

Sociology of Race and Ethnicity

Westmont College

Time: Tuesday/Thursday 1:15pm – 3:05pm

Location: Adams Center 217

Instructor: James Clark Davidson, Ph.D.

E-Mail: jadavidson@westmont.edu

Office: Deane Hall 210

Office Hours: T/Th 11am – 115pm or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to deepen our understanding of the social construction and consequences of race. What does it mean to think of race as a social construction? What are the social consequences of categorizing people based on race and ethnicity?

Throughout this course, we will answer these questions by investigating the ways in which a variety of scholars and practitioners invite us to consider race not as a natural fact, nor as an imagined fiction. Rather, race is a dynamic, historically contingent, and powerful social reality. Addressing both historical and contemporary examples, we will investigate the invention, production, and reproduction of race in the United States. After addressing how the social construction of different racial groups has occurred, we will then discuss how race structures inequality in everyday and institutional life.

Students will be invited to develop a distinctly sociological perspective that illuminates the social dimensions of race in everyday interactions and in social institutions and structures. They will be challenged to hone their analytic skills, especially through writing. Perhaps most importantly, students will cultivate a deepened respect for diversity and human dignity that will be manifested not only in the classroom but will also extend to their broader communities and contexts.

This course fulfills the *Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity (JRD)* component of the General Education Requirements:

Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity on Biblical and Theological Grounds engages students in the task of understanding historical and structural patterns that have created and sustained a variety of injustices in our society, particularly the injustice of structured racism. Students will be encouraged to develop a robust biblical and

theological framework enabling them to imagine and embody possible individual and communal responses. The JRD GE holds the following student learning outcomes:

- Students will analyze issues of justice and injustice involving race and racism in the United States in biblically and theologically grounded ways.
- Students will identify Christian responsibilities to pursue justice and reconciliation in diverse relationships, practices, and structures according to the character of God’s loving reign expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Desmond, Matthew and Emibrayner, Mustafa. "Race in America" Second edition." W. W. Norton & Company. 2020

Shelton, Jason and Emerson, Michael. "Blacks and Whites in Christian America" NYU Press. 2012.

Riley, Cole Arthur. 2024. Black Liturgies: Prayers, Poems, and Meditations for Staying Human. New York: Penguin Random House Books.

Emerson, Michael O. and Glenn E. Bracey II. 2024. The Religion of Whiteness: How Racism Distorts Christian Faith. New York: Oxford University Press.

Additional readings posted on Canvas

McCauley, Esau. "Reading While Black," Ch. 3: "The Freedom of the Slaves"—Biblical Justice and Political Witness

Wright, N.T. "The Christian Response to Crime"

Perkins, John. "Biblical Reconciliation and the 3 Rs"

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STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete this course should be able to do the following:

- Interpret and evaluate what it means for race to be a social construction, both historically and in contemporary social life in the United States
- Articulate key issues in categorizing and constructing racial groups, including the effects of race for social relations and social stratification
- Critically assess sociological texts about the social construction of race
- Develop clear and effective arguments regarding racial classification and inequality
- Discuss biblical and theological perspectives, texts, and values as they relate to race and racism in the United States.

COURSE EVALUATION

InQuizitive Quizzes (10 points each; 100 points total). InQuizitive Quiz of the chapter of the week unless stated differently on the syllabus and on Canvas. The InQuizitive Quiz is due by the date noted on the syllabus. To get credit on InQuizitive, you have to answer a minimum number of questions, but you can answer as many as you want to increase your score! You are encouraged to keep going until you reach 100% or your desired goal. I will introduce InQuizitive during the first week and post instructions on Canvas. You can gain a maximum of 10 points per quiz. Your top 10 quiz scores are counted.

In-class Quizzes and Reading Reflections (200 points). Unannounced quizzes may be occasionally given, along with short writing assignments during the scheduled in-class meeting times. Poor attendance will obviously effect your grade here - you can't do in-class assignments if you aren't here!

