

University of Florida  
Department of History and African American Studies  
Spring 2017

**AFA 3930/AMH 3931: Blackness in the Post-Civil Rights Era**

Dr. Lauren Pearlman

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T/R: 4/4-5 (10:40-11:30/10:40-12:35)

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or by appointment

**Course Description**

During the 2008 presidential campaign, you could not turn on the television without hearing the term “post-racial”—a far cry from the century before, when the great cultural critic W.E.B. Du Bois wrote that “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line.” This course will examine how racial ideology informs contemporary debates about American culture, politics, and social life by reading political writing about race that has appeared in the post-Civil Rights era. The goal of this course is not to trace the history of these texts but to explore in what ways public policy advocates, journalists, academics, filmmakers, and legal analysts write about race as a feature of American life. We will consider the complex question of racial identity and explore how writing and reading about race can both reflect and challenge racial categories, hierarchies, and perceptions.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Learn about debates over race since the Civil Rights Movement.
2. Grapple with some of the major themes about contemporary African American life, including class and gender dynamics, while forging connections between the issues at hand and the ways that they are articulated and re-articulated in different mediums.
3. Learn how to think across a number of disciplines, participate in a learning collective, and communicate important, difficult topics to a broad audience.
4. Talk more informatively about racial formations, race relations, and the significance of the phrase “post-racial.”

**Required Readings**

We will read a variety of books, articles, and primary documents. There are three (3) required texts available for purchase at the UF Bookstore or from an online retailer. Note: Amazon.com offers competitive pricing on many of these books, including the option to rent books and purchase used copies. If you decide to purchase your books online, please make sure that you purchase the correct edition and that you allow enough time for shipping. In addition to these books, there will be various readings, images, and other primary documents available online via Canvas, the course e-learning site, at <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>. These are required readings and will form the basis of many assignments. Whether you print them out as hard copy or not is up to you, but please be sure that you can access them in time for class.

- BEVERLY DANIEL TATUM, WHY ARE ALL THE BLACK KIDS SITTING TOGETHER IN THE CAFETERIA: AND OTHER CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE

- JONATHAN KOZOL, SAVAGE INEQUALITIES: CHILDREN IN AMERICA'S SCHOOLS
- MARC LAMONT HILL, NOBODY: CASUALTIES OF AMERICA'S WAR ON THE VULNERABLE, FROM FERGUSON TO FLINT AND BEYOND

### Required Podcasts and Film Screenings

Podcasts and films are a crucial component of this class. There are five (5) required podcasts and six (6) required films of varying lengths. All podcasts and screenings will be played during class time. If you miss one, you are responsible for making it up on your own time. Note: there will be writing assignments associated with the podcasts and screenings and they are considered fair material on which to be tested.

#### Films

*White People* (40mins)  
*ESPN 30x30* (TBA)  
 Beyoncé, *Lemonade*  
*Precious* (1hr49mins)  
*Crash* (1hr52mins)  
*When the Levees Broke* (selections)

#### Podcasts

Code Switch, "Content Notice"  
 This American Life, "The Problem We All Live With, Part One"  
 This American Life, "The Problem We All Live With, Part Two"  
 This American Life, "Cops See it Differently, Part One"  
 This American Life, "Cops See it Differently, Part Two"

### Course Assignments:

- This is an upper-level course. As such, this class requires a serious commitment of time and energy. Please have your syllabus on hand and be sure to keep up with all of the reading and writing deadlines.
- **Readings:** Each week, you will be assigned roughly 100 pages of reading. You are expected to read all of the assigned readings before class and arrive in class with questions, comments, and opinions about what you have read. Make sure to allow enough time in your schedule to read thoroughly and critically.
- **Quizzes:** There will be six (6) quizzes given during the semester. I reserve the right to let you know when they will be administered (or not!). These quizzes will be short and will be on the day's reading. Quizzes will be graded on a 20-point scale, and you may drop your lowest score.
- **Reflections:** You are required to write a five hundred (500) word reflection on five of the films and podcasts we view/listen to in class. These will be due at the beginning of the class following the viewing/listening unless otherwise noted. Reflections will be graded on a 20-point scale.
- **Opinion Piece:** You are required to research a "hot topic" issue through newspaper articles and online blog posts, construct a reading list of 4-6 links that reveal different sides of the issue, and then write a five hundred (500) word opinion piece about it. The issue must be current (having occurred in the past year) and must address a debate about race as a feature of American life. You are responsible for choosing an issue on which to write. You will also present on the controversy in class. Further instructions regarding



**Essays:** Generally speaking, I will look for the following in your papers:

1. Analysis. Does the paper make a convincing and coherent argument?
2. Evidence. Is the argument well supported by evidence? Is evidence used effectively?
3. Organization. Is the paper structured in logical way?
4. Content and originality. Does the paper make an original contribution or insight? Does the author's own opinion and voice come through?
5. Mechanics and style. Is the paper free of spelling and grammar errors? Is it clearly written?

