Topics in Political Theory (Privilege and Race in Global Perspective)
POL381H
Fall 2021

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Office hours: Mondays, 12-1pm (in person)
Wednesdays 1-2pm (on Zoom)
Or by appointment

Grader: Andrew Young (andrewj.young@mail.utoronto.ca)

Class Meetings: SS2127, Mondays, 2-4pm

PLEASE NOTE: In order to accommodate students whose arrivals in Toronto have been delayed, the first two class meetings will be conducted on Zoom and recorded. Full details to follow.

Course Description:
Critical Race Theory (CRT) has emerged as a profoundly impactful field of study, whose influence has travelled far beyond its original grounding in legal studies in North America. It has spawned a host of “response” subfields that adopt CRT methods and orientations, but seek to identify the particularities of subject positions beyond the distinctly racial focus of the field. It has also developed alongside studies of Whiteness and privilege, particularly intersectional and contextual understandings of privilege. However, much of the academic and policy focus of CRT and its offshoots still makes reference to racial identity structures common to the US context. This course will consider how notions of race and privilege “travel” and how they have developed and functioned in contexts outside of a North American White/non-White categorization.

We will review arguments that seek to situate “Whiteness” globally, as well as other localized iterations of ascriptive privilege, trying to identify particular characteristics, dynamics and mechanisms of privilege, including its nested nature when moving from the local to the global. Similarly, we will look at how colonial histories and ongoing settler-colonial occupations have shaped identities and the relationships between them in specific places. In doing this work, we will also study the ways in which theoretical formulations of race do and do not map on to categories such as indigeneity, caste and ethnicity. This will help us to identify ways in which CRT’s insights can be useful in understanding identity privilege elsewhere, as well as the ways in which studies of privilege in other places can help inform broader academic and policy discussions on addressing privilege and its accompanying effects.

[PLEASE NOTE: While course assignments and delivery/participation methods may seem extensive, the number and type of assignments is designed to lower the stakes for any given assignment and to give you an opportunity to practice and develop a range of important skills. The many modes of delivery and participation are intended to allow you to engage with course materials on your own time as much as possible, and to provide multiple pathways for doing so, knowing that some students will face technological or other and that some are not necessarily comfortable participating in large group settings. Please feel free to talk to me if you have questions or concerns about the course design.]

Course Readings:
All required and additional course readings are available online, either as copyright-compliant postings on the course Quercus site or as links to the University of Toronto Libraries electronic collection. You are responsible for completing all readings by the dates indicated on the syllabus. The additional readings are
optional but strongly encouraged. I also strongly encourage you to look at several of the class discussant responses each week as they are posted by your fellow students.

**Course Requirements:**

Class Participation (10%): Recognizing the challenge of robust participation amidst the uncertainty of COVID and the possibility of unexpected switches to online learning, this part of your grade will be calculated through the equal weight of three components:

1. The completion of short, occasional “in-class” writing responses, usually assigned in a pre-recorded lecture, with responses submitted on Quercus.
2. Attendance at and participation in the weekly small group discussions from Weeks 4-11.
3. Other forms of in-class or online engagement, including: direct participation during full-class discussions; commenting in weekly open discussion threads on Quercus; or talking with me about course ideas over email or during office hours.

I know that not everyone is comfortable speaking regularly in class, so I hope this range of possible methods provides an option that works for you. I still expect you to attend class regularly and maintain contact with me in order to ensure that you are meeting my expectations regarding course participation.

Class Discussant (15%): Each student must sign up to be a discussant at three class sessions during the course of the term. (Sign-up will be online and must be completed by the second class.) For each discussant session you are expected to read all assigned readings closely (I recommend that you also read the additional readings) and write a 500-800 word critical response. This is NOT a summary of the readings, but should include personal reflection on what the readings make you think about and could include questions about the readings that you wish to pose to the class, as well as your provisional responses to those questions. Each of these response papers must be posted to the course page in the appropriate “Discussions” thread **no later than 12am (midnight) the day before class.** These papers do not have to be fully developed essays, nor do they need to address all of the readings, but they should demonstrate to me that you’ve prepared for the discussion and considered some of the implications of the reading(s). You do not have to prepare a formal presentation for class. Note that discussants are discussion leaders; I still expect all of you to have read the assigned readings and a selection of other students’ discussant responses and to be prepared to participate in our discussions. Discussant responses and the questions and ideas they generate will form part of the framework for our group discussions in class. Discussant responses will be graded on a scale of “check-plus” (87), “check” (75) and “check-minus” (65). Summaries of the readings, without personal reflection or interpretive engagement, will be scored no higher than “check.”

