

**CRITICAL RACE THEORY**  
**Fall 2015 Syllabus**  
**Professor Gregory S. Parks**  
**Meeting, tentatively, weekly over meals**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In the mid-1980s, a new scholarly movement developed in legal academe, Critical Race Theory (“CRT”). Early advocates of CRT—including Derrick Bell, Mari Matsuda, Charles Lawrence, Richard Delgado, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Patricia Williams—challenged both the substance and style of conventional legal scholarship. Substantively, race critics rejected formal equality, individual rights, and color-blind approaches to solving legal problems. Stylistically, critical race scholars often employed new methodologies for legal scholarship, including storytelling and narrative.

The goal of this course is to understand CRT principles and explore CRT’s possibilities and limitations. Such explorations will require students to think carefully not only about race and racism, but also about sexism, classism, and heterosexism. Hopefully, the course will provide an opportunity for us to challenge critically our most basic assumptions about race, law, and justice. Among the current topics we will study are racial identity; the social construction of race; intersectionality and anti-essentialism; affirmative action; white privilege; implicit bias; identity performance; race and racism in law schools and law firms; and race and criminal law and procedure.

**OFFICE HOURS**

Please feel free to stop by my office, Room 3346, at your convenience. My office hours are Mondays, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. and by appointment or when my office door is open. I tend to focus on class preparation the hour or two prior to class. If you need to schedule an appointment with me, please email me at [parksgs@wfu.edu](mailto:parksgs@wfu.edu) to arrange a time. My office telephone number is 336.758.2170. If you cannot reach me, you may reach my assistant, Ms. Sonya Casstevens at [casstesa@wfu.edu](mailto:casstesa@wfu.edu). Her office is right next to mine.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

CRITICAL RACE THEORY: THE CUTTING EDGE PAPERBACK, Jean Stefancic & Richard Delgado eds. (2013).

CRITICAL WHITE STUDIES: LOOKING BEHIND THE MIRROR, Jean Stefancic & Richard Delgado eds. (1997).

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

If we maintain a class structure that runs three and a half hours in time, we will have 11 classes instead of 14. As such, we may likely complete the semester in November.

Class 1 – Critical Race Theory, Part I & II

Class 2 – Critical Race Theory, Part III & IV

Class 3 – Critical White Studies, Part I & II

Class 4 – Critical Race Theory, Part V & VI

Class 5 – Critical Race Theory, Part VII & VIII

Class 6 – Critical White Studies, Part IV & VI

Class 7 – Critical Race Theory, Part IX & X

Class 8 – Critical Race Theory, Part XI & XII

Class 9 – Critical White Studies, Part VIII & XI

Class 10 – Critical Race Theory, Part XIII & XIV

Class 11 – Critical Race Theory, Part XV & XVI

## **FORMAT**

Class discussion is critical to the success of this course. I place a premium on class discussion and participation, especially participation and discussion that display your knowledge and understanding of your assigned readings. Please note that class will not simply be a review of the articles. When you arrive for class each day, I assume that you have already carefully and critically read the pages of your assignment. In other words, I expect you to come to class ready to apply the material in the chapters, not merely to recap it, and to engage in a deep discussion about the materials. That said, you should be able to recap and provide details on the arguments in any assigned chapter if I call on you. The only writing assignment you have for each class is to prepare 7 thoughtful questions about the readings and send those questions to me within 24 hours prior to the beginning of class.

## **THE CLASSROOM**

You aspire to be professionals; therefore, I expect all of you to act in a professional and courteous manner, including arriving on time for class and remaining for the entire class, except when the most pressing circumstances make doing so impossible. Allowing one's cell phone to ring, surfing the Web, checking e-mail, and playing computer games are all inconsistent with acting in a professional and courteous manner.

### **Preparedness**

You are expected to be a prepared, active, and thoughtful participant. To be prepared for class, you must have studied the day's assignment sufficiently to engage in a thoughtful discussion of the issues that the assignment poses.

### **Respect**

You should behave professionally by treating all members of the class with dignity and respect, even when and especially when you disagree. This course, by its nature, covers controversial issues. You should engage in debate in a respectful manner. Being respectful does not mean that you cannot confront or challenge another student; learning how to challenge others is both good for you and them. *That said, I will lower a student's grade if he or she regularly degrades and disrespects other students or me through his or her class participation.*

I, and this course, will often challenge your worldview. Such challenges may make you feel uncomfortable, but ultimately they are good for your intellectual growth. I value your views and *very much* welcome dissent. I, too, grow from this process.

### **FINAL GRADE**

Your grading will be based on: (1) your class attendance and participation (50%), which includes sending me your questions in a timely fashion and (2) a 30-page paper (50%). I will follow-up in early-October with more details about your paper.

### **VIDEOTAPE POLICY**

I do not allow my classes to be videotaped. If you have to miss a class, please obtain notes from one of your classmates.