Black Oppression in Portland

Sociology 410

Spring 2019

Online

Julius McGee

Office: Cramer 217O (office hours Tuesday/Thursday 2:00PM – 3:00PM)

TA Luis Nunez (lununez@pdx.edu)

Course description: In this course, we will explore the legacy of black oppression in the city of Portland Oregon. However, where there is oppression, there is always resistance, thus, you will also learn about the legacy of resistance to black oppression. The goal of this course is twofold: 1.) Provide students with a historical overview of black oppression in Portland. 2.) Give students to skills to identify structural racism practice. To accomplish the second goal, we will be connecting the legacy of black oppression in Portland to a broader legacy of racial discrimination. The main theoretical perspective we will use to examine black oppression in Portland is the theory of Racial Capitalism. As a fully online course, the onus falls on students to make critical connection between black oppression in Portland and the broader legacy of racial discrimination. To this end, the bulk of your grade will be determined by your ability to make critical insights that connect theory and practice. Students will be given critical feedback on assignments and are expected to respond to that feedback.

Course expectations:

Workload: As a general rule, in any 4-credit course, students are expected to spend 4 hours per week in the classroom and 8-12 additional hours per week doing coursework outside the classroom. Since this class does not meet in the classroom, you should expect to spend between 12-16 hours per week completing required coursework.

The time commitment may vary from week to week, depending on the amount of reading and other assigned work. Some weeks may require significantly fewer hours, some may require more. Course materials include many reminders regarding the work you must complete.

Active Participation: Your participation in weekly online lessons is critical to your success in this course and is therefore required. You must have access to the Internet on a regular basis.

Specific points:

• You must log on to the D2L course at least every three days to check for announcements and email.

• All coursework must be submitted in the D2L course.
• If you encounter problems with D2L, click on D2L Help at the top of the page. It’s a very good idea to print a copy of the contact info found there in case you are unable to access D2L at some point during the term.

• Problems with your computer are NOT an acceptable reason for deadline extensions. If you encounter computer problems that cannot be resolved in time, you should use another computer to complete the work prior to the deadlines. It’s a good idea to have an alternative computer identified BEFORE you run into problems.

Course policies:

D2L: The instructor will post the syllabus on D2L. Students will submit journal entries via D2L. The instructor will also post comments on response papers and grades for all assignments on D2L.

Email: The instructor regularly communicates with the class via PSU email so be sure that you are receiving my emails. It is your responsibility to check your email daily during the school week and respond in a timely manner. In emails to the instructor, please put the title of the course in the subject line and sign your emails using your first and last name. Use the email addresses on the first page of the syllabus. The instructor will generally respond to email within 24 hours. Emails sent after 5:00pm on Friday will generally be answered by 5:00pm on Monday.

Academic honesty: You are expected to demonstrate complete academic honesty. Please refer to the Student Conduct Code for more detailed information on PSU policies. Cheating or plagiarism will result in failing the assignment and will be reported.

Plagiarism: If you use a direct quote (i.e. someone else’s words), you must include it in quotation marks and cite the source, including author(s) name(s), the date of publication, and the page number. If you summarize or paraphrase an idea from another person, you must cite the source, including author(s) name(s) and the date of publication. Failure to cite your sources, whether intentional or not, is plagiarism. Instances of plagiarism will result in failing the assignment and will be reported.

Access and inclusion for students with disabilities: If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment. If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the DRC to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150, drc@pdx.edu, http://www.pdx.edu/drc. If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and to discuss your accommodations.

Title IX reporting: As a member of the university community, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence or discrimination to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can find a list of those individuals at http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help or you may call a confidential IPV Advocate at 503-725-5672.
Required texts

- Burke, Lucas & Judson Jefferies. *The Portland Black Panthers: Empowering Albina and Remaking a City* (available free digitally through the PSU library)

Other texts used in course

- Newton, Huey. *Revolutionary Suicide*

Course assignments:

*Critical reflections (50%):* Throughout this course, you will be asked to keep a journal. Your journal entries will be due each **Friday by 11:59 PM** on D2L. In these journals, you are expected to record your critical reflections on course content. This will mostly consist of you connecting points made in various readings, as well as responding to my feedback from previous entries (I get that you cannot respond to my feedback in the first entry that is fine). A strong journal entry will open with a brief review of all the readings from that period and proceed to explore how these readings connect. A good way to think about these journals is to ask yourself, “is what happen in Portland consistent with a theory or with what has happened elsewhere?” For example, one week you may ask yourself is the way that Huey Newton conceptualized the Black Panther Party consistent with how the party operated in Portland. Further, you may also want to think about how the questions I proposed to you in previous entries connect to what you have examined in these readings. There is no required page length for these journals. You should write as much as you think is necessary. The grades for these journals are compounded, meaning each journal entry is worth more than the last. This is setup to so that your ideas to build on each other. Please do not be afraid to get creative early on. One way to think about these journals is as a dialogue with me. Not every student has the same academic skillset. Thus, you will be graded on your own standards. Late journal entries will be docked points. The point deduction will be made on a case-by-case basis.

