

# APPENDIX 2

## *Syllabus, Readings, and Assignments for “Race and Racism”*

Each week’s classes (four per week) were divided between intellectually very demanding historical/scientific material (three days) and more accessible material—contemporary sources and videos (one day). I list the historical/scientific and the contemporary/video material separately to make it easier to follow the chronology of the former. The interspersing of the contemporary material was somewhat random so which week it was assigned doesn’t matter. Later in the term, meetings on group projects provided a break from the historical material.

### **HISTORICAL AND SCIENTIFIC MATERIAL**

#### **Scientific critique of race**

Jared Diamond, “Race without Color,” *Discover*, October 1994.

Daniel Blackburn, “Why Race Is Not a Biological Concept,” in *Race and Racism in Theory and Practice*, ed. Berel Lang (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

American Anthropological Association, “Statement on Race,” 1998.

#### **Slavery before race—the ancient Greeks [lecture]**

#### **What is the idea of “race”? Are we naturally fearful of physical and cultural differences?**

Audrey Smedley and Brian Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*, 4th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2012), 21–27.

(Note that the page references here are not to the edition I used in class but to the most recent 2012 edition. The text is pretty much the same, only slightly updated.)

**English treatment of the Irish before English colonization of the New World**

Smedley, 52–62.

Smedley sees the English domination of (and view of) the Irish in the twelfth to the fifteenth century as the beginning of or dry run for their treatment of conquered peoples and slaves in the Americas—and first steps toward the idea of “race.”

**Spain under Muslim and Catholic domination, and beginnings of “race” in reference to Jews**

Smedley, 62–70.

When the Muslims dominated southern Spain, they were relatively tolerant of Jews and Christians. But when the Christians retook Spain, they forced Jews and Muslims to convert. In the Inquisition (fifteenth century), the Catholic church began to suspect converted Jews and looked in their bloodlines for evidence of their being “secret Jews.” This is one of the first manifestations of racial thinking—that important characteristics are carried “in the blood.”

**Beginnings of Spanish and Portuguese exploration and colonization, and plantation slavery on the Canary Islands [lecture]**

I had an excellent map of the Atlantic slave trade routes and nations, so these lessons about the geography of colonialization and slavery were more vivid to the students.

**Columbus and early contacts and later conflicts between English colonists and Native Americans**

Smedley, 73–81, 85–90.

Early wary but not totally hostile relations between the colonists and various indigenous tribes disintegrate over time, with Metacom’s War of 1675 (aka King Philip’s War), a turning point in the colonists’ developing the idea of Native Americans as “savages.”

**The English encounter with Africans before slavery (seventeenth century)**

Smedley, chapter 5, “The Arrival of Africans and the Descent into Slavery,” selections.

Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), chapter 1 (selections).

*Africans in America*, PBS series, Orlando Bagwell, executive producer (Boston, MA: WGBH Television, 1998), DVD.

Danny Duncan Collum, *Black and White Together: The Search for Common Ground* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), chapter 2, “Revolt Before Race.”

All four sources chronicle the complex status of Africans in the early years of the British colonies, where they were occasionally landowners (even occasionally owning slaves), often indentured servants or slaves, but slaves were not treated very differently from (white or black) indentured servants. The mass use of African slaves beginning in the late seventeenth century began the “descent” Smedley refers to in her chapter title, and Africans were deprived of all legal or social standing that they had possessed in the earlier (mid-seventeenth century) period. Berlin and *Africans in America* focus attention on Anthony Johnson, one of the first Africans in the colonies, a fascinating character who became a respected landowner and owned a slave, but whose descendants illustrate the “descent.” Imported Irish and poor English people, as well as some Native Americans, were utilized as slave-like labor until the slave trade (until then controlled mainly by the Spanish and Portuguese) brought the possibility of solving the labor problem through mass importation of Africans to the British colonies. Bacon’s Rebellion of 1676 uniting “blacks” and poor “whites” against the planter class in Virginia (and Native Americans) was a turning point in spurring laws raising the status of even poor whites decisively over blacks. The ideology of Africans as an inferior, barbaric, and degraded population was not yet developed (that is, the idea of “race” had only just begun), and the skills and knowledge of African labor were recognized. Smedley emphasizes developments in the idea of race. Berlin emphasizes changes in the lives and situations of Africans (and their descendants) in the colonies.

