

***Critical Race Theory:
Why it's Banned and Why it Matters***
Professor Jen Roth-Gordon
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Course Description

In this class, we will break down the controversies surrounding Critical Race Theory. We begin by defining the many terms that have moved out of scholarly circles and into the headlines: including critical race theory, structural racism, white supremacy, white privilege, anti-blackness, settler colonialism, racial hierarchy, and Islamophobia. We then dig more deeply into the research and evidence for structural racism, examining case studies on the criminal justice system, drug policies, mass incarceration, police violence, health, education, the environment, housing, the economy, the job market, and voter suppression. Lectures and readings will focus on racial inequality and its impact on African Americans, Latinx peoples, Asian Americans, Indigenous people, and Arab Americans in the US context, but international examples will be discussed as well. This class will be especially useful for anyone who wants to be exposed to an engaging and interactive synthesis of the last few decades of academic scholarship and hopes to equip themselves with relevant data and theoretical concepts.

This course assumes no prior knowledge in critical race studies, and there will be time dedicated each class to addressing participants' specific interests and questions. Based on the professor's training and experience, the class will offer an anthropological lens to approaching current day racial ideas and experiences of inequality, while pointing out important historical connections. Supplemental recommendations for readings to go deeper into any of the course topics will also be provided. Participants from a wide range of backgrounds are welcome, and educators who would like more solid grounding in these issues to better support their students are especially encouraged to participate.

Faculty Bio

Jen Roth-Gordon is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Arizona where she has taught racial and social justice classes to thousands of undergraduate and graduate students since 2004. Her first book, *Race and the Brazilian Body: Blackness, Whiteness, and Everyday Language in Rio de Janeiro*, interrogates racial inequality and common beliefs in the superiority of whiteness and has been taught in university classes around the country. She is currently working on two new research projects, one on middle-class parenting and connections between the defense of whiteness and racial violence and the other on extreme heat and experiences of structural racism in Rio.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Race, Racism, and Racial Hierarchy

Hannah-Jones, Nikole. 2021. "Nikole Hannah-Jones and the Country We Have," *NPR Throughline Podcast*, November 18, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/11/17/1056618320/nikole-hannah-jones-and-the-country-we-have>.

Biewen, John. 2020. "The Lie that Invented Racism." *Ted*, November 1, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oIZDtqWX6Fk&feature=youtu.be>.

California Newsreel. 2003. *Race: The Power of an Illusion*. Chapter 1: The Difference Between Us. Documentary.

California Newsreel. 2003. *Race: The Power of an Illusion*. Chapter 3: The House We Live In (especially minutes 25-51). Documentary.

Ferrari, Michelle. 2018. *The Eugenics Crusade*. PBS American Experience. Documentary.

Week 2: Structural Racism

Hannah-Jones, Nikole. 2015. "The Problem We All Live With" (Podcast, part 1). *This American Life*. <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/562/the-problem-we-all-live-with-part-one>.

Borr, Tamara Gilkes. 2019. "How the War on Drugs Kept Black Men out of College." *The Atlantic*, May 15, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2019/05/war-drugs-made-it-harder-black-men-attend-college/588724/>.

Martin, Nina, ProPublica, and Renee Montagne. 2017. "Nothing Protects Black Women from Dying in Pregnancy and Childbirth." *ProPublica*, Dec. 7, 2017, <https://www.propublica.org/article/nothing-protects-black-women-from-dying-in-pregnancy-and-childbirth>.

Khazan, Olga. 2018. "Being Black in America Can Be Hazardous to Your Health." *The Atlantic*, July/Aug, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/07/being-black-in-america-can-be-hazardous-to-your-health/561740/>

Gross, Terry. 2017. "A 'Forgotten History' of How the U.S. Government Segregated America." *NPR Fresh Air*, May 3, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/05/03/526655831/a-forgotten-history-of-how-the-u-s-government-segregated-america>

Vox. 2020. "How the US Poisoned Navajo Nation." *YouTube*, October 12, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETPogv1zq08>.