Small Group Reflections (10%): During Weeks 4-12, students will be randomly assigned to small groups of 4-6 members, which will rotate every 2-3 weeks. Each class session will include 25-30 minutes in these small groups to discuss the readings and respond to specific prompts that I will provide. Each student will write **two** (out of three) short reflections on the dynamics and process of the small group discussions, in response to a separate prompt provided by the professor. These will be informal, personal reflections designed to get you to think about how knowledge is generated and how different discussion formats can facilitate learning and understanding. Students will write reflections for the two sub-topic periods that they have **not** chosen for their second essay. Each of these reflections must be posted to the course page **no later than 12am (midnight) on the last class day for the period (Week 7, Week 10, Week 12).** I encourage you to think about submitting these earlier than the deadline, as you are allowed to reflect on small group work from any or all of the weeks in a particular topic. Reflections will also be graded on a scale of “check-plus” (87), “check” (75) and “check-minus” (65).

Essay Questions (20% first essay, 25% second essay): Each student will submit essays of 1,500-2,000 words responding to given prompts two times throughout the term. **All students will respond to the first essay option (due on Quercus no later than 12am (midnight) on Week 4) and can then choose another**
essay option (due on Quercus no later than 12am (midnight) on Weeks 7, 10 or 12). (Sign-up will be online and must be completed by the second class.) For these papers, I expect a level of organization and clarity of argument that is different than the more informal or speculative reflection that characterizes the Class Discussant responses. You will be required to cite something from the relevant readings (and you are welcome to use additional sources); you may use any standard citation style but you must be consistent. I will provide more guidance on essay writing in a mini-workshop during Week 3’s class.

**PLEASE NOTE: Between the Small Group Reflections and the Essays, every student will have something due Weeks 4, 7, 10 and 12. Also note that Class Discussant Responses are due by 11:59pm the day before class, so I can have time to incorporate your ideas into our class discussion. All other assignments are due by 11:59pm the day of class.**

Final Exam (20%): The final will be an open book, take-home exam that is a mixture of 1) short answer explanation questions that ask you to apply course concepts to topics we have not explicitly studied or ask you to reflect on the implications of some of our readings and 2) longer comparative and exploratory essays that invite you to put the authors we have read in conversation in creative ways. It will draw on all the required readings from the course but you will have a choice of which questions to answer and I will provide a review guide several weeks in advance. The final will take place during the December exam period and, although it is intended to be completed in 2 hours, you will have no less than 24 hours to complete it, to take into consideration time differences or other impediments.

Delivery/Participation Methods:
- **Readings** (available through Quercus; to be done in advance of the scheduled class meeting)
- **Reading Questions** (optional; posted weekly on Quercus; designed to help guide your study and provide confidence that you are recognizing and understanding some of the main arguments from each reading)
- **Class Lecture** (longer, pre-recorded lecture(s); posted weekly on Quercus; providing an overview of the readings and their arguments; ideally watch/listen to this lecture after you do the readings but before the scheduled class meeting)
- **Class Discussant Posts** (assigned short response papers—described above—that are posted publicly on Quercus to share students’ reactions to and analysis of the readings; I will read all of these in advance of the scheduled class meeting and use them to plan our group discussion)
- **Open Discussion Thread** (optional; for posting brief questions, ideas, responses or concerns about the readings that you’d like to share with classmates and incorporate into our group discussion)
- **Small Group Discussions** (in class, after a brief introduction, we will split into groups; I will provide 2-3 discussion questions each week to guide 20-30 minutes of small group discussion)
- **All-Class Discussions** (after the small group time, we will reconvene to share insights from the small groups and discuss further implications of the readings)
- **Office Hours** (held in-person and virtually for 2 hours a week, as indicated above; also available by appointment via Skype or another platform)
- **Announcements** (reminders of assignments due, updates on course plans or changes)

Course Policies:

Late Work/Make-up Exams
Please plan to submit your work on time and do your best to meet the set deadlines. Cultivating strong time-management skills is an important part of your university education. At the same time, I know that life can intervene, and the coming year promises to be just as uncertain as the last. My goal is to help you learn the materials and complete the assignments to the best of your ability, even if this takes a few extra days. If you find yourself needing an extension, please reach out as soon as possible. In requesting an extension, please include:
1. The reason for your request (but please note that you are not required to disclose medical or other personal information in detail).
2. A proposal for a new deadline.
3. Additional documentation (like a doctor’s note) is helpful but not required.

