

Dr. Melissa Maldonado-Salcedo

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Office Hours: by Appointment



This course brings together a wide range of thinking and scholarship concerning the concept of “difference” in scientific theory, practice, and its implications. While recognizing the importance of intersectionality, we will focus on some of the most charged dimensions of diversity in the world which are often the most difficult to discuss: race, gender, sexuality, and disability. We will also consider how these markers of difference are predictors of wealth, education, health, housing, employment, and other necessary measures of well-being. Additionally, this course will explore the intersection between science, technology, and medicine through the lens of race, gender, sexuality, and disability.

We will focus on the interplay between the life sciences and politics, social identity, and cultural belonging when it comes to (re)defining, resisting, or subverting “difference.” We will consider how scientific claims and technological developments influence cultural understandings of difference. How do cultural ideas about difference influence knowledge and knowledge production?

Learning Objectives

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are often the most difficult to discuss: race, gender, sexuality, and disability. We will also consider how these markers of difference are predictors of wealth, education, health, housing, employment, and other necessary measures of well-being. Additionally, this course will explore the intersection between science, technology, and medicine through the lens of race, gender, sexuality, and disability. We will focus on the interplay between the life sciences and politics, social identity, and cultural belonging when it comes to (re)defining, resisting, or subverting “difference.”

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Moses Statement

If you are a student with a disability requesting accommodations, please contact New York University’s Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212.998.4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu. You must be registered with CSD to receive accommodations. Information about the Moses Center can be found at www.nyu.edu/csd.

The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

Course Policies

- Due to the topics discussed in class, conflicting opinions and thoughts are expected. However, all class discussions should be conducted and presented with the utmost respect for others. (We “call in”- no, “calling out.”)
- This course consists of lectures and discussions. The assignments will draw heavily on materials presented in the lectures and texts.
- If you are having difficulty meeting the requirements of this course, I urge you to come and speak with me as soon as possible. I will work with you and will remain invested in your success.
- Though I will try to remain as faithful as possible to this syllabus, I reserve the right to make changes. These will be announced in advance in class and writing when appropriate.
- This is a tough time; however, you are not alone. I am here for you, and I hope that as the course progresses, we become a community for support each other.

Grade Breakdown

Reflections (3)- 30%

- A Total of 3 reflections of 2-3 pages addressing the week’s themes/texts. You will have to engage with 2-3 texts, provide an analysis, and demonstrate a deep engagement with the themes and issues addressed.
- Do not Summarize the texts.
- **Due on Weeks 4, 7, 12**
 - Reflection 1 can cover any topic/texts from weeks -1-4
 - Reflection 2 can cover any topic/texts from weeks -5-7
 - Reflection 3 can cover any topic/texts from weeks- 8-12

Homeworks-15%

- Discussion Questions

Class Participation- 15%

Responses to your classmates (2 paragraphs minimum)

Film Review- 10%

Abstract for Final- 5%

Final-20%

Your final will broadly respond to the following question, “How do you understand the relationship between science and difference?” You will craft a project that explores this question by way of a case study, an issue/topic, or an artistic imagining.

Course Outline

Week 1- September 7, 2022

Introductions

- Review of Syllabus
- Overview of the Course
- Homework-Introduce Yourself! Post on the discussion board tab on Brightspace.
- Due by September 10, 2022

Week 2- September 12, 2022

The Privlidge of Science

Lecture: The History of Science and Difference

Read

- "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" by Peggy McIntosh
- “The Forgotten Lessons of the American Eugenics Movement” by Andrea DenHoed

Watch

- "How to Recognize your Privilege"- by McIntosh

Wednesday

Lecture: On Pseudo-Science (Eugenics)

Read

- “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privlidge of Partial Perspective” by Donna Haraway
- “Chapter 1, the Data of Biology” by Simone de Beauvoir
- “First Impressions: What Does the World’s Oldest Art Say about Us?” by Judith Thurman

Watch

- “The Couple in the Cage” by Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Peña

Week 3- September 19, 2022

Bad Science and Patriarchy

Lecture: “Battling Bad Science” by Ben Goldacre (TED Talk)

Read

- “Genealogies of Modern Racism” by Cornel West

- “The Disturbing Resilience of Scientific Racism” by Ramkin Skibba

Watch

- “Scientific Studies” on Last Week Tonight

Wednesday

Watch

- *Three Identical Strangers* (2018)

Homework

- Respond to discussion questions and respond to 2 of your classmates
- Due on September 25, 2022
- Post in Discussion board tab and the assignment tab

Week 4-September 26, 2022

Intersectionality

Lecture: Intersectionality

Read

- “Feminist Encounters: Locating the Politics of Experience” by Chandra Talpade Mohanty
- “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color” by Kimberlé Crenshaw

Watch

- The Urgency of Intersectionality by Kimberlé Crenshaw (TED Talk)

Wednesday

Lecture

Read

- “Feminism, Hashtags, and Violence Against Women and Girls” by Susan Berridge and Laura Portwood-Stacer
- “Ain’t I A Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality” by Ann Pheonix and Avtar Brah
- “An Intersectional Analysis to Explaining a Lack of Physical Activity Among Middle-Class Black Women” by Ray Rashawn

Watch, m

- “Critical Race Theory” on *Last Week Tonight*

Due:

- Reflection #1 on October 3, 2022

WEEK 5-October 3, 2022

Embodying Deviance and Medicalization

Lecture: Medicalization

Read

- “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- “Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the homosexual Body” by Siobhan Somerville

- “Deviance, Definitions, and the Medical Profession” by Peter Conrad and Peter Schneider

View

- “25 Photos of ‘Freak Shows’ that are Thankfully a Thing of the past” by Joel Stice

Wednesday

Listen

- “40,000 Recipes for Murder” on Radiolab (podcast)

