

Syllabus
Race and Ethnicity in the United States
HIST 288
Online

Contact:

Prof. Lee Willis
477 CCC
Office hours: T, W, 10:00-11:00 AM on Zoom
Email: lwillis@uwsp.edu

Required texts:

Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Back Bay, revised edition, 2008). (text rental)

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (The New Press, revised edition, 2012). (For purchase.)

Course description:

This class is an exploration of United States history from the perspective of immigration and multiculturalism. Through the lens of race and ethnicity, we will seek to understand the peopling of colonial America and the United States. More specifically, we will investigate how racial and ethnic definitions are rooted in historical context and how these constructs have changed over time.

This is an entirely online course. We will not have synchronous class meetings, but rather you will have the flexibility to complete all reading and written assignments within your own schedule. At the beginning of each week I will post announcements and video(s) on the weekly schedule and upcoming assignments.

Learning outcomes:

This course meets the General Education Program requirement for Historical Perspectives and U.S. Diversity. By the end of this course you will be able to:

1. Describe how people and institutions in the United States have constructed diverse identities and cultures.
2. Explain how individuals in the United States have responded to the experience of discrimination and inequality.
3. Demonstrate understanding of and empathetic insight about diverse cultural perspectives in the United States.
4. Use primary sources as evidence to answer questions about historical change.
5. Describe differences among interpretations of colonial America and early United States history.
6. Analyze institutional and cultural change in American society.

Grading and evaluation:

Grades in this course will consist of two exams, a book precis (a concise analytical review), four reaction papers based on primary source readings and eight reflection papers based on reading in Takaki. Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Two exams: 50% (25% each)

The New Jim Crow paper: 10%

Reaction papers (4 total): 20%

Reflection papers (8 total): 20%

Grading scale: (percentages)

A = 93-100

A- = 90-92

B+ = 87-89

B = 83-86

B- = 80-82

C+ = 77-79

C = 73-76

C- = 70-72

D+ = 67-69

D = 63-66

D- = 60-62

F = 0-59

Assignments and responsibilities:

Reading: Most weeks we will read a chapter in the Takaki textbook. Pay close attention to the larger points Takaki is making each chapter and how each chapter section reinforces this larger theme. In the second half of the semester we will read Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*. This work describes the problems of structural racism, segregation, and disfranchisement that still pervade our society today.

Reflection papers: On eight occasions in the semester you will write reflection essays on the Takaki reading. I will provide a prompt or series of questions to consider as you write your essay. These assignments will help you focus on the big picture and make larger connections in the history of race and ethnicity. The assignments will also prepare you for the midterm and final exams.

Reaction papers: These assignments are designed to develop your skills in analyzing primary sources. I will provide a primary source (a piece of evidence from the historical period under investigation) and ask you a series of questions to frame your analysis.

Analytical review: You are required to write a precis (a concise analytical review) on Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*. Detailed instructions for this assignment are posted in Canvas.

Exams: We will have a midterm and final exam in essay format. The essay questions will be posted one week before the due date. The questions will be broad and will ask you to discuss larger course themes. Reflection essays and reaction papers will help you prepare for these tests.

Late penalties: Please make every effort to turn in assignments on time. A late penalty of one-letter grade will be applied for every day an assignment is late.

Schneidkies happen: If you are dealing with difficulties in your life that are interfering with your ability to work on this course please let me know. We can work out alternative arrangements if need be.

Course outline and assigned readings:

Week of September 1: Why we need “a different mirror.” Read pp. 3-20 in Takaki.
Reflection essay #1 due Friday, September 3 at 11:00 PM.

Week of September 7: The Native American and European Encounter. Read pp. 23-48 in Takaki. Reflection essay #2 due Thursday, September 10 at 11:00 PM.

Week of September 14: The Development of Racial Slavery in the 17th and 18th centuries. Read pp. 49-71 in Takaki. Reaction paper #1 due on Thursday, September 17 at 11:00 PM.

Week of September 21: Indian Removal and the Trail of Tears. Read pp. 75-97 in Takaki. Reflection essay # 3 due on Thursday, September 24 at 11:00 PM.

Week of September 28: Racial Slavery in the 19th century. Read pp. 98-130 in Takaki. Reaction paper #2 due on Thursday, October 1 at 11:00 PM.

Week of October 5: German and Irish immigration. Read pp. 131-154 in Takaki.

Midterm exam: Due Friday, October 9 at noon.

Week of October 12: Manifest Destiny and Mexico. Read pp. 155-176 in Takaki. Reflection essay #4 due on Friday, October 16 at 11:00 PM.

Week of October 19: Pacific Immigration and the Chinese. Read pp. 177-205 in Takaki. Reflection essay #5 due on Thursday, October 22 at 11:00 PM.

Week of October 26: Native American Wars in the West. Read pp. 209-231 in Takaki. Reaction paper #3 due on Thursday, October 29 at 11:00 PM.

Week of November 2: The Rise of Jim Crow and the Great Migration. Read pp. 311-335 in Takaki and continue reading Alexander. Reflection essay #6 due on Thursday, November 5 at 11:00 PM.

Week of November 9: Eastern European and Jewish immigration. Read pp. 262-291 in Takaki. Reflection essay #7 due on Thursday, November 12 at 11:00 PM.

Week of November 16: Mexican immigration in the 20th century. Read pp. 292-310. Finish Alexander and begin working on precis. Reflection essay #8 due November 19 at 11:00 PM.

Week of November 23: Mexican immigration in the 20th century, continued. Reaction paper #4 due on Wednesday, November 25 at 11:00 PM.

Week of November 30: The Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century. Read pp. 341-382 in Takaki. **Precis on Alexander due Friday December 4 at 11:00 PM.**

Week of December 6: Civil Rights in the 21st Century: disillusion or progress? Read pp. 382-439 in Takaki.

December 17: Final Exam due at 12:00 noon.