### **Field trip to “Black Heritage Trail”**

We toured an area of Boston where the free black community of the antebellum (pre–Civil War) period lived, and where resistance to slavery (e.g., sheltering escaped slaves) joined with the abolitionist movement.

### **Why enslaved Africans became the main labor force in the English colonies, instead of Native Americans, Irish, and poor English**

Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619–1877*, revised and updated (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 3–13.

Further develops the argument mentioned just above, emphasizing cost savings and ease of controlling a population (the Africans) who could not escape by blending into the urban population (as English and Irish escapees could), did not know the terrain (as Native Americans did), and were intentionally thrown together by the slave owners with people from other ethnic groups who did not speak their language.

### **Changes in slaves' lives from the charter generation (seventeenth century) to plantation slavery (developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries)**

Berlin, chapter 5, "The Tobacco Revolution in the Chesapeake," selections.

The slaves are subjected to new levels of violence and humiliation. Previous rights and opportunities (e.g., to work one's own plot of land) are taken away.

### **The African role in the slave trade; the experience of captives in Africa and on the slave ships**

Gary Nash, *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early North America*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000), 140–150. (This book is now in a 6th edition, published in 2009.)

O. E. Uya, "The African Involvement," from *African Diaspora and the Black Experience in New World Slavery* (Lagos, Nigeria: Third Press, 1992), 65–70.

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789), in *The Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Mentor, 1987).

### **Slavery in the Portuguese and Spanish colonies, and comparison to the English colonies**

Smedley, 139–145.

Nash, 155–166.

Differences in slave experience in these different colonies; why the Portuguese/Spanish populations became so much more mixed (among indigenous, Africans, and Europeans) than in the English colonies; and how this affected the ideas of "race" in those colonies and the countries they became.

### **Slavery and the growth of U.S. ideology of race**

Smedley, 149–153.

Slavery, in connection with other currents of thought (Christianity and the Enlightenment), is central to the development of the idea of race.

### **Guest speaker on slavery and race in the French Caribbean, especially Haiti**

#### **A slave experience in the Caribbean**

Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave* (1831), ed. Sara Salih (New York: Penguin, 2000).

We spent several days on this excellent slave narrative, which also deals with the British abolitionist movement. I had students prepare by selecting particular passages to read aloud in class and comment on.

### **Thomas Jefferson, his views about blacks, and Banneker's challenge to Jefferson**

Smedley, 177–181.

Benjamin Banneker, "Blacks Are Not Inferior to Whites" (1791),  
Banneker-Jefferson Letters: [www.infoplease.com/t/hist/banneker-jefferson/1/html](http://www.infoplease.com/t/hist/banneker-jefferson/1/html).

### **David Walker's challenge to Jefferson, and his condemnation of and arguments against slavery**

David Walker, *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, selections from preamble and chapter 1 (1830), ed. Peter Hinks (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

### **The abolitionist movement in the U.S.**

William Lloyd Garrison, "The Great [Constitutional] Crisis" (1832), in *Against Slavery: An Abolitionist Reader*, ed. Mason Lowance (New York: Penguin, 2000), 112–117.

### **Indian and Black slave resistance in the Spanish, French, and Portuguese colonies; the Seminoles and their role in slave escape and resistance in the U.S.**

William Loren Katz, *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage* (New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1997), 33–47, 49–62.

Escaped slaves, sometimes in cooperation with indigenous people (some of them slaves also), revolted against the Spanish and French slave masters, and sometimes set up "maroon" colonies in the Caribbean and parts of Latin America. Role of Seminoles, a U.S. Native American group that welcomed escaped black slaves.

