact; (c) the status of racial and ethnic groups in the economy, and the related issue of socioeconomic mobility; (d) the role of racial and ethnic groups in the political system.

General Education objectives addressed by the course

- communicate effectively through reading, writing, listening and speaking
- use historical or social sciences perspectives to examine formation of ideas, human behavior, social institutions, or social processes

Course objectives/expected student learning outcomes

- 1 Students will demonstrate an understanding of theories and concepts in the field of racial and ethnic relations
- 2 Students will demonstrate an understanding of the public discourse about race and ethnicity in contemporary society and in the local community.
- 3 Students will demonstrate an understanding of racial and ethnic relations in light of the central process of assimilation.

Student Learning Outcomes

- 1 a. Students will recognize principal social scientific theories of race and ethnicity.
b. Students will understand the key concepts of race and ethnicity.
- 2 a. Students will identify current issues in contemporary racial and ethnic relations.
b. Students will evaluate these issues in light of sociological theory.
- 3 a. Students will view racial and ethnic relations in American society and on the local level in the context of processes of assimilation.
b. Students will examine the possibility of ethnic change including “new ethnicities” as an outcome of assimilation.

Instructional Strategies

The course utilizes a mix of instructional methods. New material will be introduced in lectures complemented by a variety of textual resources including video and the Internet; readings assigned outside of class reinforce topics. Lecture topics are geared to *research projects* whereby questions can be investigated using sociological research methods like observation and interviews.

The course relies on a perspective that emphasizes *the social construction of ethnicity and race* in a historical context. While racial and ethnic identities are not natural phenomena, they have consequences for identity, culture, and the relations of groups and individuals. This perspective is represented by the course text: Ethnicity and Race by S. Cornell and D. Hartmann which is in the 2d edition (2007) although the 1st edition is acceptable and can be purchased online at a considerable saving. It is supplemented by readings and other material available through the QCC Library's electronic resources and the Internet (see below). Reading is essential for a higher level of understanding and must be incorporated into written submissions for a maximum grade. An expanding list of supplementary resources – newspaper and magazine articles, video, and web sites – should also be consulted (see below). Regular class meetings are in M126 which is a “Smart Room” equipped with Internet capability. This allows access to the Internet for instructional purposes.

Student Evaluation

Research projects that result in written reports are the basis for a course grade. *Four research projects* are assigned which correspond to the topics in the course outline. Projects are graded for an understanding of class discussions and the course text. This puts a premium on *notetaking* and *reading*. Lectures are referenced to the required text and supplementary sources identified on this syllabus. This makes it incumbent on students to *take representative notes in class*. Note taking creates a personal *student text* that complements the assigned text. Class notes are not available online so that students can more closely attend to *the class conversation*. In this writing-intensive class, writing (in longhand) is integral to how learning happens.

A first draft will be presented in class in a seminar format. Class presentations are intended to underscore key teaching points. In this writing-intensive class, students have the opportunity to revise this in-class presentation and submit a second draft within one week.

Grades on the four written reports are 80% of the course assessment. The remaining 20% of the course grade is reserved for class participation. The latter component is measured by a commensurate level of engagement including *contributions to the whole group learning experience* featuring oral presentations of the first draft of research projects. Because you have to be *in class* to participate, attendance has an impact on this grade. A grade for class participation also incorporates disruptive, off-task behavior. This includes persistent lateness. In particular, there is no role in the *class conversation* for

personal technology, especially phones and texting that connects you to a conversation outside of class. Last but not least, a class participation grade presupposes respect for others, including classmates, and the fundamental project of this class: furthering objective, fact-based knowledge about a subject that evokes a strong emotional response.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

As stated in the current college catalog, any student who needs specific accommodations based upon the impact of a disability should register with the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to be eligible for accommodations which are determined on an individual basis. The SSD office is located in the Science Building, room S132 (718-631-6257). Students should also contact their instructor privately to discuss their specific needs.

Academic Integrity Policy

The Department of Social Sciences Academic Integrity Policy adheres to the standards described in the Academic Integrity Policy of Queensborough Community College. Within the framework of the college policy sanctions for violations of academic integrity are left to the discretion of the instructor. Students may appeal sanctions to the department chair who will refer the appeal to a departmental Committee on Academic Integrity for review.

Attendance

Following college policy, students are allowed 6 hours of unaccounted absence. Absences and persistent lateness have consequences for a class participation grade.

