

TH3583 – Spring Long-Term 2012

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

AS

THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

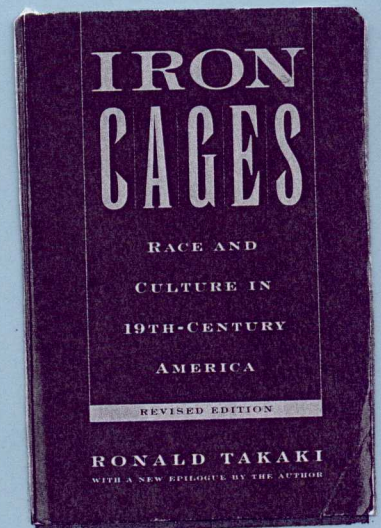
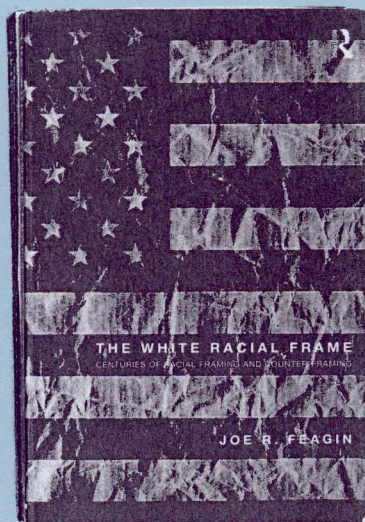
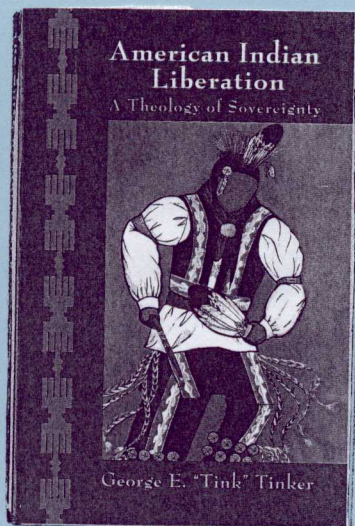
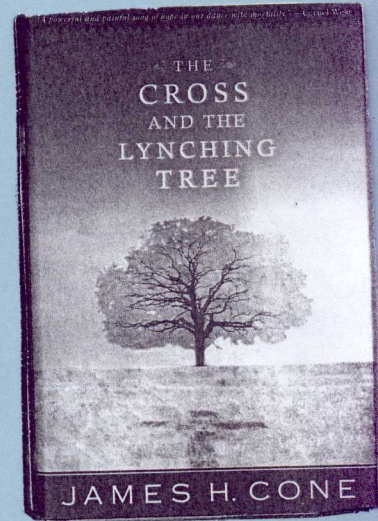
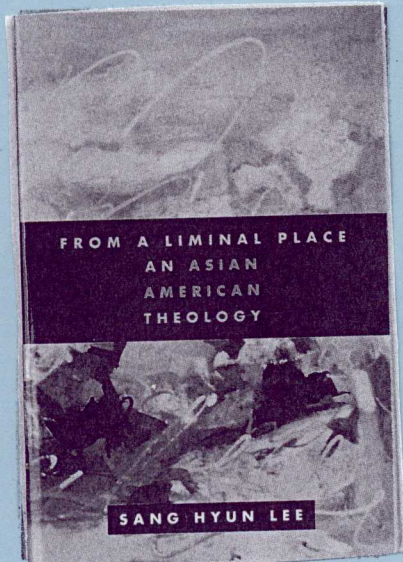
Professor: Mark Lewis Taylor

Office: Hodge 115, 609) 497-7918

Teaching Assistant: Xavier D. Pickett

Class Times: Thursdays, 2:00 pm - 4:50 p.m.

Room: Stuart Hall 5



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initial discerning...

Will we erect borders that insulate “us” against “them,” the “others”? . . . Or will we as Americans embrace a truth observed by Herman Melville over a hundred years ago? “The blood of the whole world” flows through us, he wrote. “We are not a narrow tribe.”

