

SOC/GNDR 3381-001 Exploring Social Inequality through Music & Film

FALL 2024 – TU/TH 9:10-10:30pm SW 134

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Course Description

Black Panther is a surprising film for several reasons. While the film is part of the Marvel universe along with standards like Captain America, Iron Man, and Thor, it introduces and contemplates concepts and tropes not typical of superhero movies. *Black Panther* is principally set in the impressively imagined African kingdom of Wakanda where African identity and history are played out in a setting replete with sophistication, abundance, and ingenuity. The rich history of Wakanda is in large part fueled by vibranium, the strongest metal Earth has ever known which fell to earth in Africa eons ago, ensuring that Wakandans would become the most technologically advanced and sophisticated nation on the planet. The film centers on the character of King T'Challa, present day ruler of Wakanda, and the latest in a long line of Black Panthers, whose strength is fueled in part by divine blessing but also the heart shaped herb mutated by vibranium itself. The nation of Wakanda is cloaked from the rest of the world so completely, it cannot even be seen from space by orbital satellites that can observe light and thermal signatures, a remarkable feat. Instead, the country masquerades as a pastoral setting of shepherds and weavers.

The film opens with a brief nod to ancient history, recounting the five African tribes and the coming of vibranium as well as the rise of the first Black Panther. The following scene is taken from the year 1992—it is the true nexus of the film that will profoundly impact the

story line. In this scene, we learn that Wakandan Prince N'Jobu has been stationed as an agent in Oakland, California—he is one of many Wakandan spies sent into the world to gather intelligence. N'Jobu has become increasingly disillusioned with the constant oppression and immiseration that black Americans live with daily, and decides to distribute his country's vibranium and weapons technology to black people around the world, facilitating a revolution. When his brother, King T'Chaka—T'Challa's father—learns of the plan, he ends the plot and winds up killing his brother.

The body of the film is set in the present and explores dueling ideologies and factions within Wakanda as T'Challa assumes the kingship after the death of his father (an entirely different story that involves other superheros in the Marvel and Avenger universe). There are traditionalists, let's call them, who want to keep Wakanda isolated from the world; and there are what we'll call Pan-Africanists who want to use Wakanda's extraordinary wealth and incomparable technology to do great good in the world—saving lives, supporting refugees and immigrants, the list goes on and on. T'Challa's own ex-lover, Nakia, is a proponent of extending Wakanda's resources to those suffering in other nations. But the gravest threat to T'Challa and Wakanda is N'Jadaka aka Erik "Killmonger" Stevens, the son of N'Jobu who comes to claim the throne and to avenge his father's death. Killmonger doesn't want to stop there—he says he wants to liberate black people across the globe, but what he really wants is to overthrow all existing governments and achieve world domination. His goal is not liberation but hegemony. The film will culminate over this power struggle and T'Challa will have to decide whether or not Wakanda will remove its cloak of secrecy and interact in new ways with the world from which it has isolated itself for centuries.

There is too much to say about this film sociologically. There are visions of the African diaspora and Pan Africanism, nuances of black independence and black liberation, anti-colonial messages and messages supportive of immigrants and refugees, and ultimately implications of black geopolitical power. There are several central roles taken by powerful women throughout the film—the king’s mother, sister, ex-lover, and all-woman royal bodyguard, to name the principals. There are also wonderful nods to African culture—the very language, wardrobe, and architecture of the film draw from the African nations of Mali, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Africa. It is also no accident that the title character’s name is drawn from a revolutionary movement in America in the 1960s, nor that the *Black Panther* comic book emerged during that same time period. Nor is it coincidence that some of the scenes are set in Oakland where the Black Panther organization was born, and that the pivotal scene in Oakland happens in 1992 when riots sparked by the verdict in the Rodney King case captured world attention. Not to mention, the majority of the cast is black and the Black Panther is one of very few black superheros. Ultimately, *Black Panther* asks formidable questions of its characters and perhaps its audiences: What will you do with the privileges you have for those who have not?

It is just such material which most concerns this course. The wedding of profound issues of social inequality 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.

Teaching Assistants

This course has assigned undergraduate and/or graduate Teaching Assistants or TAs. TAs do not grade, but review and advise on student work, and may be helpful in other ways to students. TAs will have access to Canvas information such as grades and assignments. Each TA has signed a confidentiality agreement and is therefore bound by University policy and the Student Code to hold all student information confidential.

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.