*Documentary Analysis (25%):* At the end of each week (**Sunday at 11:59 PM**) in this course, you will be required to watch a documentary film and write a 500-word analysis. In order to access these films you will need a Netflix account and/or a Youtube account. Note, when accessing the documentaries via Youtube you will need to pay $3.99 (everyone will at least have to do this once and it is much cheaper than a book). The way to access these documentaries is indicated in the course schedule (see below). Your documentary analysis should consist of a brief review of the content (no more than 200 words), followed by an analysis of how the documentary corresponds to other content explored in the course. You are welcome to write a critique of the documentary based on course readings, expand on a point made in the documentary, or discuss its relevance to events today. The key here is that you have an **Argument**. Do not just review the documentary and discuss how various points correspond to readings. You need to be building a consistent argument. For example, in week one you may want to connect *Vanport* to *Racial Capitalism*. This is a great approach, however, you need to do
more than write about how specific moments in the documentary demonstrate Racial Capitalism. You can critique the message of the film using Racial capitalism, or argue that the Vanport flood was caused by Racial Capitalism. Each of these approaches require an argument.

Final Paper: Creating a better future (25%): For the final paper in this course, you will be asked to explore the Portland African American Leadership Forum’s “Peoples Plan” and construct an argument around at least three of their ten points. Your argument should incorporate content explored in the course, but you are also welcome to use outside materials that relate to the theme of the course. This project is intentionally opened ended. You can examine the People’s Plan however you like. You can argue why specific parts of the plan address various issues explored in the class, or expand on points of the plan using content in the course. The People’s Plan can be found on D2L, in addition to a grading rubric. Final papers should be a minimum of 1,200 words. You can find the guidelines for the final assignment under week 10.

Course schedule:

Week 1: Introduction to Racial Capitalism/Portland’s first black communities

Required readings: Kelley, “What did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?”
Johnson, “To Remake the World: Slavery, Racial Capitalism, and Justice”
Semuels, “The Racist History of Portland, the Whitest City in America”

Documentary, Reconstruction, Slavery by another Name (documentary can be accessed using this link http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/watch/)

Week 2: Vanport and the making of Portland’s ghettos

Required readings: Massy and Denton, “The construction of the Ghetto”
Burke and Jefferies, Chapter 1 “Making and Remaking Albina”

Documentary, Reconstruction Vanport (documentary can be accessed using this link https://www.opb.org/television/programs/oregonexperience/segment/vanport/)

Week 3: The making of Portland’s ghetto continued

Coates, “The Case for Reparations”

Made in America: Crips and Bloods (available on YouTube for 2.99 athttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBDnratXHw)

Week 4: Fighting oppression in Portland and beyond

Required reading: Burke and Jefferies, Chapter 2 “Claiming Albina in the Era of the Model Cities and the National Committee to Combat Fascism”
Joseph, “Black Humanity and Black Power”

**Week 5: Fighting oppression in Portland and beyond continued**

Required reading: Burke and Jefferies, Chapter 3 “Serving Albina and Becoming Panthers under the Watchful Eye of the Portland Police Bureau”


**Week 6: Policing in Portland Mass incarceration**

*Required reading*: Sottile, “A Teen and a Toy Gun”

Coates, “The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration”

Documentary, *Freeway Crack in the System* (Available on Netflix)

**Week 7: Policing in Portland Mass incarceration continued**


Willamette Weekly, “Multnomah County Prosecutors Violated an Oregon Law for Decades. Then They Got Caught”.

Documentary, *13th* (available on Netflix)

**Week 8: Gentrification**

*Required reading*: Gooding et al. “Uneven development of the sustainable city: shifting capital in Portland”

Lubitow and Miller “Contesting Sustainability: Bikes, Race, and Politics in Portandia”


**Week 9: Gentrification cont.**

*Required reading*: Sullivan and Shaw, Retail Gentrification and Race: The Case of Alberta Street in Portland, Oregon

Anguelovski, Healthy Food Stores, Greenlining and Food Gentrification: Contesting New Forms of Privilege, Displacement and Locally Unwanted Land Uses in Racially Mixed Neighborhoods

**Week 10: Gentrification cont.**

*Required reading*: Oregon Live, “Portland African American Leadership Forum tries to find voice, place, amid Trader Joe's controversy”

PAALF Letter to
Mayor Charlie Hales  Patrick Quinton, Executive Director, Portland Development Commission
John Jackley, Director - Business and Social Equity, Portland Development Commission