Ronald Takaki

. . . “white cosmology” . . . “white speech” . . . “white silence” . . . are already operating in power before theology as an academic discipline utters its first word.

James W. Perkinson

[Teresa’s white friends]...looked out of their starvation eyes and saw Indians. And not really did they see Indians. They saw only their own hopeless fear. Their own unowned rage. Their own unfelt grief. So they hated Indians. Or petted them...Talking of the victimization they would not own.

Paula Gunn Allen

What would anti-racist theology look like? It would be first a theology that comes out of an antiracist political struggle.

James H. Cone

Unless the stone bursts with telling, unless the seed flowers with speech, there is in my life no living word. The sound I hear is only sound. White sound. Words, when they fall, are pock marks on the earth. They are hailstones seeking an underground stream.

Joy Kogawa

For privileged Western whites to escape their dominant imaginary and write about others, they must have a different memory, one that would allow them to see through their own cultural complacencies.

Anouar Majid

AIMS

1. To enable course members' growth in reflecting critically, and historically, on contemporary forms of white supremacy and racism.
 2. To understand Christianity's relation to the problems of white supremacist and racist phenomena, such that Christianity is seen complexly as both reinforcing the problems *and* resisting them.
 3. To reflect critically on different theological works that enable Christian faith to be anti-racist in practice, and to facilitate course member's creation of their own anti-racist strategies in belief and practice.
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TEXTS

SPECIAL NOTE: Do not purchase all of these books right away. During the first class session, the instructor will offer more insight about the texts. Asterisk (*) marks the books within which the most extensive required readings occur.

*CONE, James H. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Orbis, 2011.

FEAGIN, Joe R. *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing*. Routledge, 2010.

*JENNINGS, Willie James. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*. Yale University Press, 2011.

*JENSEN, Robert. *The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism and White Privilege*. City Lights Publishers, 2007.

*LEE, Sang-hyun. *From a Liminal Place: An Asian-American Theology*. Fortress Press, 2010.

OKIHIRO, Gary Y. *Common Ground: Reimagining American History*. Princeton University Press, 2001.

PILAR-AQUINO, Maria, and ROSADO-NUNEZ, Maria José. *Feminist Intercultural Theology: Latina Explorations for a Just World*. Orbis, 2007.

*TAKAKI, Ronald. *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth Century America*. (New York: Routledge, 1979/ 2000.

*TINKER, George. *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty*. Orbis Books, 2008.

COURSE PROCEDURE

1. *The three-hour block* of class time on Thursday afternoons will be used, for the first two hours, for instructor's lectures, audio-visual work and class dialogue. The last class hour will be used for Taskforce Meetings (see below for more information) – the Taskforces thus taking the place of precepts.
2. The material read and encountered in this class on race and racism always tends to overflow –intellectually but also emotionally – beyond the allotted and planned times for our in-course experience. I consider this a good thing, and urge everyone in and outside of the classroom for “Critical Race Theory as Theological Challenge” to engage one another with patience, empathy, courage, and intellectual rigor. In engaging one another, don't back down easily (“cheaply”) but listen to one another, uncompromisingly, *but* never let go of the possibility of changing your mind, faith and practice.
3. For the logic at work in the layout of readings in the course agenda, see the introductory paragraphs that are inset within the “AGENDA” below, introducing each Part.

REQUIREMENTS

1. On-time regular attendance at all class sessions. Coming to class with the assigned **readings completed** by class time (with the exception of the first class meeting) so that you are ready to be an active participant even if you choose not to speak on some occasions. (5 percent of course grade; small, but often a key swing factor in borderline cases.)
2. **The White Racism Phenomenon Midterm.** This will be a 6-8 page paper (typed double-spaced paper) on the topic of the “anatomy of racism.” In other words, this is an exercise in which you sketch out for yourself the basic structure and dynamics (“anatomy”) of white racism as you understand it after your experience and reading in the first half of this class. This mid-term is due on the first Thursday class after Spring Break, March 15. (40 percent)
3. **Theology for Anti-Racism Final Paper.** This will be a 6-8 page paper, giving a sketch of the Christian theology (basic vision, key symbols, major doctrine or doctrines) that you would argue are crucial for transforming practices and social settings pervaded by white racism. This final paper should generally function as the theological response to your “anatomy of racism” midterm. I am assuming that this final essay will contribute to an anti-racist theology. You may draw from any of the course readings for this assignment, but especially those assigned after the Spring break. Due at the term date for this class, April 21, at 12:00 noon. (40 percent).

