

Topics in Critical Race Theory: History and Theory

Course Description

This course invites learners into an inter-disciplinary exploration of the historical development and enduring significance of Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT will be engaged through a variety of literary, archival, and historiographic methods. Beyond any current controversies, CRT will be established as a vital movement within U.S. intellectual history with methodological implications for interpreting U.S. history, civil rights law, and race.

Through their stories, legal storytelling exemplars such as Richard Delgado, Patricia J. Williams, and Derrick A. Bell tell us, but also their field and any other field or person who has read their work that story is how to do this work—story is the way. Telling stories is how we invite a multiplicity of audiences into the conversation, how we build opportunities for points of access to the content, be it the Constitution, theory, legal precedent, etc. The rhetoric of story in turn informs how we as teachers of writing teach people to write their stories, inclusive of all the methodological considerations our fields within English studies (Literature and Creative Writing inclusive) contribute to concepts such as worldbuilding, dialogue, character development, style, diction, etc. We have the tools, the equipment, the training, the lens, to engage this conversation on counterstory, the counterstories that will counter the stories the racist, radical right would weave and tell to disinform the public about CRT.

In the past three and a half years of this mainstream and hot-button national fight, the urgency of storytelling through the methodology of counterstory has been underutilized by those seeking to defend and promote Critical Race Theory. In this course we will study how scholars in the Humanities can heed the call for collaboration issued by CRT founders and legal storytelling exemplars Delgado, Williams, and Bell. We will think through ways artists and activists are working to take back the narrative from those who would promote distortion and disinformation. We will explore the ways counterstory-tellers in the Humanities are extending the storytelling legacy of CRT, writing their own stories so others can be told.

Required Materials

Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefancic *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 4th ed. New York UP, 2023.

Williams, Patricia *Giving a Damn: Racism, Romance and Gone with the Wind*. Harper Collins, 2021.

All additional course readings available as PDF files or links to e-books on Canvas

Course Objectives

Learning objectives for this course are broad. Discussions responses on Canvas will be aimed at modeling these objectives and giving students an opportunity to see them in action; discussions, activities, assignments, and papers represent opportunities for students to practice these objectives and receive feedback that will be useful in improving as scholars. These objectives will be framed around the content of this particular course and reflect the contemporary and ongoing conversations concerning an literary studies, rhetorical and writing studies and its

applications and implications in relation to legal studies, particularly the academic field of critical race theory. The broad objectives are that students will:

1. Demonstrate proficiency in critical and constructive thought
2. Demonstrate proficiency in communicating complex ideas through writing
3. Possess a basic understanding of critical and rhetorical theory and an applicability of rhetorical and literary analysis and criticism
4. Comprehend basic theories concerning contemporary conceptions of race and racism
5. Understand application of basic rhetorical concepts for framing discussion/analysis and in problem solving

Major Assignments and Grading

Questions and Quotes (Q & Q's): This assignment will be due at the beginning of each class period from week 2 through week 12. Each week you will submit one typed question and two typed quotes from the assigned readings. You should pose open-ended questions that generate conversation and cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no.” Your question can address a specific reading or a theme running through several readings. Quotes may be anything from the readings that resonate with you. Along with the quote, write a paragraph or two explaining why you find the quote significant. Personal reflections that are connected with the readings/discussions are perfectly appropriate for this assignment. No grade will be entered for Q&Q assignments submitted when the student does not attend for that designated class period unless prior arrangements have been made related to extenuating circumstances.

Value: 30%

Critical Analysis: Due at the end of week 5 and the end of week 9, you will write a 5-6 page Critical Analysis short essay that will build toward your Counterstory Seminar Project. Each essay will undergo a writing process in which you will submit a first draft to instructors and your peers on Canvas for instructor and peer feedback. Final drafts will not be accepted without documented submission of first drafts, and grades are determined based on evidence of significant revision between first and final drafts. Value: 30%

Counterstory Seminar Project: At the conclusion of the semester, you will compose a project which will build on your arguments and writing from your Q&Qs and Critical Analysis assignments, and other forms of discussion and documentation utilized throughout the course. In this assignment you will weave together references to our course texts, your writing and documenting, and course discussions to form a project that will comprise your final course submission. Additional details forthcoming. Value: 40%

Grade Breakdown

Note: To earn a passing grade, you must complete all major writing assignments.

- 90-100%=A
- 80-89.99%=B
- 70-79.99%=C
- 60-69.99%=D
- 59.99% and less=F

Daily Reading Schedule

Week 1 A Case for Counterstory

Tuesday none

Thursday

Martinez “A Case for Counterstory”

Smith and Martinez “Critical Race Religious Literacy: Exposing the Taproot of Contemporary Evangelical Attacks on CRT”

Week 2 Interest Convergence and Legal Storytelling: Two Sides of the Same CRT Coin

Tuesday

Martinez and Smith from Making Critical Race Theory “Chapter 1: Deeply Rooted: Derrick Bell and the Foundations of Critical Race Theory”

Bell “Brown vs Board of Education and the Interest Convergence Dilemma”

Q&Q: #1 due

Thursday

Walker “Letter to Derrick Bell”

Walker “Dependent Status—feedback” Bell “Dependent Status—revisions”