Contact

Office Hours: TBA in M121
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Topic Outline

- Why and how does ethnicity and race matter in American society? A historical overview.

Read: Chapter 1 (Cornell and Hartmann)

Supplementary Sources:

Alon, S., "When Race is Left at the College Door" NYT (12.16.15).

Auguste, Evan, "Choosing Sides; The Struggle to Exist as a Multi-Ethnic American" (see my college website)

Blackhawk, Ned. "Remember the Sand Creek Massacre". NYT (11/28/14).

Brooks, D., “Danger of a Dominant Identity”, NYT (11.18.16).
 Friedersdorf, Conor. “The NYPD Officers Who See Racial Bias in the NYPD”. The Atlantic (1.7.15).
 Harris. E.A., “School Segregation Persists in Gentrifying Areas”, NYT (12.16.15).
 Yankah, Ekow N. “When Addiction Has a White Face”. NYT (2.9.16).
 Zhang, Sarah. “Will the Alt-Right Peddle a New Kind of Racist Genetics?”, The Atlantic (12.29.16).

- Sociological definitions of ethnicity and race
 - a) Ethnicity as a belief in shared ancestry
 - b) Race as biology and a social category
 - c) Similarities of ethnicity and race

Read: Chapter 2,3

Supplementary Sources:

Appiah, Kwame Anthony, “The Ethicist: Can I Call My Nonbiological Twins Black Because My Husband Is?”, NYT (1.31.16).
 Diamond, J. “Race Without Color”. Discover (November 1994), 82-89.
 Dreifus, Claudia, “Perceptions of Race at a Glance”, NYT (1.6.15).
 Sussman, R.W., “There Is No Such Thing As Race”, Newsweek, 11.8.14.

- A theoretical perspective
 - a) A social constructionist approach to ethnicity and race
 - b) Ethnicity and race as asserted and assigned identities
 - c) Ethnicity and race as categories within a society

Read: Chapter 4

Supplementary Sources:

Eligon, R. “An Indelible Black-and-White Line”, NYT (8.9.15)
 Johnson, K. et al, “At Center of Storm, a Defiant ‘I Identify as Black’”, NYT (6.17.15). [Rachel Dolezal]
 Katz, J.M., “In Exile”, NYT (1.17.16) [Haitians in the D.R.]

- Finding ethnicity and race in everyday life. Construction sites for transacting ethnic Identity: family, peer group, dating and mate selection, residential location.

Read: Chapters 5, 6, 7

Supplementary Sources:

Adams, Michael Henry, "The End of Black Harlem", NYT (5.27.16)

Tricarico, Donald 1984a. The Italians of Greenwich Village. Staten Island: Center for Migration Studies <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cms3.2010.23.issue-1/issuetoc>

_____. 1984b. "The 'New' Italian American Ethnicity" in The Journal of Ethnic Studies (Spring)

_____. 1991. "Guido: Fashioning an Italian American Youth Subculture" in The Journal of Ethnic Studies (Spring):41-66. [See my QCC web site]

_____. 2001. "Read All About It! Representations of Italian Americans in the Print Media in Response to the Bensonhurst Racial Killing" in Notable Selections in Race and Ethnicity, edited by A.A. Aguirre and D.V. Baker: 291-319. [See my QCC web site]

_____. 2008. "Dressing Italian Americans for the Spectacle: What Difference Does Guido Perform?", The Men's Fashion Reader, edited by A. Reilly and S. Cosbey, New York: Fairchild:265-278.

_____. 2010. "Narrating Guido: Contested Meanings of an Italian American Youth Subculture" in W.J. Connell and F. Gardarpe, eds., Anti-Italianism: Essays on Prejudice (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 163-199.

_____. 2011. "Bellas and Fellas in Cyberspace: Mobilizing Italian Ethnicity for Online Youth Culture", Italian American Review (Winter).
<http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/calandra/italian-american-review-winter-2011-volume-1-number-1>

_____. 2014. "Consuming Italian Americans: Invoking Ethnicity in the Buying and Selling of Guido" in Making Italian America, edited by Simone Cinotto, New York: Fordham University Press, 178-195.

_____. 2011 "Not the Usual Ethnic Subjects: The Significance of Guido for Italian American Studies" *Presidential Lecture*, QCC (March 30)
<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL14EB878BDECF14A7>

- Imprinting ethnicity and race in American culture.