Attendance and Participation (200 points). Participation is a vital component of this class! Your score is based on your level of preparation, involvement in discussions, and the quality of contributions – especially in light of confronting challenging issues. A participating student is one who is actively engaged in the collective learning process; an attending student shows up. Please do both. While I know that speaking up in class is hard for many of you, I will provide times of reflection that allow space to gather your thoughts. For full credit you must volunteer thoughts during class discussion from time to time. Full attendance but no verbal participation will result in 140 out of 200 for A&P grade. Grades will go up or down depending on missed classes or increased verbal participation.

Exams (200 points) Exams will be discussed in class on 1/11. An Updated schedule will follow

Course Papers (200 points). Over the semester you will produce two 3-5-page paper. These papers will be uploaded to Canvas using standard font, 1" margins, double spacing and should include a cover page with word count. If you would like assistance in improving your writing, please make an appointment with the writing center.
<https://www.westmont.edu/writers-corner>

Course Reflection (100 points). You will complete a 2-4 page reflection exercise that will invite you to discuss some of the major themes of the course, as well as engage in some personal reflection about the significance of course topics for your own identity and understanding of the world. It is due on the final day of regular classes: December 8.

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FINAL GRADES

Your final grade will be the total points you have earned out of 1000 total possible points:

InQuizitive Quizzes	100
In-class Q/R	200
Attendance & Participation	200
Exams	200
Papers	200
Final Reflection	100
Total	1000

These scores will be converted to letter grades according to the following scale:

A: 94%+	B+: 87-89.9%	C+: 77-79.9%	D: 60-69.9%
A-: 90-93.9%	B: 83-86.9%	C: 73-76.9%	F: below 60%
	B-: 80-82.9%	C-: 70-72.9%	

COURSE POLICIES

Class preparation: Please set yourself up for success by taking extensive notes on the readings. You should always bring the readings, your notes on the reading questions, and specific passages to point to or ask questions about to each class session.

Class culture: We will discuss topics in this class that can be sensitive, and it is important that we foster a culture of respect and empathy. My hope is that together we will cultivate an environment of active engagement, where we ask thoughtful questions, ponder complex and difficult topics, and appreciate the different places from which we may be approaching a given issue. At all times, we will engage with one another and the course material with civility and openness, even when we disagree or do not understand. I will do my best to model Christlike dialogue reflecting God's desire for justice and reconciled relationships among all image-bearers and expect you to do your best at striving for that as well. I invite you to cultivate a posture of generosity and curiosity toward your fellow classmates, the course material, and the instructor. Any written work you submit, as well as your participation in class and in meetings should always adhere to these expectations. Please let me know if you witness or experience something that does not align with these commitments. Depending on your life experiences, some topics may feel more personal and weightier than others, so I also encourage you to be proactive in attending to your needs. I am happy to help process topics, and to connect you to additional resources for support, should you need them, so please feel free to reach out.

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Technology and engagement: Students who take notes by hand are more likely to gain knowledge and retain it than those who type, and someone else's distraction with technology will have a negative effect on your learning, so we will refrain from using laptops, tablets, and phones during class. Be sure your cell phone is silenced and put away for the duration of class. Failure to do so will result in loss of participation points for the day. We will not record our class in any form, whether visual or audio. Course materials may also not be shared without the instructor's permission. If your only access to course readings during class time is with a laptop or tablet, please email me to request permission to use an electronic device ahead of class. Requesting such permission signifies your commitment to silence all notifications and minimize or close out of all other applications on your device while you consult the reading.

Deadlines: All assignments should be submitted in Canvas by the due date and time; only on-time submissions will receive credit. If you anticipate having difficulty meeting a deadline, I invite you to reach out to me in advance to discuss a possible exception. Sometimes technology fails, so you should plan ahead and submit your work early instead of waiting to the last minute.

Attendance: Attendance will be taken in each class session, and it will factor into your participation score for the day. Be sure you get notes and ask questions about the material you miss. We will follow the College's policies regarding excessive absences and official activities; please be sure you have read and understood these policies and let me know if you have questions as soon as possible.

Course communication: Please put "SOC 189" in the subject line of emails to me. I will use Canvas announcements and email to communicate important information, so please enable Canvas notifications and check your email daily. You can expect email responses from me within 24 hours during standard business hours (8am-5pm) during the week (Monday-Friday).