Q&Q: #2 due

Week 3 The Civil Rights Chronicles

Tuesday

Martinez and Smith from Making Critical Race Theory “Chapter 3: Finding Geneva”

Bell “Foreword: The Civil Rights Chronicles” pg. 4-43

Q&Q: #3 due

Thursday

Bell “Foreword: The Civil Rights Chronicles” pg. 43-83

Bell, et. al “The Civil Rights Chronicles Revisited: Comments and Introduction”

Q&Q: #4 due

Week 4 Bestselling Bell: A Legal Storytelling for the Masses

Tuesday

Martinez “Derrick Bell and Counterstory as Fantasy/Allegory

Bell “The Real Status of Blacks Today: Chronicle of the Constitutional Contradiction”

Q&Q: #5 due

Thursday

Bell “The Space Traders”

Q&Q: #6 due

Week 5 Critical Analysis Writing Week

Tuesday

Due for in-class peer feedback: A draft of your Critical Analysis 1 assignment

Thursday

Due to BB no later than 11:59PM: Final draft of your Critical Analysis 1 assignment

Week 6 CRT’s Origins (his)Stories

Tuesday

Crenshaw “The First Decade: Critical Reflections, or ‘A Foot in the Closing Door’”

Delgado “Liberal McCarthyism and the Origins of Critical Race Theory”

Q&Q: #7 due

Thursday

David Trubek, “Foundational Events, Foundational Myths, and the Creation of Critical Race Theory”

Hererra, “Challenging a Tradition of Exclusion”

Q&Q: #8 due

Week 7 Making Critical Race Theory: The People Who Breathed Life into the Movement

Tuesday

Martinez and Smith from Making Critical Race Theory “Chapter 4: Clash of the Titans”

Richard Delgado, “The Imperial Scholar: Reflections on a Review of Civil Rights Literature”

Q&Q: #9 due

Thursday,

Patricia Williams “Alchemical Notes: Reconstructing Ideals from Deconstructed Rights”

Q&Q: #10 due

Week 8 Making Critical Race Theory: The People Who Breathed Life into the Movement

Tuesday

Matsuda “Looking to the Bottom: Critical Legal Studies and Reparations”

Q&Q: #11 due

Thursday

Kennedy “Critiques of Legal Academia”

Q&Q: #12 due

SPRING BREAK

Week 9 Critical Analysis Writing Week

Tuesday

Due for in-class peer feedback: A draft of your Critical Analysis 2 assignment

Thursday

Due to BB no later than 11:59PM: Final draft of your Critical Analysis 2 assignment

Week 10 Delgado and Stefancic

Tuesday

Martinez and Smith from Making Critical Race Theory “Chapter 2: Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado”

Delgado and Stefancic “Why Do We Tell the Same Stories?: Law Reform, Critical Librarianship, and the Triple Helix Dilemma”

Q&Q: #13 due

Thursday

Stefancic and Delgado “Panthers and Pinstripes”

Q&Q: #14 due

Week 11 The State of the Movement: Where Do We Go from Here?

Tuesday

Bell “On Celebrating an Election as Racial Progress”

Delgado “Metamorphosis: A Minority Professor’s Life”

Q&Q: #15 due

Thursday

Matsuda “Radical Wāhine of Honolulu, 1945”

Q&Q: #16 due

Week 12 The State of the Movement: Where Do We Go from Here?

Tuesday

Williams Giving a Damn: Racism, Romance, and Gone with the Wind

Q&Q: #17 due

Thursday

Williams Giving a Damn: Racism, Romance, and Gone with the Wind

Q&Q: #18 due

Week 13 The State of the Movement: Where Do We Go from Here?

Tuesday

Martinez and Smith from Making Critical Race Theory “Chapter 6: Monikered and Targeted”

Q&Q: #19 due

Thursday

Martinez and Smith from Making Critical Race Theory “Conclusion: Story: The Answer from the Beginning”

Q&Q: #20 due

Week 14 A Turn to Counterstory

Tuesday

Martinez “Richard Delgado and Counterstory as Narrated Dialogue”

Delgado “Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative”

Q&Q: #21 due

Thursday

(Choose one counterstory from each of the provided genres: *Fantasy/Allegory, Dialogue, and Vignette*)

Fantasy/Allegory:

Martinez “The Politics of Historiography, Act II”
Martinez “An Allegory About Immortality”
Martinez “On Cucuys in Bird’s Feathers: A Counterstory as Parable”

Dialogue:

Martinez “On Storytelling and Perspective, or, The Road Trip”
Martinez “A Plea for Critical Race Theory Counterstory: Stock Story versus Counterstory Dialogues Concerning Alejandra’s ‘Fit’ in the Academy”

Vignette:

Martinez “‘Quisieron enterrarnos, pero se les olvido que somos semillas’ A Counterstory Afterword in Vignettes”
Martinez “Alejandra Writes a Book”
Martinez “Diary of a Mad Border Crosser”

Q&Q: #22 due

Week 15 Counterstory Project Writing Week

Tuesday

Due for in-class peer feedback: Brainstorms/Outlines/Proposal for Counterstory Projects

Thursday

Due for in-class peer feedback: Draft 1 Counterstory Projects

Week 16 Finals Week

Thursday

Due: Final Seminar Project Due to Canvas, no later than 11:59PM