All late work that is not excused in advance will be penalized at a rate of 2% per day of lateness. I guarantee that I will give every request serious consideration. Your success in this course and your personal well-being are both important to me.

Accessibility Policy
I do my best to welcome students with diverse learning styles and needs in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. I know that this formal process can be slow, so I want to encourage you to come to me in advance to talk about any accommodations you might need or challenges you might be facing. I am also open to hearing about ways in which the course environment or structure might unintentionally exclude or disadvantage certain people and will work to respond to any such concerns.

I’m always willing to work with any student to help facilitate your participation and success in this course, whether you have a formal accommodation granted or not. I recognize that a range of other circumstances might affect your ability to engage fully with course expectations. Please feel free to come to me to discuss any difficulties you are experiencing and we can work together to address them.

Attendance Policy
I expect you to be engaged with course matters as much as you are able, including doing the weekly readings, listening to pre-recorded lectures, and attending and participating in class discussions. I also recognize that your ability to access materials or participate in discussions might fluctuate, due to technological limitations, environmental stresses or other factors. If you’re having trouble keeping up, please get in touch with me and we can work together to find a suitable way forward.

Grading Policy
I will be happy to discuss any grades that I give on assignments. I will do my best to communicate the criteria I’ll be grading on in advance but please ask questions if you are confused. If you feel that I have made an error, you can take it up with me through the following procedure (Please note that I will only discuss issues with grading during the 7 days after the assignment has been handed back):
1. Wait a minimum of 24 hours after receiving your grade to contact me.
2. Put in writing the reasons why you are dissatisfied with the grade.
3. Bring the assignment/exam and your written statement to my office hours to discuss.

For assignments graded by the Grader, the same policy applies, and your first submission to discuss a grade should be to the Grader. If you are still dissatisfied with the resolution, you may contact me, providing the previous communication with the Grader and a further explanation of why you think the assigned grade was not appropriate. Please note that initiating a challenge to a grade means that the grade could go up, stay the same or go down.

Academic Integrity:
Cheating and plagiarism are offenses against academic integrity and are subject to disciplinary action by the university. Plagiarism is copying someone else’s work and presenting it as your own (by not attributing it to its true source). If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me. I take this matter very seriously and will NOT tolerate plagiarism. Let me stress again; if you are unsure about how to properly cite an idea, please ask me. Otherwise, I expect university students to know proper citation methods, styles and norms. Your Essays will all be submitted using an online plagiarism
detection tool; if you would like to request an alternate method of submission, please let me know and we can arrange this.

Course Readings:

Week 1 (Sept 13): Starting Points I: Privilege
Required Readings
Hutcherson, Lori Lakin. 2016. “My white friend asked me to explain white privilege, so I decided to be honest.” *Good Black News,* July 14.

Additional Readings

Week 2 (Sept 20): Starting Points II: Race and Critical Race Theory
Required Readings

Additional Readings

Week 3 (Sept 27): Starting Points III: Intersectionality and the Racial Contract/Mini-Writing Workshop
Required Readings

Additional Readings

**Week 4 (Oct 4): Colonial Constructions of Race**

*Required Readings*


*Additional Readings*


(**First Essay Question due date**)

**Please Note: No class in Week 5 (Oct 11) due to holiday**

**Week 6 (Oct 18): Racialized Onto-Epistemologies**

*Required Readings*


*Additional Readings*


**Week 7 (Oct 25): Positionality and Perspective**

*Required Readings*


*Additional Readings*


Week 8 (Nov 1): Race in Latin America: Discourses of Mestizaje
Required Readings
Moreno Figueroa, Mónica G. and Emiko Saldívar Tanaka. 2016. “‘We are Not Racists, we are Mexicans’: Privilege, Nationalism and Post-Race Ideology in Mexico.” *Critical Sociology* 42 (4-5): 515-533.

Additional Readings

**Please Note: No class on Nov 8 for Reading Week**

Week 9 (Nov 15): Indigeneity and Settler Colonialism
Required Readings

Additional Readings

Week 10 (Nov 22): “Indigeneity” as Privilege?
Required Readings

Additional Readings

(**Third Essay Question/Small Group Response due date**)

Week 11 (Nov 29): Ethnicity and Privilege
Required Readings
Additional Readings

**Week 12 (Dec 6): Caste and Privilege**

**Required Readings**

**Additional Readings**

**(**Fourth Essay Question/Small Group Response due date**)

**Make-up Class (Dec 9): Identity Privilege in the Academy/Exam Review**

**Required Readings**