

## RACE, SEX, DIFFERENCE

INT 407/307-301

x-listed with PAX, SOC, Geo

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Class time: Th 6-9pm Classroom: A&L 405  
Office hrs: By appointment M, T, W, F after 10am

### Course description:

This course explores the idea of ontology in relation to sex, race, and difference, and the difference that ontology makes in thinking about how power circulates and operates. We begin with five cultural material premises in relation to the human species and difference: humans evolved through dimorphic “sex”; they are born the most physiologically premature and dependent of any primate species; human infants come to recognize and work with difference dyadically (in relation to the care-giving (m)other) and through the disciplinary functions of signification including language; and that leaning about, and *realizing*, difference is so traumatic that a libidinal-psychical terrain emerges that is largely opposed to it, the “unconscious.”

These premises are inter-related. Physiological immaturity, for instance, has to do with the exceptionally hefty human head that houses a similarly precocious brain. If the rest of the in vitro body were to catch up with its big brain, the entire assemblage would be too large to stay in or leave the womb. The skull is still too large to exit, as-is. It has therefore evolved to have integrated flexible plates that slide over one another that compress as the infant enters the birth canal, these rebounding slowly afterwards.

The pre-mature newborn body is problematic on two major grounds. First, its physiological immaturity makes it vulnerable to death unless it is kept relatively safe from environmental dangers, and it is neurologically not well connected to its brain. Hence, for nearly a year after birth the child cannot mobilize or address its needs on its own, instead crying to signal its needs, the relative immediacy of a (m)otherly response creating a sense that the care-giving two (dyad)—infant and (m)other—is actually One. It will take even longer for the child to stand, walk and speak, much of the brain’s extensive circuitry dedicated to carrying out a remarkable array of signifying practices, including language and speech, these effectively extinguishing the need for *instinct* (human newborns have no instinctual sense of where to find food, for instance). That is, signification will create *worlds of sociality* upon which species survival will (in lieu of instinct) depend. Until the newborn’s physical and neurological capacities become integrated and ready to do this, however, the infant will continue to depend on the dyadic relations of ((m)othering) that collapse the two into One. Childhood will therefore be a time of anxiety as the infant learns to see the (m)other as different from itself and to recognize that this (m)other is tied to, and desires, a signifying world operating beyond it.

The peculiar characteristics of the newborn human are part and parcel of how the *maternal* body evolved to have: uterine capacities able to accommodate long gestational periods; an amply flexible birth canal; lactating breasts that react to an infant’s cries; and varied means for distributing antigens to the child during and after birth. (*It was precisely because the indigenous maternal body did not give birth to the colonizer that indigenous children succumbed to the diseases brought from Europe, nearly eliminating the majority of indigenous populations in the Americas.*) The ontological and somewhat divine value of the maternal as the site of new life figures prominently in archaeological records from the Paleolithic era to non-state-based agrarian societies where the child (as future labor) is largely relied on for group survival. Its historical and geographical predominance begs the question of how and why *paternity* came into signifying existence. After all, paternity is indecipherable and illegible in human societies

where female monogamy does not exist. Through what cultural material processes, then, did “fatherhood” or the paternal come to displace the importance of the maternal-child relation?

To theorize this shift, we move from ontology to *epistemology*, that is, the organizing of cultural material practices and procedures to create worlds of truth that exist only through signifying logics that elaborate material effects. The most powerful epistemological device ever deployed against the maternal body was “private property,” the signifying-material effects of which were mobilized to compete with the ontological value accorded dyadic life and to assert the primacy or phallicism of the paternal. The epistemological breadth and rootedness of private property across cultural material life transformed it into an ontology able to both subsume the maternal/child relation (both could be *owned*) and sever the connection between dyadic life and fortune. In the process, binary sex became an instrumental means of paternal scrutiny and control.

Unlike “sex,” race never operated outside the context of private property and the paternal. Accordingly, it is manifested only through the signifying and organizing devices of epistemology. Moreover, “sex” and “race” became instrumental to one another as means of shoring up the phallic function of paternity. One of the earliest signifying manifestations of “race” will register in the myriad of slavery practices worldwide that shored up ideas of possession through war, thus making the children of other (m)others your paternal own. Through the making and signifying of possession (bodies, labor, the maternal, land) the ontology of race unfolded alongside sex, the particularities of territorial and bodily desires shaping how race would manifest.

