

SOC 3381-001 Exploring Inequality through Music & Film

SUMMER 2018 – MTWTF 8:00-5:00pm Sandy 106

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Course Description

Hidden Figures is a film set in Hampton, Virginia in 1961. The film centers around African American female mathematicians who worked at NASA at a critical juncture in the nation's history—during the Space Race or epic Cold War rivalry between the U.S. and Russia for supremacy in space. The story of three key African American mathematicians is highlighted—Ms. Katherine Goble, Ms. Mary Jackson, and Ms. Dorothy Vaughan. In addition, Ms. Goble's relationship to the Space Task Group is explored in depth.

The film opens with a successful Russian satellite launch which ramps up the Space Race competition. At this point, a white supervisor assigns Ms. Goble to the new Space Task Group led by Al Harrison. The next scenes revolve around the obvious struggles that all three mathematicians experience as women of color working in a segregated and patriarchal world. The film then explores the significant events leading up to astronaut John Glenn's legendary orbital launch during which Glenn requested Ms. Goble's presence even though she had been removed from the Task Group and barred from the control room. Ms. Goble is finally granted admittance, and the successful launch and reentry—in large part due to her calculations and intervention—becomes an essential signifier of the desire of African Americans, particularly women of color, to achieve their goals despite living

in the midst of repressive segregationist policies and practices.

The film culminates with notable successes for all three mathematicians and the epilogue reveals that Ms. Katherine Goble was responsible for calculations of the Apollo 11 and Apollo 13 NASA missions.

It is just such material which most concerns this course. The wedding of issues of social inequality in U.S. society with media such as music and film is the central focus of this course.

Fundamentally, this course is an historical, theoretical, and ultimately, sociological exploration of race, ethnicity, class, and gender as axes of inequality in the United States, through the lens of music and film media. Materials examine the interaction between personal experiences and social structures as students explore how individuals carry varying degrees of penalty and privilege depending on their position within a complex matrix along axes of race, ethnicity, class, and gender that affects everyone in society. Students will be invited to explore the ways that people experience and respond to the matrix, that is, structures of racial/ethnic, class, and gender inequality, through the lens of various media, and the ways that people help to reinforce and reshape those structures. In this way, the course provides a unique method of entering the "sociological imagination" within the social and behavioral sciences by engaging with social media—a most significant element within the social milieu so critical to global citizenry in this new century.

Note: It must be emphasized that this class presents difficult, sensitive subject matter. Individual students might have personal experiences that profoundly resonate with class material, evoking painful memories. It should make us all more mindful of how we unpack class material and respectful of each other's experiences.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- **Explain** critical media literacy, particularly as an analytical tool for examining societal inequity
- **Explain** sociological theory significant to societal inequity in the U.S
- **Describe** race/class/gender relations in America through historical and empirical analyses as well as a music/film media lens on major societal spheres of influence such as the educational system, employment and housing, the family, and the criminal justice system
- **Apply** critical thinking to the matrix of race/class/gender relations in our country particularly in terms of future ramifications

General Education/Bachelor Degree Requirement Designation

This course meets the Social and Behavioral Sciences Foundation Intellectual Explorations (BF) requirement. Throughout the semester, this course will address the following Learning Outcomes: Critical Thinking, Written Communication, Information Literacy, and Foundation & Skills for Lifelong Learning. In addition, this course meets the Diversity (DV) requirement.

Canvas

This course requires use of **Canvas**. You will be expected to retrieve and upload assignments and readings through Canvas throughout the course of the semester. It would be wise to sign into Canvas through the Campus Information System (CIS) as soon as you can so that you can see all required assignments and readings for the class.

Student Names & Personal Pronouns

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name as well as "Preferred first name" (if previously entered by you in the student profile section of your CIS account). While CIS refers to this as merely a preference, I will honor you by referring to you with the name and pronoun that feels best for you in class, on papers, exams, etc... Please advise me of any name or pronoun changes (and update CIS) so I can help create a learning environment in which you, your name, and your pronoun will be respected.