Important to Know

Our class assignments often involve the sharing of personal experiences in essays and papers. This is a natural outcome of discussing issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality, but also just discussing personal and family histories. If shared personal experiences that students include in class assignments involve rape, sexual assault or sexual violence, I am required by law to report them to the Office of Equal Opportunity. This is not to discourage these confidences at all, but to offer students options and resources from that office. If a student wishes to ignore correspondence from the OEO office, that's fine. It's all up to the student what they do with that information. I just want to be upfront about these matters.

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.

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 (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;

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 below and this sequence should happen at least two to three times in the space of 3-4 pages:

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)

2. 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—what you learned, etc...

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**.

Grade Calculation

Students can calculate their grade according to the weightings below. The first five components of the grade—exams, 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. In addition, there may be further penalties for students with significant absences, including the loss of a half to a full letter grade.

Electronics Policy

Students are allowed to take notes ONLY on paper in this class. Electronic gadgets are NOT ALLOWED and can have consequences for your attendance score. 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.

ADA Statement

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 & Access (<https://disability.utah.edu/>), 162 Olpin Union Building, 801-581-5020. CDA will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability & Access.

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).

Emergency Preparedness Information

The College of Social and Behavioral Science has made it a college priority to ensure we have an active CSBS Emergency Preparedness Plan. The college takes seriously the safety of all of our students in the case of any type of emergency on campus. The last page of the syllabus is a copy of the CSBS Emergency Action Plan that includes the SW building where our class is located.

University Safety Statement

The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit utah.edu.

Dates You Should Know

Aug 27-Dec 3: Reading Assignments
 Sept 22: Sociobiography
 Oct 20: Exam 1
 Nov 10: Critical Analysis Paper
 Dec 8: Final Exam

Course Outline

AUG	20	Introduction
	22-27	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 and Harjo – Presentation Aug 27
	29	Race: Exploring the <i>Poverty of Philosophy</i>
SEPT	2	Labor Day Holiday
	3-10	Race: Exploring the <i>Poverty of Philosophy</i> continued Ta-Nehisi Coates Excerpts from “Letter to My Son” Peggy McIntosh “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women’s Studies” Coates and McIntosh – Dialogue Sept 3
	12-17	Class: Tales from the <i>Passenger Seat</i> Tal Pinchevsky “Because Food and People are Terrible Things to Waste” H. Luke Shaefer and Kathryn J. Edin “A Simple Approach to Ending Extreme Poverty” Pinchevsky and Shaefer & Edin– Letters Sept 10
	19-26	Gender: Questioning the <i>Formation</i> Marilyn Frye “Oppression” Julie Scelfo “A University Recognizes a Third Gender: Neutral” Frye and Scelfo – Presentation Sept 17
	22	Sociobiography
OCT	1-3	Theory: The Matrix of Race, Class, and Gender
	6-13	Fall Break
	15-17	Theory: The Matrix of Race, Class, and Gender continued Patricia Hill Collins “Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment” Gloria Anzaldúa “ <i>La conciencia de la mestiza</i> . Towards a New Consciousness” Collins and Anzaldúa - Dialogue Oct 15

	17	Exam 1 Up on Canvas
	20	Exam 1
	22-24	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 and Rivera – Letters Oct 22
	29-31	(Un)equal Justice: Crime <i>Made in America</i> Brentin Mock “It’s Time to Stop Calling it “The Great Migration”” Luis J. Rodriguez “The Color of Skin Is the Color of Crime” Mock and Rodriguez – Letters Oct 29
NOV	5	(Un)equal Justice: Crime <i>Made in America</i> continued
	7-14	Schooling: <i>Freedom Writers</i> in the Face of Inequity Laura Meckler “Public education is Facing a Crisis of Epic Proportions” Erica L. Green “A College Program for Disadvantaged Teens Could Shake Up Elite Admissions” Meckler and Green – Presentation Nov 5
	10	Critical Analysis Paper
	19-26	Family and Relationships: We’re Just <i>Ordinary People</i> Teju Cole “The Digital Afterlife of Lost Family Photos” Tomás Rivera “The Portrait” Cole and Rivera – Letters Nov 26
	28-29	Thanksgiving Holiday
DEC	3	Family and Relationships continued
	5	The Distance: A Question of <i>Us and Them</i> Cornel West “Introduction.” West – Presentation Dec 3
	5	Exam 2 up on Canvas
	8	Exam 2

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: Exploring the *Poverty of Philosophy*

- Ta-Nehisi Coates. 2015. Excerpts from "Letter to My Son." Atlantic, July.
- 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.

Class: Tales from the *Fast Car*

- Tal Pinchevsky. 2018. "Because Food and People are Terrible Things to Waste" *Ozymandias*, May 22.
- H. Luke Shaefer and Kathryn J. Edin. 2021. "A Simple Approach to Ending Extreme Poverty." *Atlantic*, June.