NOTE REGARDING BOTH PAPERS: Please attach your SBN number to your submitted papers, which usually will be done through the “Digital Drop Box” of Blackboard for this course.

4. **Taskforce Participation.** Serving on one of the taskforces constructed for this course. Below are some suggestions, but I am open to conversing with course participants in establishing these, naming them, and defining their work. The general aim of a taskforce is to define a problem pertinent to white racism as theological challenge, reflecting and planning practices that engage church, seminary, community and even broader settings. Taskforces will meet in the third hour of each class session, starting the second or third week, and space will be made in our agenda for their presenting to the larger class toward the end of the semester (15 percent).

My Taskforce suggestions are these:

- A. Tracing Race in Theological Education Taskforce.** A group that not only looks at this seminary, but more importantly places it in the context of U.S. theological education. What are the patterns, the problems, the successes? What needs to be done? How might needed aims be realized or approximated?
- B. Law, Prisons & Race Taskforce.** A group that seeks clarity about the difference that race makes in differential group experience in the U.S. of the law (courts, police, prosecutors, et al) and imprisonment.
- C. Unmaking Whiteness Taskforce.** This group samples “whiteness studies,” reflects on how some members of society “learn to be white,” rely (consciously and often unconsciously) on “white privilege(s)”, and on how the construct and effects of whiteness can be “unmade.”
- D. Immigration and Race.** Those in this group will look at how race shapes immigration processes and experiences, refugee status, and citizenship. History and present social analysis will be crucial to this project.
- E. Race and Housing Crises & Zones.** Are U.S. citizens and residents less segregated today than before? Has race played any differentiating role in the present post “2008 Housing Crisis”? How does race shape where and how one lives and receives shelter?
- F. Race & Globalization Taskforce.** Developing quickly a working definition of “globalization” today, this group explores race and racism’s role. Is corporate globalization the great equalizer? How does race affect class and poverty, and the gaining of wealth by nations, especially by underdeveloped nations and communities who live in the shadow of the wealthier nations?

- G. Race and U.S. Schools Taskforce.** This group looks at the ways race is at work in young people's experience of education in their communities. The focus will be primarily on pre-college school experience of race by youth in the U.S. Which are the key points where race and racism seem to play their roles? What policies might be proposed as redressive?
- H. Other Taskforces Options?** I am also open to Taskforces on the following ways that race and racial ethnic identity interacts with (conflicts, reinforces, and so on) with other variables like (gender, sexuality, class, nation). So I can imagine also Taskforces like **Race and Gender, Race and Sexuality, Race and Class, Race and Nation** – though I think the last two are covered in more focused ways, and named in some of the Taskforces summarized above.

OUTCOMES

1. Enrollees by the end of the class will display a growing capacity to analyze the contemporary phenomenon(a) of white racism and several aspects of its historical background. The extent to which this capacity has developed by course's end will be assessed from performance in the mid-term essay on an "Anatomy of White Racism."
2. Registrants will also display a developing ability to understand and construct Christian theological discourse in ways that engage critically the phenomena of racism. The extent to which this theological capacity has emerged will be evident from the theological proposals that the student develops in his or her final essay on Christian theology and racism.
3. Course members will show integrative skills which are interdisciplinary, and which bridge inter-faith, church/world and religious/secular divides. This will be measured *not only* by sensibilities shown in the writing of submitted papers, *but especially* through performance in the Taskforce work.

NOTE: Determining Final Grades. This is always a difficult process and my grading method is not an exact science. This does not mean, however, that it is purely impressionist or subjectivist, either. The general rules of thumb are guided by the percentage weights given to requirements above.

