

300:02 Law, Race and Literature: An Introduction to Critical Race Theory
Fall 2008

Law and Literature both inhabit the realm of interpretation, rhetoric, form, ethics and epistemology; they mediate our relationship to society and shape how we imagine the world and ourselves. This course introduces Critical Race Theory, an emerging movement in critical legal studies led by African American, Latino and Asian American legal scholars.

How does the law inform how we talk about and imagine race? Informed by literary studies, postmodernism, feminism, and continental political philosophy, this eclectic group of scholars and practitioners continues the civil rights tradition by challenging set liberal premises and racial orthodoxies to open up new ways of thinking about race and racism.

Through careful close reading and writing assignments, the class will begin to explore a critique of liberalism, the legal construction of whiteness, how racism pervades civil institutions and the complex, oftentimes incommensurate, intersections, of race, gender, class and sexuality. The class will then apply these critical skills in analysis of four literary works and the issues they raise about race, desire and the law.

Prerequisites: At least one class in American history or literature or Philosophy is suggested.