Week 3: Anti-Blackness and Racial Violence

DuVernay, Ava. 2016. *13th: From Slave to Criminal with One Amendment*. Available on Netflix or YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krfcq5pF8u8>. [watch time: 1h 40m]

Kendi, Ibram X. 2020. "The American Nightmare." *The Atlantic*, June 1, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/american-nightmare/612457/>.

Miraya Ross, Kihana. 2020. "Call It What It Is: Anti-Blackness." *New York Times*, June 4, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/04/opinion/george-floyd-anti-blackness.html>.

Burton, Orisanmi. 2015. To Protect and Serve Whiteness. *North American Dialogue* 18(2):38–50.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2015. "The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration." *The Atlantic*, October, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/10/the-black-family-in-the-age-of-mass-incarceration/403246/>.

García, Armando. 2019. Disposable Subjects: Staging Illegality and Racial Terror in the Borderlands. *Critical Philosophy of Race* 7(1):160–166 (excerpt).

Equal Justice Initiative. 2016. "Terror Lynching in America," *YouTube*, October 11, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aS61QFzk2tI>.

Smith, Christen. 2013. "An Open Love Note to My Son: On Mourning, Love, and Black Motherhood." *The Feminist Wire*, July 14, 2013, <https://thefeministwire.com/2013/07/an-open-love-note-to-my-son-on-mourning-love-and-black-motherhood/>

Week 4: Whiteness

Loewen, James. 2018. The Importance of Sundown Towns (intro) in *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*. New York, NY: New Press. 3–23.

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. 2014. Introduction: The Land (chapter 1), *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. 1–14.

Treuer, David. 2021. "Return the National Parks to the Tribes: The Jewels of America's Landscape Should Belong to America's Original Peoples." *The Atlantic*, May 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/05/return-the-national-parks-to-the-tribes/618395/>

Razack, Sharene H. 2022. Anti-Muslim Racism, Whiteness, White Supremacy, and Law (introduction), in *Nothing Has to Make Sense: Upholding White Supremacy through Anti-Muslim Racism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1–23 (excerpt).

Schwartz, Patricia. 2020. "Ancestral Geographies: The Indian School." *Journal of the Southwest Radio*. <https://jsw.arizona.edu/multimedia/podcasts/>.

Martinez, Domingo. 2012. The Mimis (chapter 10) in *The Boy Kings of Texas: A Memoir*. Guilford, TX: Lyons Press. 85-98.

Week 5: Anti-Racist Efforts and Backlash

Hannah-Jones, Nikole. 2024. "The Colorblind Campaign to Undo Civil Rights Progress," *The New York Times Magazine*, March 13, 2024,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/13/magazine/civil-rights-affirmative-action-colorblind.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare&srp=c-cb>.

Anderson, Carol. 2016. Burning *Brown* to the Ground (chapter 3) in *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury USA. 41–59.

Williams, Johnny E. 2020. "I Tweeted 'Whiteness Is Terrorism' and Was Condemned for It. Here's Why I'm Right." *Hartford Courant*, February 28, 2020,

<https://www.courant.com/opinion/op-ed/hc-op-reconnecting-williams-whiteness-is-terrorism-0228-20200228-nvrnyhfyn5aqfndbtbm7dxlhl4-story.html>.

Webber, Nahliah. 2020. "If You Really Want to Make a Difference in Black Lives, Change How You Teach White Kids." *Education Post*, June 29, 2020, <https://educationpost.org/if-you-really-want-to-make-a-difference-in-black-lives-change-how-you-teach-white-kids/>

Hannah-Jones, Nikole. 2020. "What is Owed." *New York Times Magazine*, June 30, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/24/magazine/reparations-slavery.html>.

Givens, Jarvis R. 2021. "What's Missing From the Discourse about Anti-Racist Teaching," *The Atlantic*, May 21, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/05/whats-missing-from-the-discourse-about-anti-racist-teaching/618947/>.