Power and Difference: Race, Poverty Knowledge, and Urban Ethnography
01:070:376
Spring 2009
BIO 205
Mondays and Thursdays, 10:55-12:15

The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line.
– W.E.B. Du Bois

Instructor:	Krista Hegburg
Office:	Ruth Adams Building 316
Email:	khegburg@rci.rutgers.edu
Office Hours:	Mondays and Thursdays, 12:30-2:00

Course Description:

This seminar addresses the relationship between ethnographies of racialized urban poverty and their place in the production of what Alice O'Connor calls "poverty knowledge," the empirically based, structurally oriented and reform-minded apprehension of poverty that coalesced at the turn of the last century. After a grounding in selections from the classics of poverty knowledge, we will chart the postwar entanglements of ghettoization, race, culture, and class by tracing the bifurcated trajectory of ethnographic and popular accounts of ghettos that spirals out from Oscar Lewis's formulations of the "culture of poverty," and that continue to organize poverty knowledge in the United States. We will read ethnographies of American ghettos alongside reportage and policy-oriented interventions to illuminate the stakes involved in making poverty's disruptions of the liberal order visible through the optic of culture.

This course is an advanced seminar, and will be taught as a combination of lecture and class discussion. Active participation and intellectual generosity in class is required. Students will be asked to bring critical analytical skills to bear both on the popular and policy literature concerning poverty and race as well as ethnographic accounts by anthropologists.

Course objectives:

After taking this course, students will be able to:
- understand and describe the social construction of knowledge that underpins contemporary articulations of race, class, and urban space in the United States;
- explain the role of the discipline of anthropology in producing ethnographies situated in American ghettos;
-evaluate and historicize the relationship of such studies to popular journalistic accounts of, and public policy interventions in, racialized urban poverty; and
- apply critical interpretive and writing skills to analyze contemporary and historical events in light of ethnographic writing about American ghettos.

Course Requirements:

<u>Attendance and participation</u>

Class attendance and participation is mandatory. Please do not arrive late for class. You must do the reading for that class and come prepared to discuss it. **You must bring the readings assigned for that day to class**. You are allowed two **excused** absences in this class. Absences

will be considered excused if you can provide me with a note from a doctor or a dean. Otherwise, absences will result in deductions from your class participation grade (for the first three), and deductions from your overall grade (after three).

Required texts

The following books are required and may be purchased at the Douglass Coop:

Philippe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk,* Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005.
John Langston Gwaltney, *Drylongso: A Self-Portrait of Black America* (New York: Vintage, 1980).
Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
Carol Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

Articles and book chapters will be made available electronically on Sakai.

Assignments

Over the course of the semester, students will prepare two 4-5 page reaction pieces, one on a film, and one on an academic talk or conference. A list of films and events to choose from will be posted in Sakai, and most will be available in the Media Center at Livingston and through iTunesU. Each piece should relate the topic to material covered in class.

Each student will also prepare a 15-minute presentation and lead a class discussion on one of the readings. You will introduce the author, the reading and its main themes, highlighting specific arguments or excerpts from the text, and pose several questions to the class for discussion. You will be expected to turn in a written outline of your presentation.

The topic of your final paper (~20 pages) will be developed in consultation with me. Please visit me by March 23 to discuss your paper.

All assignments must be in Times Roman 12-point font, double-spaced, and stapled. For every day an assignment is late, your grade will be reduced by one letter grade.

Grading Procedures

(a) Class participation (20%)
(b) Each reaction piece (10%)
(c) Presentation (20%)
(d) Research paper (40%)

Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to adhere strictly to the Rutgers University Policy on Academic Integrity. To review this policy, see http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml. Serious infractions of this policy will be referred to the appropriate University authorities for disciplinary action. If you are in doubt about

the principles that govern the practice of citation in academic texts and written assignments, or about the parameters of collaboration on class assignments, please come see me for clarification.
Tentative Course Schedule:

Readings and Assignments

January 22: Course Introduction

The problem of the color line

January 26/29
Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview,* Westview Press, 2007. Chapters 1, 9, 10, 12

February 2/5
W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

Social-scientific knowledge, urban ethnography, and the ghetto

February 9/12
Academic Integrity presentation (Feb. 9)
Loïc Wacquant, "Ghetto," pp. 1-7 in *The International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences,* Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, eds., London: Pergamon Press, 2004.
Loïc Wacquant, "The New Urban Color Line: The State and Fate of the Ghetto in Postfordist America," pp. 231-276 in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity,* Craig J. Calhoun, ed. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1994.
In-class film screening: *DisLocation*, Sudhir Venkatesh

February 16/19
Michael Lacey and Mary Furner, "Social investigation, social knowledge, and the state: An introduction," pp. 3-62 in *The State and Social Investigation in Britain and the United States,* Lacey and Furner, eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
Sudhir Venkatesh, "'Doin' the hustle': Constructing the Ethnographer in the American Ghetto," *Ethnography,* 2002, Vol. 3, No. 1.
Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, Chapters 1 and 2

Mapping race and class on the urban landscape

February 23/26
W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*. New York: B. Blom, 1967. Selections
Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, Chapter 3
First reaction piece due (Feb. 26)

March 2/5
Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944. Selections
St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. Selections
Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, Chapters 4 and 5

Poverty Wars/Culture Wars

March 9/12
Oscar Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village: Tepoztlán Revisited*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1951. Selections
Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, Chapters 6, 7, and 8

March 16/19: Spring Break

March 23/26
Oscar Lewis, *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty*, New York: Basic Books, 1959. Selections
Second reaction piece due (March 26)

March 30/April 2
Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997. Selections
Moynihan Report on the Negro Family (http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/history/webid-meynihan.htm)
Robin D.G. Kelley, *Yo' Mama's Dysfunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997). Chap. 1.
In-class film screening: *The Vanishing Family: Crisis in Black America*, CBS News

Unrest, riot, rebellion, insurrection

April 6/9
Governor's Select Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report for Action: An Investigation Into the Causes and Events of the 1967 Newark Race Riots*. New York: Lemma Publishing Corp, 1968, 1972. Selections
Tom Hayden. *Rebellion in Newark: Official Violence and Ghetto Response*. New York: Vintage Books, 1967. Selections
In-class film screening: *Revolution '67*, Marylou and Jeremy Bongiorno

Welfare as We Knew It

April 13/16
Carol Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*
Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, chaps. 9, 10, and 11

April 20/23
John Langston Gwaltney, *Drylongso: A Self-Portrait of Black America*. Selections
Ken Auletta, *The Underclass*. Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1999. Selections

Political Economy, Crime, and the Carceral

April 27/30
Philippe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect*

May 4: Wrap-up

May 11: Final papers due