AGENDA

Please read with great care the language I have used to introduce each “Part” of the Agenda. It will help you keep your bearings as we move through the course.

PART ONE

MOORINGS OF RACIAL POWER – *Histories of Illusions, Identities, Repressions*

[Part One provides a largely historical introduction (through texts like Jennings, Takaki, Okihiro) to the way racial power is “moored” (deeply anchored, yet floating and shifting) in the U.S. past. The present features of white racism in the U.S. are treated sociologically (Feagin) and the videos enable us to quickly get into major features and debates about white racism. The general progression in Part One is from a first focus on the notion of race and white racism to a widening perspective in which white racism is seen as one crucial force pervading many other exploitative patterns and also at work in the many daily interchanges and structures that we often may not think of as sites of racism.

The theology book by Willie James Jennings, which I have you reading right away is of value because it not only begins theological reflection, but does so by also providing a wider “optic” looking out onto the historical past of white racism’s formation through constructs of gender, race, sexuality, class – and especially coloniality.]

Feb 2 ORIENTING PERSPECTIVES [99 pages to read]

Jennings, W. J. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*, 1-11, 15-38, 60-64, 65-72.

Robert Jensen, “Introduction: Just a Joke” and “Race Words and Race Stories,” in *Heart of Whiteness*, xiii-xix, and 1-26, respectively.

Feagin, “Preface,” and “The White Racial Frame: Why a New Concept?” vi-ix, 1-21.

In Class: Video, *Race: The Power of an Illusion*. Website video guide:

http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm.

Recommended:

Joseph L. Graves, “How Biology Refutes Our Racial Myths,” in Graves, *The Race Myth*, 1-18. (E-Reserve)

Feb 9 OPTIONS IN HISTORY AND SOCIETY [83 pp.]

Jennings, 72-100 (through first incomplete paragraph), 112-16.

Takaki, v-x (“Preface”), and 3-35 (introducing U.S. “republicanism”).

Feagin, “Building the Racist Foundation: Colonialism, Genocide and Slavery,” 22-37

In Class: Video: *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (Conclude)

Recommended:

Jensen, “Facing the Truth: Past, Present, and Future,” in *Heart of Whiteness*, 27-44.

J. Kameron Carter, “Prologue: The Argument at a Glance,” and “The Great Drama of Religion: Modernity, the Jews, and the Theopolitics of Race,” in *Race: A Theological Account*, Oxford University Press, 3-9.

**Feb. 16 COLLECTIVE PSYCHOLOGIES & SOCIAL PRACTICES –
THE PLOT THICKENS** [93 pp.]

Jennings, 119-32, 161-8.

Okihiro, “Preface,” and “West and East,” xi-xvi, 3-27.

Takaki, 36-55 (on racial republicanism).

Feagin, 56-8, 78-83 (key fragments in *The White Racial Frame*)

Frantz Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness,” in David Theo Goldberg, editor, *Anatomy of Racism*. University of Minnesota Press, 1990, 108-26. (E-Reserve)

Recommendation:

Takaki, 55-79 (from racial republicanism to racial accumulation)

PART TWO

IN RACIAL POWER'S "IRON CAGES" – DISSOLUTIONS, NETWORKING IDENTITIES, REPRESSIONS

[Part Two enables study of the very complex dynamics that occur in the “iron cages” constructed by racism (Takaki’s term, ix-x, 303). These complex dynamics, in turn, render complex and reinforce racism, and so diverse identities are dissolved, reworked and re-inscribed in the “iron cages.” Not only is racism thus reinforced in new ways, it also intersects with gender injustice, sexual repression and class – “networking” these into a mesh of repressive cultural practices. The general progression of Part Two is *from* and through the intersection of race with sex, gender and class in U.S. history, *to* the ways these now exist as interplaying forces in the present U.S. national and imperial matrix of power, especially as constructed “Others” yield a complex affective frame of fear, rage and other emotions.]

Feb. 23 COMPLICATING RACE - SEX , GENDER AND CLASS [114 pp.]

