

SOCI 235 ¹

Racialization and Ethnicity

Instructor: Dr. Seb Bonet; sbonet@uvic.ca (do reach out if you have questions!)



Course Description:

In June of 2019, the image of Oscar Martinez and his two-year-old daughter, Valeria, who both drowned attempting to cross the Rio Grande into the United States, raced around the world. It prompted widespread mobilizations condemning border practices and denunciations of the dehumanizing implications of the image itself. Meanwhile, caravans of migrants continued to defy the web of bordering controls developed by Fortress North America.

On May 25th of 2020, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, Black people in America rose up in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd, while the same happened in Canada following the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet. In the Canadian context, Black activist and political commentator Desmond Cole called for the police to be disarmed and defunded, even as he questioned the Canadian tendency to fixate on America to the exclusion of our own history of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and anti-Black racism.

¹ This online outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. Detailed course outlines will be made available for all registered students on the first day of class. Only those outlines are to be considered official.

And in 2021, the remains of 215 Indigenous children were discovered on the grounds of a former residential school in Kamloops. This horrifying re-confirmation of the genocidal foundations of Canadian settler colonialism comes even as Indigenous land defenders continue to be arrested and surveilled defending their territories from resource extraction.

This course takes these tragic images and events as its point of departure. We will ask, and attempt to respond to, questions like: why is the global crisis of displacement and migration happening and intensifying? How are anti-Black racism and the afterlives of slavery continuing to shape Black life in North America? How is settler colonialism evolving into a discourse of reconciliation even as its structural imperative to maintain access to Indigenous territory continues? And how are systems like capitalism, white supremacy and settler colonialism entwined?

As we attempt to understand these systems of racialized domination, we will also try and ground ourselves in the experiences and practices of the people resisting them. What visions of liberation and flourishing are being offered amidst resistance? We will seek to learn from land reclamation and unbordering efforts in movements for migrant justice; from the politics of abolition and transformative justice being practiced as part of Black liberation; and, from the struggles for LandBack and beyond that we see in Indigenous Resurgence movements.

Course Outcomes/Objectives:

This course aims to provide students with a wide and deep enough theoretical framework to make sense of contemporary forms of racialization and the movements that attempt to sustain and create mutualistic alternatives to domination. The course also aims to connect theory to practice. The course will invite students to think of themselves in relation to the questions we grapple with, and will attempt to bring to life the movements that racialized empire attempts to control.

Course Pre-requisites/Recommendations:

Recommended prior to SOCI 384, 436

Course Evaluation:

Take-Home Paper #1 (30%) – This take-home paper will ask you to think about displacement and forced migration. I will pose a few questions and you will choose one to respond to. Your response will be 1200 words or less, double-spaced and use 12-point font.

Take Home Paper #2 (30%) – This take-home paper will zero in on anti-Black racism. I will again pose a few questions and you will choose one to respond to. Your response will be 1200 words or less, double-spaced and use 12-point font.

Reflection Paper (40%) - Your final paper will be a personal reflection on course content. In addition to touching on the material from the first two take-home papers, in this paper you will also bring in material from the final section on settler colonialism.

Required Resources May Include:

Readings, videos and podcasts will be posted to CourseSpaces as PDFs or links.