African Americans and the Mass Media

This course will examine the media representations of African Americans from slavery through the twentieth century. Attention will be paid to the emergence and transmission of enduring stereotypes, and their relationship to changing social, political, and economic frameworks in the United States. The course will also consider African Americans' responses to and interpretations of these mediated images.

Requirements:

Attendance is mandatory. More than a couple of absences will severely impact your final course grade (unless you are ill and provide a doctor’s note). Your final grade will be based upon:

- An in-class midterm (40%) Tues, 2/6
- A comprehensive in-class final exam (40%) Tentative Date: Tues 3/20 from 3pm-6pm, but Check Final Exam Schedule to be sure.
- Class Participation (10%)
- A series of 1-2 page typed papers (10%) (These will not receive credit if turned in late, but all one-page papers must be turned in by the end of the course in order to receive a passing course grade.)

The 10% figures for Participation and Homeworks are approximate. Basically, as long as you attend all class meetings, participation can either raise or lower your grade by one partial grade. (So, for example, consistent active and helpful participation can push your final course grade up from a B+ to an A-, while a notable lack of contribution to class discussions can push your grade down by the same amount.) Similarly, as long as you complete all homework assignments adequately and on time, they can raise or lower your final course grade by one partial grade. (Homeworks will be graded check, check plus, or check minus, and will not receive comments.) Missing class meetings, or turning in homeworks late, can adversely affect your final course grade much more severely.

Readings for the course:
A reader containing most course readings can be purchased at Cal Copy, 3251 Holiday Ct. (453-9949, in the shopping center just past the Mobil station off campus -- near St. Germain’s liquor and deli.). A few additional readings will be available on-line, and the syllabus provides the web addresses. (If the address won’t work for any reason, you’ll be able to find the article through google or another search engine.)

The course reader must be brought to class each time we meet.
The outline that follows will provide you with a relatively structured idea of what we will be examining, although specific dates for readings and discussions may change as the quarter progresses.

WEEK 1 (1/9, 1/11): Introduction: Popular Culture, Film and Racial Formation

Henry Jenkins, Tara McPherson, and Jane Shattuc, “Defining Popular Culture,” in Hop on Pop, 26-41

Raymond Williams, Keywords, “Hegemony,” “Popular”

K. Sue Jewell, From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond, Chapter 2 “The Social Significance of Cultural Imagery”, pgs 15-34


**WEEK 2 (1/16, 1/18): Lynching as “Racial Project”**


**WEEK 3 (1/23, 1/25): Legacies of Anti-Racist Cultural Activism: From The Scottsboro Nine to the Kobe Bryant Rape Case**


**WEEK 4 (1/30, 2/1): Television and Representations of Blackness**


WEEK 5 (2/6, 2/8): African Americans in the News, Introduction
TUESDAY: MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Stuart Hall, “The whites of their eyes: Racist ideologies and the media”

Martin Gilens, “Race and Poverty in America: Public Misperceptions and the American News Media”
Public Opin Q 1996 60: 515-541.
http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/60/4/515.pdf (please access article on-line)


WEEK 6 (2/13, 2/15): The Black Press


Rodger Streitmatter, *Voices of Revolution: The Dissident Press in America*, “Chapter 5: Crusade Against the Barbarism of Lynching,”


WEEK 7 (2/20, 2/22): Racial Spectacles in the News, Part One: Rodney King and the LA Riots/Uprising; The Murder of Stephen Lawrence


S. Cottle “Mediatized public crisis and civil society renewal: The racist murder of Stephen Lawrence” *Crime, Media, Culture*, 1(1): 49-71

Elsa Barkley Brown, “Imaging Lynching: African American Women, Communities of Struggle, and Collective Memory,” pgs. 100-123

Linda Susan Beard, “Of Metaphors and Meaning: Language, Ways of Knowing, Memory Holes, and a Politic Recall,” pgs. 182-199


WEEK 9 (3/6, 3/8): Popular Music, Censorship and Race


T.A. Martinez, “Popular Culture as Oppositional Culture: Rap as Resistance” in Sociological Perspectives 40 (2): 265-286


Karim Murji, “Using racial stereotypes in anti-racist campaigns” in Ethnic and Racial Studies Volume 29, Number 2, Number 2/March 2006, pp. 260-280(21) http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/media/h82chcapeldjywec5r02/contributions/g/t/1/j/gt1jj46l931w8836.pdf (please access article on-line -- probably easiest to go through the library, and search for the journal issue)


Elayne Rapping, The Looking Glass World of Nonfiction TV, Chapter 9, “Commercials: Television’s Ultimate Art Form,” pgs. 161-172