### **Slave rebellions in the United States: Stono, Prosser, Vesey, Turner**

Nathan Huggins, *Black Odyssey: The African American Ordeal in Slavery*, with a new introduction (New York: Vintage, 1990), 210–227.

### **Louis Agassiz and racial science in the nineteenth century**

Smedley, 227–229, 233–237.

Nineteenth-century debate between monogenists (humans were created by God as a single species) and polygenists (multiple creations). Influence of Agassiz, a revered Harvard scientist of the mid-nineteenth century, in the development of racist thought. Brief discussion of impact of Darwinism on racial thought.

**Asians and U.S. naturalization law in the early twentieth century**

Ian Haney-Lopez, *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: NYU Press, 1996), 79–92.

Discussion of fascinating *Ozawa* and *Thind* cases of 1923, at a time when U.S. law said that only whites could naturalize (a 1790 law, not fully rescinded until 1952). *Ozawa*, a Japanese immigrant, claimed he was white; the Supreme Court said scientists say Japanese aren't Caucasian and so aren't white. *Thind*, an Indian immigrant, then claims that since he is Caucasian, he should be able to naturalize, as white. Court, reversing previous argument (of the same year), says being Caucasian does not make you white. For contemporary students, the cases raise issues of pride, heritage, skin color, immigration, white supremacy, and the role of race in American history.

**CONTEMPORARY MATERIAL**

Rachel L. Swarns, "'African-American' Becomes a Term for Debate," *New York Times*, August 29, 2004.

African immigrants, African Americans, and the appropriate terminology.

Ward Churchill, "Let's Spread the 'Fun' Around: The Issue of Sports Team Names and Mascots" and "In the Matter of Julius Streicher: Applying Nuremberg Precedents to the United States," in *From a Native Son: Selected Essays on Indigenism, 1985–1995* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1996).

Gives arguments against using Native American names for sports teams.

*Skin Deep*, directed by Frances Reid, 1995, DVD.

Excellent documentary about twelve college students from different racial groups, colleges, and parts of the country. The first part of the film is about each student's individual story; in the second part they are brought together for a weekend of discussion of racial issues and their own experiences.

Correspondents of the *New York Times*, *How Race Is Lived in America* (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt, 2001):

- "Growing Up, Growing Apart." Three middle school girlfriends of different races go to (the same) high school and find racial forces making them drift apart.
- "Best of Friends, Worlds Apart." Two Cuban friends, one dark skinned, one light skinned, immigrate to the United States and find the U.S. racial order separating them and challenging their friendship.
- "Reaping What Was Sown on the Old Plantation." An African American National Park Service guide on a Louisiana plantation tries to figure out the best way to educate visitors about slavery. A descendant of the plantation family is not pleased.

Tim Walker, "Something Is Wrong Here: Denver Students Confront Racial Tracking at Their High School," *Teaching Tolerance*, Fall 2002, 38–43.

Describes a Denver high school with a similar demographic to CRLS and in which there are a disproportionate percentage of whites in the high-level classes. The article explores possible explanations.

*RACE—The Power of an Illusion*, produced by California Newsreel, 2003, VHS.

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. *Reading questions*: Every reading was accompanied by several questions to guide the students through the complex material and to give them a further incentive to do the reading. The students had to answer a third of the questions on a given day's reading. They had to show their answers to the teaching assistant before class started (so they could not write the answers in class) and turn them in at the end of class. I checked their answers against the numbers the teaching assistant gave me and commented on their particular answers. Individual answers were not graded; students were graded only on making a reasonable attempt to answer the question, not on getting it right.

2. *Educational autobiography* (400–800 words): "Write an essay about your educational history, experiences, aspirations, and hopes." (Assigned the first week.)

3. *Racial incident description* (discussed in chapter 4): "Describe an incident involving race in some way, and involving people you know, that did not work out well. Write about how a bystander to the incident might have intervened in a constructive way." (Assigned second or third week.)

4. *Race and science essay* (500–800 words): "Explain three different scientific criticisms of our system of racial classification, drawn from our three readings."