Jennings, 169-180, 186-203.

Takaki, 80-4, 92-107 (“Red race” and “Black race” as metaphysics of civilization)

Okihiro, “White and Black,” 28-54, “Man and Woman,” 55-86.

Recommended:

Jensen, “The Emotions of White Supremacy: Guilt, Fear and Anger” in *The Heart of Whiteness*, 45-65.

Mar. 1 RACE AND EMPIRE [89 pp.]

Jennings, 207-20, 234-49

Takaki, 154-64 (white technology and the “brown” Mexican), 215-40 (from red, black and brown bodies to “heathen Chinees”), and 253-6 (through top incomplete paragraph), 266-89 (toward Asia and Empire).

Recommended:

“Heterosexual and Homosexual,” in Okiihiro, 87-113.

[MID-TERM BREAK - March 2 - 11]

PART THREE

***CHALLENGING RACIAL REGIMES –
Theologians’ Reconstructive Work***

[Finally, in this Part Three, we lift to prominence the religious and theological dimensions of the issues, giving primary attention now to the ways theological discourse has been developed by some theologians who are acutely conscious of the complexities of race and racism. The general progression of this part is *from* discussion of theology’s frequent silence in the face of white racism, *to* specific theological proposals by Native American, African-American, Latino/a-U.S. Hispanic, and Asian-American thinkers.]

March 15 A THEOLOGICAL TURN [91 pp]

James H. Cone, “Theology’s Great Sin: Silence in the Face of White Supremacy.” See <http://www.scribd.com/doc/32485024/Cone-Theology-s-Great-Sin-Silence-In-The-Face-Of-White-Supremacy> , and on Blackboard, “**Course Documents.**”

Jennings, 250-94.

Perkinson, *White Theology*, 1-20 (“Introduction” and “White Boy in the Ghetto”), at Blackboard, **Course Documents.**

Jensen, “Against Diversity, for Politics” and “Conclusion – White People’s Burden,” in *Heart of Whiteness*, 77-87 and 89-96, respectively.

March 22 NATIVE AMERICAN CRITIQUES AND THEOLOGY [96 pp]

Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*, 1-56, 84-125.

Recommended:

Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*, “Ecojustice and American Indian Sovereignty,” 57-83, “American Indian Liberation: Paddling a Canoe Upstream,” 126-43, and “Culture and Domination: A ‘Postcolonial’ Quandary,” 144-63.

Mar 29 ASIAN-AMERICAN CRITIQUES AND THEOLOGY [182 pages]

Lee, Sang Hyun, *From a Liminal Place*. 1-182.

Recommended:

Okihiro, “American History,” in *Common Ground*, 114-37.

Apr 12 LATINO/A-AMERICAN CRITIQUES AND THEOLOGY [87 pp]

María Pilar Aquino, “Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology: Toward an Intercultural Theology for the Third Millennium,” in Orlando Espín and Miguel H. Diza, eds. *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology*. Orbis Books, 1999, pages 6-48.

Clara Luz Ajo Lázaro, “Jesus and Mary Dance with the Orishas: Theological Elements in Interreligious Dialogue,” 109-22, Daisy L. Machado, “Voices from *Nepantla*: Latinas in U.S. Religious History,” 89-106, in María Pilar Aquino, *Feminist Intercultural Theology: Latina Explorations for a Just World*. Orbis Books, 2007.

Luis Pedraja, “Jesucristo,” 127-42, in Pedraja, *Teología: An Introduction to Hispanic Theology*. Abingdon, 2003.

April 12 AFRICAN-AMERICAN CRITIQUES AND THEOLOGY (172 pages)

James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Orbis, 2011, xiii-xix, 1-166.

Recommended:

-JoAnne Marie Terrell, "Rethinking Sacrifice: The Challenge of Womanist Christology," *in the Blood: The Cross in African-American Experience*. Orbis Books, 1998, 99-125, on Blackboard at **Course Documents**.

AND – three important theory books you'll be hearing from me much in lectures . . .