Read: Chapters 5, 6, 7

Supplementary Sources:

Alvarez, L. “Modern Miami Casts Covetous Eye on ‘Cuban Plymouth Rock’”, NYT (12.24.15).
Gonzalez, D. “Cultural Insight Beyond the Music”, NYT (12.30.15).
Gordiner, Jeff, “Beyond Labels: A New Generation of African American Chefs is Fusing History and Innovation”, NYT (1.27.16).
Patterson, O. “The Secret of Jamaica’s Runners”, NYT (8.14.16)
Questlove, “Mo’ Money, Mo’ Problems: How Hip Hop Failed Black America, Part II” Vulture (4.29.14).

- Framing Ethnic Identity in Mainstream Mass Media

Read: Chapters 5, 6, 7

Supplementary Sources:

Buckley, C. “In Actors’ Walkout, Anger Over Stereotypes”. NYT (5/5/15).
Castle, S. and R. Mackey, “Fox News Beats a Retreat After Gaffes About Islam”, NYT (1/13/15).
Ryzik, Melena “Can Television Be Fair to Muslims?”, NYT (12.4.16).
Scott, A.O. “Young, Geeky and Black” (film review), NYT (6.18.15).
Scott, A.O., “Diversity Lessons From a School of Fish”, NYT (6.17.16)
Stavans, I. “The Rolled R’s of Vanessa Ruiz”, NYT (9.17.15).
Terry, Bryant. “The Problem With ‘Thug Cuisine’”, CNN (10.14.14).

- Assimilation
 - a) Definition, historical context, and major theoretical approaches
 - b) Dimensions and stages of assimilation: process and sequence
 - c) Partial and Segmented assimilation: Race and Class
 - d) New ethnicities (e.g., Latinos, Desi, Asian Americans)

Read: Chapters 3 and 8

Supplementary Sources:

Duneier, Mitchell. Ghetto. Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2016.
Lee, Felicia. “A Real Postracial America”. NYT (8.12.14).
Portes, A. and Min Zhou. “The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants”. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 530 (November 1993):74-97.
Semple, K. “Muslim Youths in U.S. Feel Strain of Suspicion” NYT (12.15.15).

Smale, Alison. "Flooded With Migrants, Germany Strides to Integrate Them". NYT (4.28.16).

Thompson, Derek. "Donald Trump and the Twilight of White America", The Atlantic (5.13.16).

Video Used in Class

- 1) "Farmingville" (DVD, Youtube)
- 2) "Race: The Power of an Illusion" (Youtube), Parts 1 and 3
- 3) "Rachel Dolezal Breaks Her Silence: 'I Identify as Black'", Today Show interview, 6.16.15 (Youtube)
- 4) "African American Lives" (Gates), I and II (PBS/Youtube)
- 5) "Finding Your Roots: Decoding Our Past" (Gates), PBS, 11.25.14
- 6) "The Amish of Ohio" (Youtube)
- 7) "Italian Americans: Our Contributions" (Youtube)
- 8) "Little White Lie", PBS, 3.23.15
- 9) "A Parent's Role in Cultivating Healthy Black Kids", Lacey Schwartz The Atlantic, 4.16.15
- 10) "Intersections: Southern Boulevard, The Bronx" (NYT Video)
- 11) "The Fab Five" (ESPN/Youtube)
- 12) "Magic and Bird" (ESPN/Youtube)
- 13) "A Short History of the Blues" and "Nothing But the Blues – Part 1" (Youtube)
- 14) "My American Girls" (DVD)
- 15) "Segregation Now", Nicole Hannah (NYT video, posted 4/16/14)
- 16) "Zoot Suit Riot" (Youtube)

Web Sites

www.understandingrace.org (American Anthropological Assn.)

WRITING PROJECTS

Project 1: Definitions

Use Cornell and Hartmann in Chapters 2 to 4 to discuss the core concepts of ethnicity and race. Enlist class discussion including support materials notably. Address the following points:

- What definition of ethnicity has the most merit for the authors and which is represented in the text?
- What gives ethnicity a “primordial” quality that separates it from other social identities? [See especially pages 48 to 56.]
- Reference the Diamond article and the video “Race: Not Biological” to support the authors’ position that “race” is not a natural or biological category. What do they mean by race as a “social” concept? Reference the Rachel Dolezal case (see “Supplementary Readings”) for insights into the use of cultural as well as physical differences in *making claims* about racial identity.
- In the view of the authors, how do race and ethnicity overlap? How are they different?