Accessibility and Accommodations: Students who have been diagnosed with a condition that meets the criteria of a disability are strongly encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) as early as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by ODS. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your full participation and the successful completion of this course. Please email ods@westmont.edu and see the website for more information <http://www.westmont.edu/offices/disability/>

Academic Integrity: Dishonesty of any kind may result in loss of credit for the work involved and the filing of a report with the Provost's Office. All the work you submit must be your own. You must include citations when appropriate in all your written work.

Westmont's academic integrity policy prohibits students from presenting someone else's work as their own. Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, attempt to do the work of writing or other creation for their users. Therefore, students should NOT substitute AI-generated text or content for original academic work. Doing so is a violation of Westmont's academic integrity policy. Additionally, if you are considering using an AI tool for editing or another assignment-related task, please consult with me first—as this can also cross the line regarding the requirement that you produce your own original work (and is sometimes flagged by AI detection tools as being plagiarism).

If you're uncertain about what qualifies as academic dishonesty, or you feel tempted to plagiarize or google things due to time constraints, confusion about the assignment, or anxiety about your writing, please contact me before the due date. Major or repeated infractions may result in dismissal from the course with a grade of F and repeated offenses may result in expulsion from the college. Be familiar with the College's academic integrity policy, found at: <https://www.westmont.edu/office-provost/academic-program/academic-integrity-policy>

Library Resources: Westmont librarians are available to advise and consult with you on your research assignments. You can drop by the Research Help Desk or schedule an appointment with a librarian assigned to your course. To identify a specific librarian and find subject-specific resources, consult Voskuyl Library's Research Guides or email askalibrarian@westmont.edu

COURSE CALENDER -TBD- Exact Schedule will be squared away (with your input!) on Thursday 1/11

Please note that readings, topics, and/or assignments may be substituted or shifted to different days in order to achieve our learning goals. I will announce any changes on Canvas and/or in class. Please feel free to double-check with me to be sure you have the most up-to-date schedule.

	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment
Week 1	T 1/9	Syllabus		

	R 1/11	Intro		Syllabus Quiz
Week 2	T 1/16	NO CLASS		
	R 1/18	Race in the 21st	DE1	IQ1
Week 3	T 1/23	Inventing	DE2	
	R 1/25	Inventing	DE2	IQ2
Week 4	T 1/30	Politics	DE3	
	R 2/1	Politics	DE3 – McCauley	IQ3
Week 5	T 2/6	Econ	DE4	
	R 2/8	Econ	DE4	IQ4
Week 6	T 2/13	Exam 1		
	R 2/15	Housing	DE5	
Week 7	T 2/20	Holiday Have Fun! 🥳		
	R 2/22	Housing	DE5	IQ5
Week 8	T 2/27	Crime	DE6	Paper 1
	R 2/29	Crime	DE6 – Wright	IQ6
Week 9	T 3/5	Education	DE7	
	R 3/7	Education	Canvas	IQ7
Week 10	T 3/12	SPRING BREAK Have Fun! 🥳		
	R 3/14			
Week 11	T 3/19	Exam 2		
	R 3/21	Black Liturgies	Riley	Reflection 1
Week 12	T 3/26	Faith	Shelton & Emerson	
	R 3/28	Faith	Shelton & Emerson	Reflection 2
Week 13	T 4/2	Associations	DE9	
	R 4/4	Associations	DE9 – Perkins	IQ9
Week 14	T 4/9	Intimate	DE10	Paper 2
	R 4/11	Intimate	DE10	IQ10
Week 15	T 4/16	Distorted Faith	Emerson & Bracey	
	R 4/18	Gospel Dialogue	Emerson & Bracey	Reflection 3
Week 16	T 4/23	Democracy	DE11	IQ11
	R 4/25	Democracy	DE11	Reflection 4
Final	Monday 4/29 at 12PM			

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Important dates

1/15 MLK Holiday
 1/16 Monday Schedule on Tuesday
 1/19 Last day to drop classes without record 330pm
 2/19-2/20 Presidents Holiday

Course SOC-189

Spring 2026

2/28	Midterm
3/11-3/15	Spring Break
3/29-4/1	Easter Holiday
4/5	Last day to withdraw 330pm
4/26	Study Day
4/29	Final 12pm
5/4	Commencement
5/8	Final grades submitted by 5pm