### **Attendance and Assignment Policies**

- Attendance is required, expected, and central to your learning experience. Attendance is taken in a few ways including: roll call, sign-up sheets, quizzes, and in class activities.
- Class will begin and end on time each day. Please be considerate of your classmates and avoid disrupting their learning.
- In addition to showing up for class on time, be ready to articulate and defend your ideas, as well as to listen to and work with the ideas of others.
- Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date and turned in by you and you alone. Unless stated otherwise, late assignments will be penalized one-third-letter grade per 24-hour period after the deadline. So if you turn your assignment in after class ends the same day it is due, and your grade is a B, your final grade will be a B-.
- In order for assignments to be accepted without losing points, please contact me as soon as possible and provide documentation of illness or other university-approved absences. Dated documentation can include, but are not limited to: dated doctor's note, documentation of jury duty, obituary, etc. I reserve the right to contact the appropriate sources to confirm the documentation. If you know you must have an excused absence, contact me beforehand to make arrangements to turn in work before class.
- If you turn in an assignment and leave before class ends, your assignment will be discarded and will be considered late once re-submitted.
- You are responsible for getting the information and material you miss in class from a classmate. A student with 5 unexcused absences will have their grade dropped a full letter grade. More than 8 absences will result in automatic failure of the course. Arriving at class late and/or leaving before class is over counts as ½ an absence. I will not contact students during the semester to apprise them of their attendance status; it is the responsibility of the students to check this regularly. Religious holidays, UF athletic travel conflicts, and written explanations from a certified health professional are eligible for an excused absence when cleared with the instructor ahead of time. See UF attendance policy at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

### **Guidelines for Discussion**

Participation in discussion is an important part of your role as a member of this class. I expect students to be prepared and engaged in discussion. You should expect to be called on from time to time. Please keep in mind that conversations about race can stir up strong emotions. A great deal of this results from the environment of mistrust and misunderstanding that exists in the

wider society. I start from the assumption that those of you that have chosen to take this class have come with an open mind, ready not only to share your points of view but to try to understand the perspectives of others. Thoughtful, insightful, and honest points of view are needed in order to help us all learn to communicate more effectively and openly about race. So that everyone feels respected in the classroom, use tact and understanding when presenting your ideas. Personal attacks, disparaging remarks, or attempts to dominate the conversation will not be tolerated. Remember as well that individuals in the classroom may have been personally affected by the issues that we are discussing; and to show respect to your peers and the educational process.

### **Mobile Electronic Device Policy**

Recent studies have shown that college students retain less information when they use laptops instead of pen and paper, and that open laptops are disruptive to nearby students. However, I recognize that many of you are more comfortable taking notes on a computer, so I will allow it during lecture and discussion. Laptops will not be allowed during film screenings, so do bring pen and paper to class on these days. I reserve the right to ban laptops if they become disruptive over the course of the semester. Please silence your cell phone prior to the start of class, keep it out of sight, and do not text or use social media apps during class time.

### **Correspondence**

I will send important course announcements and other correspondence to you via your UF email account. If you do not use this as your primary account, please make sure that you have your UF email forwarded to you and check your email regularly! Sadly I will not text you reminders about when assignments are due.

### **How to get in touch with your professor**

- Come to office hours. I truly enjoy getting to know more about students outside of the classroom. You are encouraged to stop by with any questions that you may have about assignments, readings, your major, going grad school, or other pertinent topics.
- Email me at [lpearlman@ufl.edu](mailto:lpearlman@ufl.edu). I will generally get back to you within 24 hours, though my response will be slower during the weekend. Do not email me the night before an assignment is due and expect to receive a response.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed. Students requesting classroom accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting an accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### **Academic Honesty**

The University, as well as your instructor, values and expects academic integrity. Ethical violations include cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and academic misconduct (including turning in the work of others as your own and reusing old assignments). These will not be tolerated and will result in a failure of the assignment and the risk of an automatic failing grade in the course,

and possible expulsion from UF. To avoid plagiarism, you must not copy the words, phrases, arguments, ideas, or conclusions of another person or source (including Internet sources) without properly crediting the person or source with both quotation marks and a footnote. Make sure that you properly cite direct quotations, paraphrased information, and facts that are not widely known. I will provide you with guidelines for proper citations and formatting prior to your submission of all written work, but you may contact me at any time for clarification. For more information on UF's honest policy, see <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/conductcode.php>. For more information on how UF's Judicial Affairs processes cases of plagiarism, see <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php>.

Note: Only original work will receive a grade. A zero will be assigned to any work with unoriginal work until the situation is resolved

### **Student Evaluations**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>.

### **U Matter, We Care**

Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

## Course Schedule

Please Note: the schedule is provisional and may be changed as needed by the instructor.