Project 2: Finding Ethnicity in Everyday “Constructions Sites”

Ethnic identity is a consciousness of a shared ancestry. It is referenced to nationality, religion, and race. Keep in mind that “new ethnicities” emerge like Latino, West Indian or Caribbean, white, and Asian.

As Cornell and Hartmann point out, ethnicity is *constructed in specific social sites*. This project is intended to find ethnicity in the most immediate social relationships. These are the relationships that provide the individual with a primary emotional connection as well as social grounding - group memberships that have practical consequences (i.e., promote material interests). Examine or *de-construct* the following relationships in order to find ethnicity:

- The nuclear family and relatives (e.g., grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins)
 - Friends and the peer group
 - Dating and marriage partners
 - The neighborhood community
1. What does Cornell and Hartmann mean by *the social construction of ethnicity*?
 2. How is ethnicity constructed in these *social sites*? Consider the role of ethnicity a) as a credential of affiliation or social boundary; b) as a source of cultural content (i.e., a script referenced to a heritage like a linguistic style or cuisine), and; c) claims of invidious status (i.e., that one group is “better” than or superior to another in things that matter).

3. How is ethnicity constructed when boundaries are crossed? For example, when dating or marrying across ethnic lines or when neighborhoods experience ethnic succession.
4. Does boundary crossing result in the construction of a “new ethnicity” (e.g., Latino, Caribbean, Desi) in any of these sites? What accounts for this ethnic identity change? How does this represent a change in ethnic identity from an older, (e.g., parents or grandparents) generation?

Project 3: Choose 1 of the Following:

(1) Ethnic Groups and American Institutions

How has a specific ethnic group imprinted on some area of American life? Here are some suggestions:

- Blacks: popular music, church music, popular dance, sports like basketball and football, youth culture “cool”, organized crime
- Italian Americans: pizzerias, sanitation, popular music, organized crime
- Irish Americans: police and fire (NYC), Catholic religious vocations, organized crime
- Greek Americans: restaurants, organized crime
- Albanian Americans: pizzerias, organized crime
- Jamaicans: nursing, track (sprints), organized crime
- Jews: Hollywood, the law, accounting, organized crime

- 1) What historical circumstances shaped entry into this area? Consider the *types of “capital”* brought into the situation (e.g., cultural heritage) and the *structure of opportunity* in the larger society.
- 2) Is the group over-represented in membership numbers?
- 3) Does the group or group members exert disproportionate power or enjoy privilege?
- 4) Has the group’s culture been imparted to the institution?

(2) Framing Ethnic Identity in the Mass Media

For this project, you will investigate the framing of ethnic group identity in the mass media. You will focus on a single case reported in media outlets like the press (print media) or a TV show.

1. Identify the media text (e.g., The BET Hip Hop Awards Show, Jersey Shore, Ebony).

2. What themes construct ethnicity? Use the perspective developed in class which relies on the work of Cornell and Hartmann. In particular, what identities were invoked? For example, were the principals defined by race or nationality or some new ethnicity (e.g., Latino, Desi)? Also, what did these identities *mean*? Here, pay attention to prominent themes or motifs like “criminality” assigned to Italian Americans by Hollywood.
3. To what extent are these media representations ethnic *stereotypes*?
4. Is there *a pattern* of mass media stereotypes for this ethnic group (i.e., found in other texts and perhaps widely accepted)?
5. Why do you think these perspectives are used to tell the story? Is there a media agenda or ideology?

Project 4: Assimilation

1. What is assimilation? Why is it important for the host society and for the immigrant population?
2. Choose a family household that is *within 2 generations* of emigrating to the U.S. (i.e., the oldest members can be born here of immigrant parents). Ask the following questions: Where did they come from? [be as specific as possible] Why did they leave? When did they arrive? What determined where they settled? Did they arrive as a family or in a “chain”?
3. Use *interviews* and *observation* to determine the course of assimilation. What is the commitment to assimilation for individuals and the family as a whole? What is their *assimilation strategy*? What are the assimilation strategies of individual members? In considering individual differences, pay attention to *age* and *generation*.
4. How much assimilation is taking place for individuals and the family as a group? Assess *relative amounts* for major *types or stages of assimilation*: a) *cultural* (including educational), b) *social* (including residential), and c) *marital*.
5. Are individual members and the family as a group preserving their ethnic heritage?
6. Is there evidence of a “new” ethnicity (e.g., Latinos, Desi, Chicano) that impacts on assimilation?
7. How typical is this family’s experience for the ancestry group in the city or metropolitan region? Note and explain any discrepancies.