### **Course objectives:**

To understand and be able to articulate and analyze:

- What ontology and epistemology have to do with sex, race, and difference in relation to signifying practices, truth, and power.
- What is meant by *instrumentality* in relation to 1.
- Empirical examples of ontology, epistemology, and instrumentality in relation to sex, race, and difference.
- The cultural material processes through which genitalia-based sexual difference came to matter more than the difference of life/new life registered by the maternal/child dyad.
- how difference can be parsed and addressed across scales and disciplines, particularly in relation to psychoanalysis and geopolitical economy.

### **Campus writing resources:**

The University Center for Writing-Based Learning (<http://condor.depaul.edu/writing/>) collaborates with writers from all disciplines, backgrounds, levels of expertise, and roles within the University community. Their goal is to help develop better writers along with better writing and reflection through continual revision. If you need assistance with writing assignments, they can be contacted at: 773.325.4272 (LPC) or [wcenter@depaul.edu](mailto:wcenter@depaul.edu)

### **Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:**

Academic honesty and integrity are expected at all times. Plagiarism – using someone else’s work without acknowledgment and, therefore, presenting their ideas or quotations as your own work – is strictly forbidden. DePaul University officials will be informed of any instance of academic dishonesty and notification will be placed in your file. Please read the DePaul Academic Integrity Resources page (<http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/Resources/index.html>) for definitions and explanations of plagiarism and the University’s Academic Integrity expectations for students.

*Note: cutting and pasting text directly from any source—including the Internet-- without appropriate referencing and/or quotation marks is plagiarism and must be reported to DePaul authorities. So please be careful.*

### **Attendance vs Participation:**

Attendance is essential. After two unexcused absences, your grade is significantly lowered. If you need information about a class that you missed and the absence was unexcused, I encourage you to contact classmates for information. If the absence is excused, please consult with me about what you missed, bringing proof of what it was that prevented your attendance. If you are unsure about what constitutes an emergency, feel free to contact me.

30% of your grade is based on participation, which is much more than attendance. Much of this grade comes from how well you do on the regular in-class quizzes and the degree to which your active participation in class and with class colleagues demonstrates a sustained engagement with the texts and related midterm and final materials.

### **Learning Accommodations**

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD). This enables you to access to accommodations and support services that will help ensure your success. There are two office locations:

**Loop Campus** - Lewis Center #1420 - (312) 362-8002

**Lincoln Park Campus** - Student Center #370 - (773) 325-1677

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions are confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate and reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the PLS Program (for LD, AD/HD) at 773-325-1677, Student Center #370, and/or The Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at 773-325-1677, Student Center #370 (<http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/plus/index.asp>)

### **Classroom learning**

Learning is a practice and there are ways of helping yourself to learn that have proven to be useful

- 1) Take notes
- 2) Speak up in class. Regularly formulating and articulating your ideas helps to consolidate ideas, develop public speaking skills and confidences, and create a more dynamic group centered learning dynamic that can model all future learning.
- 3) Listen with care to others.
- 4) Improve your personal presentation skills, e.g., not repeating the word “like” when speaking, and being more formal in how you articulate your thoughts.

### **Grading:**

There are two assignments, the writing quality *and* rigor of the research determining the grade assigned. Since the INT department stresses the importance of writing well, 50% of the grade awarded for all writing assignments is based on the technical qualities (rather than stylistic elements) of writing and 50% on content.

30% class participation, class-related writing assignments, Midterm Quiz

35% Midterm Template Exam with trends

35% Final paper

### **Course readings:**

#### **Week 1: Theorizing 'sex' outside gender**

Foucault, Michel. 1978. *History of sexuality, volume 1*, Part 1 – We “Other Victorians”; (pp 1-13; Part 3 - Scientia sexualis (53-73); and Part 4, Chapter 3 – Domain (pp 92-102).

View the Frontline 20 minute documentary about Mosuo women in southwestern China, *The women's kingdom*. ([http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/rough/2005/07/introduction\\_to.html](http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/rough/2005/07/introduction_to.html))

#### **Week 2: Theorizing maternal generativity/value through 'sex,' lineage, and the competitive ontology of private property; coloniality as maternal theft**

Engels, Friedrich. 1884. *Origins of the family, private property, and the state*. Read: The monogamous family (16pp) See: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/index.htm>

Fanon, F. 1963. *Wretched of the earth*. New York, NY: Grove Press. Read: Concerning violence

Alloula, Malek. 1986. *Colonial harem*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. Read Chapter 10, The colonial harem - images of a suberoticism.