### Week One: Introduction

January 5      None

### Week Two: Talking About Race

January 10      Read Syllabus; Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”  
(<https://www.deanza.edu/faculty/lewisjulie/White%20Priviledge%20Unpacking%20the%20Invisible%20Knapsack.pdf>); Lawrence Ware, “How to Survive, Be Safe and Thrive at a Predominantly White Institution,” August 8, 2016  
(<http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2016/08/how-to-survive-be-safe-and-thrive-at-a-predominantly-white-institution/>)

January 12      Class: Code Switch, “Content Notice”  
Read: Tatum, Intro and Part I: A Definition of Terms, ix-xix and 3-30; John Metta, “I, Racist,” July 6, 2015 (<https://thsopl.com/i-racist-538512462265#.u3gkh88re>)

### Week Three: Understanding Race

January 17      Read: Tatum, Part II: Understanding Blackness in a White Context, 31-92  
Syllabus Acknowledgement form due

January 19      Class: White People (40mins)  
Read: Tatum, Part III: Understanding Whiteness in a White Context, 93-130

### Week Four: Race and Inequality

January 24      Read: Tatum, Part IV: Beyond Black and White and Part V: Breaking the Silence, 131-206

January 26      Class: NPR, This American Life, “The Problem We All Live With, Part One”  
Read: Kozol, Savage Inequalities, intro and ch 1, 1-48  
**Reading lists due for opinion pieces**

### Week Five: Race and Education

January 31      Read: Kozol, Savage Inequalities, ch 2, 49-100

February 2      Class: NPR, This American Life, “The Problem We All Live With, Part Two”  
Read: Kozol, Savage Inequalities, ch 3, 101-160  
**Opinion Pieces due**

Week Six: Race and Education (cont.)

February 7 Read: Kozol, *Savage Inequalities*, ch 4, 161-210  
Podcast reflection due

February 9 Read: Kozol, *Savage Inequalities*, ch 5-6, 211-282

Week Seven: Midterm Exam and Research Day

February 14 **Take Home Midterm Exam Due**

February 16 Research Day – Meet in Library

Week Eight: Race and Sports

February 21 Read: Blog posts and news articles posted on Canvas

February 23 Class: ESPN 30x30 (TBA)  
Read: Blog posts and news articles posted on Canvas  
**#Syllabus Topic due**

Week Nine: Race and Popular Culture

February 28 Class: Beyoncé, *Lemonade* (selections); Melissa Harris Perry on Beyoncé  
(<http://www.msnbc.com/melissa-harris-perry/watch/beyonce-evokes-new-orleans-in-new-video-618221635632>)

- Zandria Robinson “How Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* Exposes the Inner Lives of Black Women,” *Rolling Stone*, April 28, 2016 (<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/how-beyonces-lemonade-exposes-inner-lives-of-black-women-20160428>)
- Candace Benbow, “Beyoncé’s ‘*Lemonade*’ and Black Christian Women’s Spirituality,” *Religion and Politics*, June 28, 2016 (<http://religionandpolitics.org/2016/06/28/beyonces-lemonade-and-black-christian-womens-spirituality/>)
- Syreeta McFadden, “Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* is #blackgirlmagic at its most potent,” *The Guardian*, April 24, 2016 (<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/apr/24/beyonce-lemonade-album-video-black-girl-magic-womanhood-america>)
- Miriam Bale, “Beyoncé’s ‘*Lemonade*’ Is a Revolutionary Work of Black Feminism: Critic’s Notebook,” *Billboard*, April 25, 2016 (<http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/7341839/beyonce-lemonade-black-feminism>)

March 2 Class: *Blackish* (selections)  
Read: Blog posts and news articles posted on Canvas  
Film reflection due

Week Ten: Spring Break

March 7 No Class

March 9 No Class

Week Eleven: Race and Victim Blaming

March 14 Read: Robert Huber, "Being White in Philly," *Philadelphia Magazine*, March 2013 (<http://www.phillymag.com/articles/white-philly/>)

March 16 Class: Precious (1hr49mins)  
Read: Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race In America* (selections) (on Canvas)

Week Twelve: Race and Social Science

March 21 Read: William Julius Wilson, "The Declining Significance of Race: Revisited & Revised," *Daedalus* 140.2 (2011): 55-69 (on Canvas)  
Film reflection due

March 23 Class: Crash (1hr52mins)  
**#Syllabus proposals due**

Week Thirteen: Race and Current Crises

March 28 Read: Lamont Hill, Nobody, 1-67  
Film reflection due

March 30 Class: When the Levees Broke (selections)  
Read: Lamont Hill, Nobody, 68-122

Week Fourteen: Race and the Criminal Justice System

April 4 Class: NPR, This American Life, "Cops See it Differently, Part One"  
Read: Blog posts and news articles posted on Canvas

April 6 Class: NPR, This American Life, "Cops See it Differently, Part Two"  
Read: Blog posts and news articles posted on Canvas  
**Annotated Bibliography due**

Week Fifteen: Race and Current Crises (cont.)

April 11 Read: Lamont Hill, Nobody, 123-184  
Podcast reflection due

April 13      Read: David Remnick, "Blood at the Root: In the Aftermath of the Emanuel  
Nine," *The New Yorker* (September 28, 2015)  
(<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/09/28/blood-at-the-root>)

Week Sixteen: Conclusions

April 18      **#Syllabi and final papers due**

**Syllabus Acknowledgement and Acceptance**

I \_\_\_\_\_ have carefully read the syllabus in its entirety and agree with the requirements, policies, and all other terms. I have asked clarifying questions to ensure that I understand what I read.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_