Gender: Questioning the *Formation*

- 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: The *Matrix* of Race, 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 America: 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.

(Un)equal Justice: *Crime Made in America*

- Brentin Mock. 2018. "It's Time to Stop Calling it the 'Great Migration.'" *CityLab* July 4.
- 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.

Schooling: *Freedom Writers in the Face of Inequity*

- Laura Meckler. 2022. "Public Education is Facing a Crisis of Epic Proportions." *The Washington Post*, Jan 30.
- Erica L. Green. 2021. "A Program for Disadvantaged Teens Could Shake Up Elite Admissions." *The New York Times*, Feb 18.

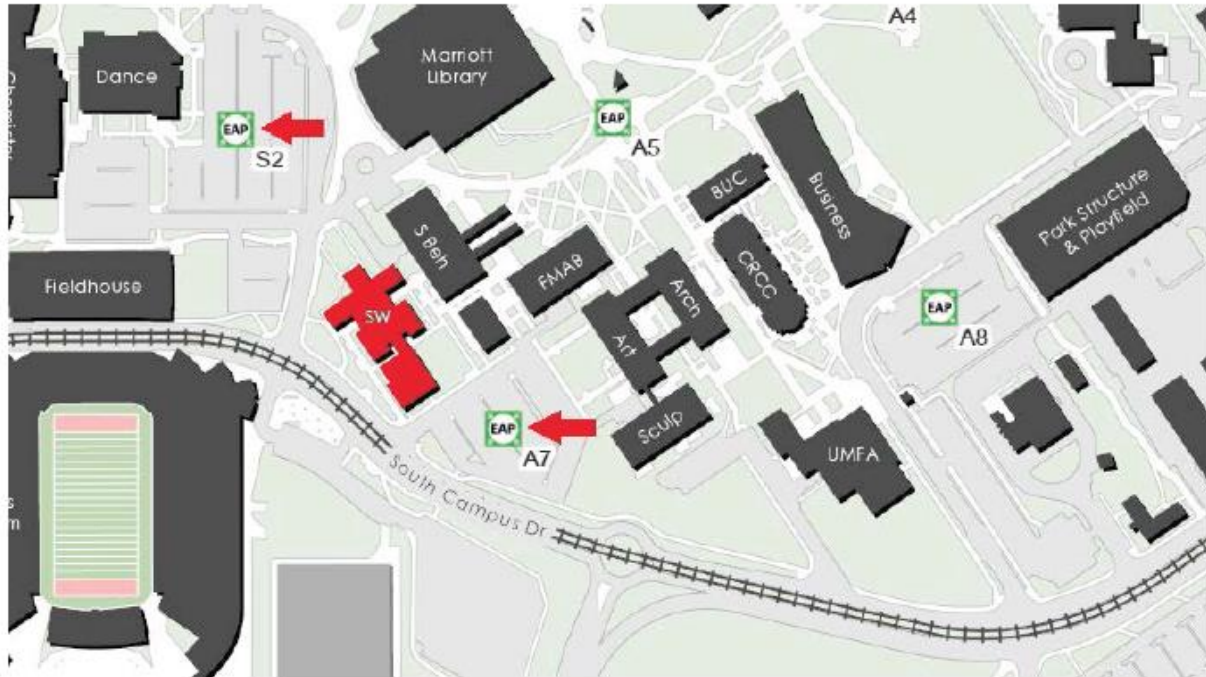
Family and Relationships: We're Just *Ordinary People*

- 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: A Question of *Us and Them*

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

CSBS EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN



BUILDING EVACUATION

EAP (Emergency Assembly Point) – When you receive a notification to evacuate the building either by campus text alert system or by building fire alarm, please follow your instructor in an orderly fashion to the EAP marked on the map below. Once everyone is at the EAP, you will receive further instructions from Emergency Management personnel. You can also look up the EAP for any building you may be in on campus at <http://emergencymanagement.utah.edu/eap>.



CAMPUS RESOURCES

U Heads Up App: There's an app for that. Download the app on your smartphone at alert.utah.edu/headsup to access the following resources:

- **Emergency Response Guide:** Provides instructions on how to handle any type of emergency, such as earthquake, utility failure, fire, active shooter, etc. Flip charts with this information are also available around campus.
- **See Something, Say Something:** Report unsafe or hazardous conditions on campus. If you see a life threatening or emergency situation, please call 911!

Safety Escorts: For students who are on campus at night or past business hours and would like an escort to your car, please call **801-585-2677**. You can call 24/7 and a security officer will be sent to walk with you or give you a ride to your desired on-campus location.