

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 453 (L01): Race, Representation, and Media

FALL 2021: September 7 to December 9 (excluding Nov. 7-13)

Lecture: MW 9:30 to 10:45

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR IN-PERSON COURSE DELIVERY

Note: This course will be delivered in-person. If you are unable to participate in-class owing to time differences or geographical location, please arrange to take this course in a future term. Masks are mandatory in the classroom and must be worn at all times during class (i.e., covering mouth and nose). Failure to comply with this policy will result in dismissal from the classroom and possible disciplinary action under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Instructor:	Dr. Arti Modgill
Email:	arti.modgill2@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	Tuesdays 9:30am to 11:30am (<i>via zoom</i>)

Course Description

Introduces critical race and intersectional feminist frameworks for examining representations of race and racialized identities in media culture(s) and texts. Emphasis on the production and circulation of racial discourse(s) in mass media, popular culture, and activist media. This course may not be repeated for credit.

This course critically examines representations of race and racialized identities in Canadian and American media cultures. Students are introduced to critical race and intersectional feminist frameworks for analyzing representations, programming policy, and mediated practices generated within “post-racial” cultural contexts. The class also specifically considers the circulation of racialized discourses in digital culture(s), as well as anti-racist activism. Current examples from political and popular culture will be used to illustrate these issues and debates.

Prerequisite(s)

Communication and Media Studies 371

Antirequisite(s)

Credit for Communication and Media Studies 453 and 401.54 will not be allowed.

Additional Information

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found on D2L.

Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

Please note that we will be studying some challenging material in this course that may involve coarse language, discussion of racist rhetoric and white supremacy, discriminatory practices, and depictions of racialized violence. In addition, we will look at the intersections

of critical race theory and gender studies in our discussions of representations of racialized people.

This course offers a combination of lecture, class discussion, and some small group discussion. Coming to class having read the assigned readings and prepared to discuss the material in a respectful, informed manner is essential to success in this course.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- understand how notions of race have been defined and shaped in mediated forms;
- recognize power relationships, including the relative privilege or marginalization of social groups, including one's own;
- identify media practices and discourses that shape perceptions;
- demonstrate this understanding through identification and analysis of current instances of racial politics and controversies.

Textbooks and Readings

Course readings will be made available on the COMS 453 L01 website in D2L.

Mark Allocation

Critical Reading Responses (2x10%)	Sept. 29 & Nov. 24	20%
Midterm Exam	Oct. 13	25%
Analytical Essay	Nov. 3	30%
Take Home Final	Dec. 8	25%

Assessments

Critical Reader Responses

Students will complete two critically engaged writing activities of 600 to 700 words. These short writing pieces will be evaluated for their critical engagement with ideas, texts and authors on the syllabus and will be evaluated according to clarity, organization, grammatical fluency, and the argumentative sophistication expected in a university course at the 400 level. The responses must use a close reading based interpretive approach to generate an argument about a text or idea. All responses should identify a critical problem or question that a text poses, suggest an answer to it, and then explain the significance of that answer to how one reads and interprets the text.

Students are encouraged to use these activities to think about how discourses which inform representations of race are constructed and discussed in the texts and media artefacts we read and interrogate. The two reader responses should cover works and information from lectures in roughly the first and second parts of the course. More information on these assignments will be discussed in class and the instructions will be posted to D2L.

Analytical Essay

Students will write an essay of 2500 words which analyses a media artefact by applying the perspective of critical race theory and its intersections as covered in our readings and discussions. These essays will take the approach of textual analysis to critically engage with the course theme. More information on topics and assignment guidelines will be discussed in class and instructions will be posted to D2L.

Students are strongly advised to visit the instructor during office hours to get guidance on their essay and discuss their topic and thesis prior to writing the essay.

Midterm and Final Exams

The exams will assess your knowledge and understanding of both the readings and class lectures.

Midterm

The midterm exam will assess your knowledge of both the readings and class lectures. Students will have 70 minutes to write a closed book in-class exam consisting of approximately 4-6 short answer and 2 essay questions. The midterm will cover readings, lectures, class discussion and activities to the exam date.

Take Home Final

The take home final exam will be distributed to students in the second to last week of the course. The open book exam consisting of 2 essay questions will cover readings, lectures, class discussion and activities over the term, but also focus heavily on material after the midterm. Students' responses should be approximately 3 pages for each question, typed and double spaced. The exam will require in-text citations and references to texts to support answers to the questions.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Note: All major assignments (worth 10 percent or more) must be completed, or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor. Failing grades on individual assignments may be averaged out to a final passing grade by other assessment components.

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments by uploading them to the designated D2L *dropbox before the start of each class in which they are due*. Include your name, course, and instructor's name on all assignments. Be sure to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to submit the proper version.

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recording for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. Essays more than one week late will not be accepted without prior approval of the instructor. In the event of a serious illness, please contact me immediately about an extension.

Policy on the use of Electronic Communication Devices

Laptops, tablets, and mobile phones may be used in class and tutorials only for course-related purposes and only if their use is not distracting others or negatively impacting the learning environment. **No audio or video recording is allowed in any class without the instructor's explicit permission.**

Taking notes

Research studies have shown that handwritten class notes are markedly superior in terms of acquiring a more thorough understanding of course material and for retention of material in one's memory. Keep in mind that it is the student's responsibility to take notes. (In other words, notes are not given but taken.) Sometimes students assume that notes should be taken only when there is a PowerPoint Presentation on the screen, but this is not true.

Email

Email is most useful for short, specific inquiries. If you have detailed questions on the course material, assignments, or grades, visit the instructor during office hours. The instructor will respond to emails during the week, usually on a first-come, first-served basis. Emails sent in the evening or on weekends will not be read (or replied to) until the next working day.

When corresponding with the instructor via email, students should include the course name (ex. COMS 453) in the subject line. If you do not include the course name in your email's subject line, your message may get overlooked in the instructor's inbox and go unread. Please maintain a respectful tone in your correspondence with the instructor.

NOTE: Email submissions of work will not be accepted unless otherwise specified.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. For the full policy on Student Accommodations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-accommodation-policy>

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require a medical note. For information on the use of a statutory declaration, see the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, letter grades will be used for written assignments, while percentage or numerical grades will be used for exams.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support>

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including lectures, course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed, or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

To ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes & electronic versions of textbooks), all students are required to read the *University of Calgary Policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright* at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy> and the requirements of the *Copyright Act* (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferral of term work, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk. For resources on D2L, Zoom, Yuja, etc., see <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

See the course website on D2L for the scheduled of topics and readings.