Read

- *The Elephant Man* by Bernard Pomerance (selected excerpts)
- “The Struggles of Rejecting the Gender Binary” by Daniel Bergner
- “Here is Why the Non-Binary Alien Trop is Problematic” by Averie Watson

Watch (recommended)

- *The Elephant Man* (1980)
- *The Imperfects* (2022) on Netflix (recommended)

WEEK 6-October 10, 2022

Sentience and Personhood

Lecture: The Science of Sentience

Read

- “First Impressions: What Does the World’s Oldest Art Say about Us?” by Judith Thurman
- “On the Frontier of Knowledge: a Discussion of Alien Civilizations” by Shelley Thompson
- “How Science Can Inform Ethics and Champion Sentient Beings” by Michael Shermer
- “The Science of Sentience: An Interview about Animal Feelings” by Mark Bekoff

Listen

- “The Humpback and the Killer” on *Radiolab*

Wednesday

Lecture: Personhood

Read

- “The Elephant in the Courthood” by Lawrence Wright

Watch

- *My Octopus Teacher* (2020)

Homework

- Respond to discussion questions and respond to 2 of your classmates
- Due on October 17, 2022
- Post in Discussion board tab and the assignment tab

Week 7- October 17, 2022

Animals and Us

Lecture: Animal Rights

Read

- “Increasing Our Compassion Footprint: The Animals Manifesto” by Marc Bekoff
- “The Dog-Human Connection in Evolution” by Greg Downey

Wednesday

Lecture: Multispecies Justice

Read

- “Of Men and Mice: How a Rodent Conquered the World of Science” by Greg Critse
- “Watch What Happens When Scientists Tickle a Rat” by Jason Bittlw (*watch the 3:10 video)

Due Reflection #2 on October 17, 2022

Week 8- October 24, 2022

Perfection, Beauty, and Fitting In

Lecture: Beauty Industries

Read

- “Don’t Expect Me to Perfect” by Newsweek Staff
- “Beauty Weighs in Argentina” by Melissa Maldonado-Salcedo

Wednesday

Lecture: Killing us Softly 4 (on Kanopy)

Homework

- Respond to discussion questions and respond to 2 of your classmates
- Due on November 1, 2022
- Post in Discussion board tab and the assignment tab

Week 9 - October 31, 2022

Out of this World

Lecture: Aliens

Read

- “First Impressions: What Does the World’s Oldest Art Say about Us?” by Judith Thurman
- “On the Frontier of Knowledge: a Discussion of Alien Civilizations” by Shelley Thompson

Wednesday

Read

- “I have no Mouth, and I must Scream” by Harlan Ellison
- “Absolute Alterity”? The Alien Animal, the Human Alien, and the Limits of Posthumanism in *Star Trek*” by Manuela Neuwirth

Week 10: November 7, 2022

Decolonizing Science

Read

- “The Milk of Sorrow: A Theory on the Violence of Medicine” by Kimberly Theidon
- “Why you should root against The Milk of Sorrow’s Oscar Nomination” by Rick Vecchio

Wednesday

Read

- “View of Quechuan Voices: The Art of Storytelling through Song” by Sarah Anderson
- “What should Decolonization mean for the history of Science?” by Timothy Sim

Watch

- *The Milk of Sorrow* (2009) or *The Gift of Diabetes* (2005) for the film review
- *Visitas: Walk in the Forest* (2009) (3 mins)

Homework

- Write a “Film Review” that also integrates an analysis using the assigned texts
- Due on November 14, 2022

Week 11 November 14, 2022

Becoming Techno

Read

- “Technology Colonialism” by Anjuan Simmons
- “The People’s Science: a Call for Justice based ethics for Science & Beyond” by Shay Akil McLean
- “2020: The Year of the Robot Rights” by David Gunkel

Wednesday

Read

- “Toward Embodied Virtuality” by N. Katherine Hailes
- “From Scientific Instrument to Everyday Appliance: the Emergence of Personal Computers, 1970-77” by Paul Ceruzzi (recommended)
- “What does it mean to be (seen as) human? The Importance of Gender in Humanization” by Martin A.R and M.F Mason

Week 12 November 21, 2022

Engineering Inequality

- “Race After Technology: Shining Light on the New Jim Code” by Ruha Benjamin
- “Engineered Inequality: Are Robots Racist?” by Ruha Benjamin

Wednesday

Read

- “Introduction: the Power of Algorithms” in the *Algorithm of Oppression* by Safiya Umoja Noble
- “How is Face Recognition Surveillance Technology Racist?” by the ACLU

Due

Reflection #3 on November 29, 2022

Week 13- November 28, 2022

The Global Black Experience

Read

- “The Black Experience; A Slow Walk of Trees (as Grandmother Would Say) Hopeless (as Grandfather Would Say) by Toni Morrison
- “Poetry is Not a Luxury” by Audre Lorde
- “Racism is Terrible. Blackness is Not” by Imani Perry

Wednesday

Read

- “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action” by Audre Lorde

Listen

- “The Trauma of being Black in America” by NPR

Watch

- *Nope* (2022)

Homework

- Respond to Discussion Questions and 2 of your classmates (following class schedule)

WEEK 14- December 5, 2022

Community and Love

Lecture: Community Health

Read

- “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” by Audre Lorde
- “Speaking in Tongues: a Letter to 3rd World Women Writers” by Gloria Anzaldua
- “What it means to be nonbinary” by Jennalyn Fung

Wednesday

Lecture

- “The Necessity of Normalizing Queer Love” by Panti Bliss (TED Talk)

Read

- “Brokeback Mountain” by Ang Lee
- “The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men’s Violence” by Michael Kaufman

Due

- Final Abstract due December 7, 2022

WEEK 15- December 15, 2022

Open Office Hours