Class Work

The major tasks of the class include two exams, two papers, and reading assignments. In addition, **attendance and class participation** are also considered significant to your grade. Taking **notes** is important in this class and will be considered part of participation—more on notes in a bit. In the interest of clarity, let us further break down the components of class work.

Sociobiography (3-5 page Double-spaced essay, Word or PDF)

Write a brief essay focused on how race, class, and gender have affected your life. **All three aspects of your life—race, class, and gender—are required, using roughly equal space in the essay for each. Make sure to BOLD main points.** If you would like to add another aspect of your life related to inequality—age, religion, ability—that's fine, as long as you explore race, class, and gender for at least 3 full pages.

Let me elaborate just a bit. Remember that each of us has a race, class, and gender even though we might not consciously realize their effects. If you focus, you will be able to see their effects and remember that they can have positive, negative, and otherwise very complex effects on you as an individual. So for example, African Americans may be more conscious of their racial status than white individuals, but the racial status of being white in our country does carry weight in life and it should be explored here.

A woman or queer individual may be more conscious of gender issues than a cis man, but cis men should explore how gender is part of their experience. A person who was raised in poverty may be more conscious of their class status than an individual from the middle class, but a middle class person can also discuss how class has influenced their life. It is important to start thinking about yourself as part of a large and complex society that both influences and is influenced by your actions. It is essential to think about how you are situated within a matrix of race, class, and gender in U.S. society and what that really means in concrete terms. I especially want you to start thinking about privilege and access in our society with regard to your race, class, and gender.

Reading Assignments (1-2 page Single-spaced essays, Word or PDF)

The readings have **corresponding assignments**—some pair up two readings while others might have a single reading. All readings are accessible as **PDF files** through **Canvas** and will include a **description of the assignment** and **due dates** so that you can **upload them into Canvas**. **Follow the assignment instructions carefully and take a look at the sample assignments in the Modules section on Canvas.**

Exam 1, Exam 2 (2-3 page Single-spaced essays, Word or PDF)

All exams will be **essay exams** made **available on Canvas prior to due dates and due to be uploaded as single-spaced Word or PDF files**. For each exam you will need to choose one essay question in which you will need to incorporate material from lectures, readings, film clips, music clips, and theory, and you will only have **2-3** single-spaced pages in which to accomplish this.

Critical Analysis Paper (4-5 page Double-spaced paper, Word or PDF)

The critical analysis paper consists of an analysis of either **four song lyrics OR two films** (or if you want to use both music and film, it would be **two songs and one film**). **PROOFREAD** and use reasonable font and margins. The paper should cover three things:

1. a **thesis section** [one paragraph]—introducing me to the songs or films you have chosen for your paper as well as the theory(ies) you will use to analyze them. This section can be as dramatic as you'd like or include personal insight;
2. an **analysis section** [3-4 pages]—an analysis entails a **one-to-one correspondence between the theory(ies) and the films or song lyrics**, starting with a brief definition of the theory in your own words, followed by your choice of a corresponding aspect, character, or scene from the films or lyrics (or films+lyrics) that serves as a clear illustration of the theory (you may find more than one). You may use quotes/lyrics to enhance your point but make them very brief, indented, and single-spaced. Do not use more than two theories in your analysis—multiple theories tend to weaken the strength of your argument. Keep in mind that in enhancing your theoretical argument, especially since we are analyzing media forms, you should use your critical media literacy skills which will be covered in the first days of the semester. Examples include looking at the films and song lyrics through the lens of political economy, textual analysis, and/or audience reception. The analysis will basically look like this:

Definition (of a theory in your own words)

Proof (illustration from the films/song lyrics as good examples of the theory—this can be elaborate and descriptive)

The optional tie back (you might want to add a brief sentence at the end of the proof, noting why the illustrations are good examples of the theory and coming full circle in your analysis but this is not required)

This sequence should happen at least two to three times in the space of 3-4 pages.

3. a critique or evaluation section [one paragraph]--this section can be as dramatic as you choose to make it and must entail an **opinion** of the task.

Grade Calculation

Students can calculate their grade according to the weightings below. The first five components of the grade—both exams, the papers, and quizzes—are weighted at 100 points each. The final two components of the grade--assignments and attendance—are weighted at 200 points each.

