Race and Racialization: Essential Readings

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Instructor’s Resources:

Critical Thinking Questions

CSPI 2014
Part 1: Race Through Time

Part 1A: Early Theories of Race

Chapter 1: Race and Progress by Franz Boas

1. Critique the use of the word “race” by Boas. Are there any other problematic words or language used by Boas? How could you re-write his words in the current context?
2. What eugenic arguments was Boas addressing? How do eugenic arguments influence sexual standards?
3. How does race particularly affect women’s sexuality? What are the intersections between race, sexuality and gender?

Chapter 2: The Concept of Race by Ashley Montagu

1. What are the pitfalls of using the word “race” according to Montagu? What other words can be used in its place? Is “ethnicity” a good substitute for “race?” Why or why not?
2. Gathering race-based statistics has been a controversial practice in Canada. How are debates around this issue connected to Montagu’s main thesis?
3. Is it possible to study racism without using the word “race” or gathering race-based statistics? How?

Chapter 3: The Classification of Races in Europe and North America: 1700–1850 by Michael Banton

1. What are the different ways in which the word “race” has been used through the ages in Europe? How has the word been employed outside Europe, e.g. in South America, India, