

Course Proposal:

“Work and Race”

[for the full course syllabus please contact evelyn@yorku.ca]

[this course will endeavor to use online teaching platforms such as moodle, blackboard or vista to facilitate learning and make readings easily accessible for students while respecting the university’s copyright policies]

Course Overview	
Week 1.	Course Introduction & Social Justice Bingo Icebreaker
Part I: Foundational Theoretical Tools	
Week 2.	Racism, Colonialization and Nation Building by the “Others” [NFB Documentary: In the Shadow of Gold Mountain]
Week 3.	Situating Ourselves in Power, Privilege, Oppression at Work
Week 4:	Trends in Race and Work in Contemporary Canada
Part II: Contemporary Landscapes of Racism at Work	
Week 5.	Professors of Colour and Racial Discrimination in the Ivory Tower
Week 6:	Aboriginal Workers [CBC: 8 th Fire Episode]
Week 7	Immigrants and Racialized Notions of Skill
Week 8.	Taxi Drivers, Foreign Trained Doctors and Nurses
Week 9.	“Temporary Foreign Workers”: Farm Workers & Live-in-Caregivers
Part III: Racial Justice/Equity Seeking Strategies	
Week 10.	Policy, the Law and Human Rights
Week 11.	Enter the Labour Movement
Week 12.	From the House of Labour to the Grassroots: Fighting for Equity and Social Justice at Work and in our Communities
Week 13.	Final in Class Test
Course Requirements:	
Engaged Participation-15%	Attendance, active listening, important contributions to discussions
Privilege Journal-10%	Grounding foundational theories with the personal
Community Event Journal-10%	Seeking the issues outside of the ivory tower into “community spaces”
News Journal Assignment-15%	Selection of three news stories to critically analyze in relation to course themes and readings
Film Journal-10%	Individual viewing and analysis of a powerful labour film
Mid-term Reflection-20%	Critical analysis of selected case studies discussed up until mid-semester
Final in Class Test-20%	Review of the main theories in multiple choice and applying through analysis in essay question

Course Description:

Most of us have to work in order to live, afford university and carve time for leisure. While many of us are privileged to be in the space of the ivory tower we all face different obstacles in securing a livelihood. We are bound by our social locations and the ways we are embodied determine our employment and career opportunities and hence the quality of our lives. We enter the labour market unequally and are decisively marked by social constructions of race.

In this course we turn our focus to race, racialization and racism operating within the Canadian labour market. We start from the construction of the nation through colonialization imposed on Aboriginal peoples and the historical exclusion and marginalization of workers who built and continue to build Canada. We then survey the contemporary landscapes of racism and work within diverse industries and workplaces. We will map how race does not operate in isolation. It is a social construction that is part of a complex matrix of domination that serves to segment the labour market and segregate certain workers into cheap and precarious labour. Specifically, we will probe how race functions in conjunction with gender, class, language, immigration status to produce and maintain marginalization and inequality in Canada.

Key questions guiding our study include the following:

- What are the functions of race and racism in the capitalist labour market?
- How can we map the intersection of race with other forms of domination within diverse workplaces?
- What are the impacts of racism and other forms of oppression on workers, workplaces and communities?

We will conclude with contemplations of racial and social justice for tangible and meaningful equality that have been undertaken and that we can further embark upon at the personal and collective level as labour scholars, activists and organizers.

Course Pedagogy:

The pedagogy of the course is premised on transformative and embodied learning. There may be moments of discomfort in this course since we are dealing with “difficult knowledge” and serious issues that may challenge our very core such as our sense of power, privilege and (internalized) oppression at the same time. This is indeed transformative learning in practice where we learn and unlearn, feel and analyze. Learning in this course is guided by the philosophy that *it is not enough to know but necessary to feel in order to fully embody and act upon social change.*

Some may feel a sense of guilt. Yet as Black feminist Audre Lorde reminds us...

"...guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to one's own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change then it can be useful, since it is then no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge. Yet all too often, guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness destructive of communication; it becomes a device to protect ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness." — Audre Lorde

The course director will assume the role of a facilitator and emphasize concepts, theories and issues of the course by taking them further with applicable examples of the contemporary and the historical period. The course director will also endeavor to incorporate students' knowledge, interests and lived experiences as much as possible. Marginalized

voices and agency on issues of race and work will also be privileged through the involvement of guest speakers, film and multimedia. Since the course consists of numerous students in a space of a lecture hall, we will collectively negotiate what transformative learning may look like throughout the progression of the semester. Although the exact pattern of the lecture will vary from week to week, the emphasis is on collaborative and student-led learning. For the course to be successful, you must be ready to participate and apply your knowledge and analysis to our collective discussions.

Readings are intended to be manageable by ranging from 25-30 pages per week in order to ensure detailed attention to the material. Students are also expected to stay on top of current news on the themes of the course in order to mediate the turn-around time of academic texts. Students will also be expected to keep a journal [explained further below] that will include some of these news stories in order to bring to life the issues we are contemplating.

In this course you will be able to...

- engage in a space of transformative learning that emphasizes critical analysis and experimental knowledge;
- situate yourself, your life and social location within the issues of the class as an exercise of self-reflection;
- practice “intersubjectivity”, namely contemplating the positionality and experiences of others with issues of racism and oppression;
- articulate and refine your own ideas, in both speaking and in writing;
- contemplate and devise strategies for change and organizing and
- step outside of the ivory tower to engage with community/labour initiatives for racial/social justice.

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