Claire Denis (dir). 1988. *Chocolat*. <https://www.123movies.st/watch/chocolat.jj904/pnx1m9> Orion Classics. 105 min.

#### **Week 3: 'Sexed' 'being' (ontology) and the maternal body as an instrument of power**

Irigaray, Luce. 2013. *In the beginning she was*, Chapter 3. London: Bloomsbury.

*BBC News*, Africa. 2012. Togo women call sex strike against President Gnassingbe. 27 August.

van Allen, Judith. 1972. "Sitting on a man": Colonialism and the lost political institutions of Igbo women. *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 6(2): 165-181. *Use Google Scholar to locate this article and to make sure that your computer is tethered to the DePaul library system. If not, go to the library and ask a librarian to show you how to do this.*

Phillip Noyce (dir). 2002. *Rabbit proof fence*. Rumbalara Films. 93 min.

#### **Week 4: Psychoanalysis, rape, and ontological difference**

Kapoor, Ilan. 2017. Introduction, Epilogue, and Chapter 4 in *Psychoanalysis and the Global*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Baaz, Maria Eriksson and Maria Stern. 2009. Why do soldiers rape? Masculinity, violence, and sexuality in the Armed Forces in the Congo (DRC). *International Studies Quarterly* 53: 495-518.

Martin, Ariel. 2016. *iMom*. <https://vimeo.com/157977103>.

#### **Week 5: Performative histories of race**

Saldanha, Arun. 2005. Trance and visibility at dawn: racial dynamics in Goa's rave scene. *Social & Cultural Geography* 6(5): 707-721.

Heng, Geraldine. 2018. Teaching essay | Race in the European Middle Ages. [Link](#)

Souleymane Cisse (dir). 1987. *Yeelen* 106 minutes

**Week 6: The end of maternal/difference?: the Machine as masculinist vehicle of value and purveyor of death**

Nast, Heidi J. 2015. The Machine-Phallus: Psychoanalyzing the geopolitical economy of masculinity and race. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 35(8): 766-785.

Nast, Heidi J. 2017. Queering the maternal?: Unhinging supremacist geographies of the Machine, markets, and recreational pleasure. *Society & Space* online. (Google the title for the open access link and full article)

Watch these following video shorts:

*The Guardian*. 2016. *The last job on Earth: Imagining a fully automated world*. (less than 2:53 minutes). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yvs7f4UaKLo>. 17 February.

Schumann, Fritz. Dir. 2014. *Valley of dolls*. (6:29 minutes) <https://vimeo.com/92453765>.

**Week 7: Lecture 1. Lacan: the maternal/child relation, the imaginary, and mastery; questions of sexed competition and race. Midterm quiz is due.**

**Week 8: Lecture 2. Friedrich Engels radical mapping of sex and political economy.**

Hand in: Midterm quiz, three templates, home work exercise (story board).

**Week 9: Enlightenment, race, and revolution** (*D2L contains the first article, since it is a book chapter; the others you will find on your own using Google Scholar*)

Eze, Emmanuel. 1997. Race, history, and imperialism. Ch 10 in *Race and the Enlightenment*. London: Blackwell.

Simone, AbdouMalik. 2016. Urbanity and generic blackness. *Theory, Culture & Society* 33(708): 183-203.

Winnubst, Shannon. 2016. Is the mirror racist? Interrogating the space of whiteness. *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 30(1): 25-50.

Upload Midterm Templates to D2L by 11:59pm 6 March unless an accommodation has been negotiated with the instructor

15 templates for undergraduates

20 for graduates

**Week 10: The end of the maternal as the end of the world?**

D'Emilio, J. 1993. [1983]. Capitalism and gay identity. In H. Abelove, M.A. Barele, and D.M. Halperin (eds) *Powers of desire: The lesbian and gay studies reader*, 467-78. New York: Routledge.

Gupta, K. 2017. What does asexuality teach us about sexual disinterest? Recommendations for health professionals based on a qualitative study with asexually-identified people. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*. 43(1): 1-14.

Gupta, K. 2015. Compulsory sexuality: Evaluating an emerging concept. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 41(1): 131-154.

Massot, James (dir). 2010. *My sex robot*. Netflix.

In-class review of Final Paper Guidelines

**Week 11 (Finals week): 21 March Upload Final paper to D2L by 11:59pm.**

10 pages for undergraduates

15 pages for graduates.