Sociobiography Exam 1 Exam 2 Critical Analysis Paper Pop Quizzes = 100 each
Assignments Attendance = 200 each

There is no class text, so **reading assignments** take on extra significance with regard to course work. **Attendance** is weighted highly because this is an intensely interactive class, both with the material and with everyone in the classroom. Finally, being punctual, staying for the entire class, and **notetaking** are all critical elements of your course work, so **pop quizzes** will be given throughout the semester at the beginning or end of the class to encourage students to come in on time, stay for the duration of the class, and keep up with notetaking.

Attendance Policy

As mentioned above, attendance is critical to this class since this is an interactive class. Be very careful that you actually **sign** the roll sheet each class day which counts attendance (200 points)—initials and printing will not count. If a student is found not to be in class, but there is a signature for them on the roll sheet, this will be considered “Academic Misconduct” and could mean serious penalties for the person who signed and the person who they signed for—see Academic Misconduct below.

Electronics Policy

Students are allowed to take notes **ONLY** on paper in this class. Electronic gadgets are **NOT ALLOWED**. A growing and substantive body of research finds that multitasking degrades any kind of task performance in a class. Interestingly, taking notes on a laptop turns students into “transcription zombies”; while taking notes with a pen or pencil excites a “process of integration, creating more textured and effective modes of recall”—an academic way of saying that students learn a heck of a lot more when they write notes than when they type them.

Information about the Center for Disability Services

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

Academic Misconduct

Per University of Utah regulations (Policy # 6-400). “A student who engages in academic misconduct,” as defined in Part I.B. and including, but not limited to, cheating, falsification, or plagiarism, “may be subject to academic sanctions including but not limited to a grade reduction, failing grade, probation, suspension or dismissal from the program or the University, or revocation of the student's degree or certificate. Sanctions may also include community service, a written reprimand, and/or a written statement of misconduct that can be put into an appropriate record maintained for purposes of the profession or discipline for which the student is preparing.” Please refer to the Student Code for full elaboration of student academic and behavioral misconduct policies (<http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>).

Addressing Sexual Misconduct

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

Dates You Should Know

May 1: Sociobiography
 May 7-11: Reading Assignments
 May 9: Exam 1
 May 13: Critical Analysis Paper
 May 20: Exam 2

Course Outline

MAY	1	Pre-class work – Sociobiography due
	7	First class day - Introduction
	7	Critical Media Literacy: <i>Let Knowledge Drop</i> Ellen Seiter “Different Children, Different Dreams: Racial Representation in Advertising” Suzan Shown Harjo “Redskins, Savages, and Other Indian Enemies: A Historical Overview of American Media Coverage of Native Peoples” Seiter-Harjo – Dialogue May 7
	7	Race: Exploring the <i>Poverty of Philosophy</i> James Loewen “Gone With the Wind: The Invisibility of Racism in American History Books” Peggy McIntosh “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women’s Studies” Loewen-McIntosh – Dialogue May 7
	8	Class: Tales from the <i>Passenger Seat</i> Jason DeParle “Learning Poverty Firsthand” DeParle – Letter May 8
	8	Gender: Questioning the <i>Formation</i> Marilyn Frye “Oppression” Julie Scelfo “A University Recognizes a Third Gender: Neutral” Frye-Scelfo – Dialogue May 8
	9	Theory: The <i>Matrix</i> of Race, Class, and Gender Patricia Hill Collins “Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment” Gloria Anzaldúa “ <i>La conciencia de la mestiza</i> : Towards a New Consciousness” Collins-Anzaldúa Dialogue May 9
	9	Living and Working in America: The Search for <i>A Better Life</i> Alana Semuels “The Role of Highways in American Poverty” Tomás Rivera “The Children Couldn’t Wait” Tomás Rivera “The Little Burnt Victims” Semuels-Rivera – Letters May 9
	9	Exam 1 up on Canvas 5pm
	9	Exam 1 due midnight
	10	(Un)equal Justice: Crime <i>Made in America</i> Luis J. Rodriguez “The Color of Skin Is the Color of Crime” Rodriguez – Letter May 10