5. *Journals*: There were four journals, one targeted to a specific reading and the other three completely open. In the open ones, the students could write about racial issues in their own lives, bounce off the readings, or talk about something that happened in class, or anything racial.

6. *Racial empathy essay* (500–800 words): A complex, several-stage assignment that spanned a six-week period (starting about a third of the way through the semester). The students had to find someone of a different race to interview about their racial experiences and their outlook on racial issues. The class generated questions to ask (in six categories that I devised) and I compiled them; each student was encouraged to come up with questions of their own as well. They interviewed their subjects in two stages. In the first stage, they transcribed the interview in a coherent way and turned that in, with suggested follow-up questions for the next interview. I gave feedback on this "organized transcript," generally suggesting some more follow-up questions or asking for clarification on particular

points and issues. In the second stage, the students did a follow-up interview. They then wrote an essay in the interviewee's voice, and added their own reflections on what they had learned about the interviewee's racial group that was surprising to them, what they learned about race and racial issues, and "what you learned about yourself."

7. *Acting white/acting black essay* (300–500 words): The essay assignment asked students to explain what they and their peers mean when they say someone is "acting white" or "acting black," and then to examine whether the use of these expressions is harmful, hurtful, or damaging to the people who are accused, the people who do the accusing, or anyone else overhearing the use of the expressions. (Assigned seventh week.)

8. *Mary Prince essay* (500–800 words): The students had a choice of two essay questions on Mary Prince's slave autobiography, one on Mary's developing consciousness about whether slavery *itself* (or only especially harsh treatment within slavery) is wrong; the other about developments over time in how Mary responds to how she is treated. (Assigned thirteenth week.)

9. *Banneker/Walker essay* (500–800 words): "Describe and analyze three different arguments that Banneker or Walker uses against Jefferson's arguments that blacks are inferior." (Assigned nineteenth week.)

10. *Final group project*: This was a very complex activity that ranged over the last two and half months of the term. First, my TA and I created three-person groups, with kids of different races in each, although we did not call attention to this fact. The groups had to pick topics to work on, drawn from a list of topics we had generated in class and to which I added. I did not allow more than one topic to be picked twice, which meant that some groups did not get their first choice, but I think all got their first or second choices. Here is a typical list of topics:

- Use of stereotypes by CRLS students
- The racial achievement gap at CRLS
- Race, ethnicity, and the social world of CRLS
- Mixed-race identity
- Race and racism in two different countries (Japan and Haiti)

Once the groups were formed, I gave them time to meet in class—one class period per week in December and early January (until their presentations). The groups also had to meet outside of class, and some of them found it difficult to find a time that all members could meet, or at least sometimes used that as an excuse for why they did not meet. The groups had to turn in weekly reports (rotating who wrote them) on what they had accomplished, and what they were aiming at.

The final week of the course was devoted to presentations by the groups, which had to be at least twenty minutes, had to involve something visual, and had to

make use of research that had been done on the topic beyond interviewing. The audience for the presentations, besides other students in the class, included other adults, mostly from inside the school but occasionally colleagues of mine from outside. The evaluators graded the presentations according to a protocol I created.

The individual student's grade for the presentation was a combination of a group grade and a grade on the individual's role in the group presentation.

I think the groups were a good learning and interpersonal experience for all the students. But the interaction was often quite difficult. A few of the groups had real interpersonal crises that I had to resolve, generally through conferring with individual students in the group. (The TA and I tried to pick groups that contained at least one student who seemed to us exceptionally responsible, hoping that person would keep the group relatively on target.)

11. *Final project individual essay* (no more than five pages): After the group presentations, on the last day of class each student had to turn in an essay reflecting on and examining her or his group's process, assessing the dynamic within the group, saying honestly what the interpersonal challenges were and how the group attempted to deal with them, and describing what the individual student felt he/she contributed to the group and learned from the project.

12. *Exams*: One exam six weeks into the semester, one midterm, and one final.

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