

SOCI 235

Fall 2020
M, W 4.30-5.50
Classroom: N/A

Racialization and Ethnicity

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Course Description

On September 2nd, 2015, the image of a drowned Kurdish child, Alan Kurdi, raced around the Western world and prompted massive mobilizations to open up the borders and welcome refugees. Much less reported, Alan Kurdi's father asked that if people wanted to honour the memory of his son, they should support Rojava and the struggle for self-determination of Kurds living in territories claimed by Syria.

In late June of 2019, a similar pattern repeated itself. The image of Oscar Martinez and his two-year-old daughter, Valeria, who both drowned attempting to cross the Rio Grande into the United States, also instigated a wide response, from the condemnation of American border practices to the denunciation of the dehumanizing implications of the image itself. Meanwhile, caravans of migrants continued to defy the web of bordering controls developed by Fortress North America.

And in June of 2020, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, Black people in America are rising up in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd, while the same is happening here in Canada following the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet. In the Canadian context, Black activist and political commentator Desmond Cole has called for the police to be disarmed and defunded, even as he questions the Canadian tendency to fixate on America to the exclusion of our own history of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and anti-Black racism.

This course takes these tragic images and events as its point of departure. We will ask, and attempt to respond to, questions like: why is the global crisis of displacement and migration happening and intensifying? What systems of racialized domination, like imperialism, capitalism and white supremacy, are expressed by it? How have these systems historically interlocked to get us to this place? How do these systems play out within Canadian borders? For example, how is policing, from the Canadian Border Services Agency to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, implicated? And, finally, what does all this mean in the context of intensifying settler colonialism?

At the same time, we will seek to honour the spirit of Alan's father's request. What relationships are being besieged through these systems, from land reclamation in Central America, where Oscar Martinez and Valeria were displaced from, to Indigenous resurgence, and Black and migrant justice struggles here?

Course Objectives

This course aims to provide students with a wide and deep enough theoretical framework to make sense of contemporary forms of racialization and the movements that attempt to sustain and create mutualistic alternatives to domination. The course also aims to connect theory to practice. The course will invite students to think of themselves in relation to the questions we grapple with, and will attempt to bring to life the movements that racialized empire attempts to control.

Course Delivery Format

At this time, I intend to use a variety of formats to deliver the course. The core theoretical framework will be delivered as pre-recorded lectures accessible for students to view on their own time. Videos will be made available for students to view on their own time, while some scheduled class times will be used to bring students together to respond to questions about videos and share their own interpretations. Students will work through readings at their own pace, while also needing to ultimately be responsible for scheduled assignments based on these readings. I will also use class time to schedule guest speakers, and give live time for questions and answers as the course proceeds. Finally, I will supplement readings with correspondence from me that interprets key take-aways and links readings to core ideas in the course.

I do not intend to use discussion forums as a teaching or evaluation tool in the course.

Course Evaluation

Take-Home Paper #1 (30%) – This take-home paper will ask you to connect the theoretical framework developed in Week Two to make sense of what we will be calling Empire, to the material we cover in Weeks Three and Four on displacement and forced migration. Your response must be 1200 words or less, double-spaced and use 12-point font. It will be due to CourseSpaces on Monday, October 5th by class time.

Take Home Paper #2 (30%) – This take-home paper will zero in on anti-Black racism. I will share questions with you on November 4th and you will choose one to respond to in 1200 words or less, double-spaced, using 12-point font. It will be due to CourseSpaces on Monday, November 16th by class time.

Reflection Paper (40%) - Your final paper will be a personal reflection on course content. It will be due on December 9th. In addition to touching on the material from the first two take-home papers, in this paper you will also bring in material from the final section on settler colonialism.

The key requirement in this final, reflection paper is to move from course concepts, themes and theoretical frameworks into your own experience and surroundings. Your reflection must be 2000 words or less, double-spaced and use 12-point font. To succeed in this assignment, I suggest you consider, as we are going along in the course, how your experience aligns with, or differs

from, the experiences of the people we discuss and read about? What light do the concepts we use shed on your own life? On your own people's mode of arrival or continued presence on these territories?

Course Texts

Readings will be posted to CourseSpaces as PDFs or links. I will likely assign enough of *Policing Black Lives* by Robyn Maynard (Ch 1, 2, 6 and Conclusion for sure) that I will make it available for purchase through the Uvic Bookstore.