	10	Schooling: <i>Freedom Writers</i> in the Face of Inequity Jonathan Kozol “Still Separate, Still Unequal: America’s Educational Apartheid” Michael Godsey “The Inequality in Public Schools” Kozol-Godsey – Dialogue May 10
	11	Family and Relationships: We’re Just <i>Ordinary People</i> Teju Cole “The Digital Afterlife of Lost Family Photos” Tomás Rivera “The Portrait” Cole-Rivera – Letters May 11
	11	The Distance: A Question of <i>Us and Them</i> Cornel West “Introduction.” West – Presentation May 11
	13	Critical Analysis Paper due
	11	Exam 2 up on Canvas at 5pm
	20	Exam 2 due at midnight

Reading List

Developing a Critical Media Literacy: *Let Knowledge Drop*

- Ellen Seiter. 1995. "Different Children, Different Dreams: Racial Representation in Advertising." Pp. 99-108 in *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*, edited by Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Suzan Shown Harjo. 2006. "Redskins, Savages, and Other Indian Enemies: A Historical Overview of American Media Coverage of Native Peoples." Pp. 62-77 in *Images of Color, Images of Crime Readings* (3rd ed) edited by Cormae Richey Mann, Marjorie S. Zatz, and Nancy Rodriguez. Roxbury Publishing Company.

Race, Ethnicity, and Culture: Gauging the *Poverty of Philosophy*

- James Loewen. 1995. "Gone With the Wind: The Invisibility of Racism in American History Books." Pp. 131-163 in *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. New York: The New Press
- Peggy McIntosh. 2001. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies." Pp. 95-105 in *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology* (2nd edition), edited by Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins. Stamford, CT: Wadsworth.

Social Class in the *Passenger Seat* and other Stories

- Jason DeParle. 1997. "Learning Poverty Firsthand." *The New York Times Magazine*, April 27.

Doing Gender in the *Birdcage*

- Marilyn Frye. 1995. "Oppression." Pp. 37-41 in *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*, edited by Margaret L. Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins. New York: Wadsworth.
- Julie Scelfo. 2015. "A University Recognizes a Third Gender: Neutral." *The New York Times*, February 3.

Theory Along the *Matrix* of Race/Ethnicity, Class, and Gender

- Patricia Hill Collins. 1991. "Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment." Pp. 221-238 in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Gloria Anzaldúa. 1999/1987. "La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness." Pp. 99-123 in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

Living and Working in American Society: The Search for *A Better Life*

- Alana Semuels. 2016. "The Role of Highways in American Poverty." *Atlantic*, March.
- Tomás Rivera. 1987. "The Children Couldn't Wait" and "The Little Burnt Victims." Pp. 77-78 and 112-114 in ...Y No Se Lo Tragó La Tierra/... *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*. Houston: Arte Público Press.

The Urban Landscape and Criminal Justice: *Crime Made in America*

- Luis J. Rodriguez. 2006. "The Color of Skin Is the Color of Crime." Pp. 36-41 in *Images of Color, Images of Crime: Readings* (3rd ed) edited by Cormae Richey Mann, Marjorie S. Zatz, and Nancy Rodriguez. Roxbury Publishing Company.

The School Years: *Freedom Writers* in the Face of Inequity

- Jonathan Kozol. 2005. "Still Separate, Still Unequal: America's Educational Apartheid." *Harpers Magazine*, Vol. 311, No. 1864 (1 September): 41-54.
- Michael Godsey. 2015. "The Inequality in Public Schools." *The New York Times*, June 15.

Family and Relationships *Under La Misma Luna*

- Teju Cole. 2016. "The Digital Afterlife of Lost Family Photos." *The New York Times*, April 26.
- Tomás Rivera. 1987. "The Portrait." Pp. 129-132 in ...Y No Se Lo Tragó La Tierra/... *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*. Houston: Arte Público Press.

The Distance: Life After the *Crash*

- Cornel West. 1993. "Introduction." Pp. 1-8 in *Race Matters*. Boston: Beacon Press.