Program: Social Justice and Inequality in São Paulo
Course Code / Title: (SP/SOCI 350) Re-thinking Racial Democracy in Brazil
Total Hours: 45
Recommended Credits: 3
Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Sociology / History, Political Science
Language of Instruction: English
Prerequisites / Requirements: None

Description
This course provides a rigorous treatment of the dynamics of Brazilian racial relations by exploring the notion of ‘racial democracy.’ Through informed debate about the widespread image of Brazil as a racially harmonious society, students are exposed to the leading racial relations and racism theories that have been produced in the social sciences and through social movements.

In particular, this course provides insight into the structure that underlines the myth of ‘racial democracy,’ as well as its consequences for Brazil’s current racial scenario. Classroom lectures and discussions are supplemented by field-based course components to relevant sites in and around São Paulo.

Objectives
Through this course, students:
- Gain deep knowledge about the nature of racial relations in Brazil
- Develop familiarity with the most important concepts and theories in this field of study
- Employ critical reasoning around the idea of ‘racial democracy’
- Analyze the consequences of ‘racial democracy’ as an entrenched concept in Brazilian society

Course Requirements
Students are required to actively participate in class discussions and attend field-based visits to organizations and institutions that are related to race issues in Brazil. Discussions are based on assigned readings, tasks, and presentations. Attendance requirements are outlined in the CET Attendance Policy.

Weekly readings are assigned. It is imperative that each student complete the assigned reading in a timely fashion, as this enables them to actively participate in class.

Grade components of the course are as follows:
- Participation: This criterion is based on students’ active participation in all curricular activities. Special emphasis is placed on the contribution of each student to the discussion sessions, class debates, and field-based course component discussions.
- Student Seminar Presentation: Each student delivers a 15-minute presentation with a 10-minute Q&A session guided by the professor’s comments.
Syllabus of Record

- Final Paper: This 10 to 15-page essay should reflect an empirical, in-depth investigation addressing the relationship between a race-related issue in Brazil and its relevance to any of the main topics discussed in class.

Grading
The final grade is determined as follows:
- Participation: 30%
- Student Seminar Presentation: 25%
- Final paper: 45% (research proposal 10%, actual research 35%)

Readings


Additional Resources


Syllabus of Record


Guimarães, Antônio Sérgio Alfredo. Colour and race in Brazil From whitening to the search for AfroDescent. British Academy Scholarship Online: January 2013.


Outline of Course Content

Module I - Conceptualizing Race and Racism
Basic definitions of racial issues and racism. How racial issues are constituted in the Brazilian reality.

Module II. Main issues in the way racism is reflected in Brazilian reality
How the concept of “racial democracy” is built as a key path to understanding the way Brazil understands itself as a country in its racial identity. Review and criticism on social thought and social studies by Brazilian intellectuals and Brazilianists.

Module III. Critique of the ‘racial democracy’ idea
Why is this actually a myth? Through the critical lens of black intellectuals and scholars, students identify and examine the limits of “racial democracy ideology” and how it has been the grounds for perpetuating racial historical unrest. Perspectives and challenges.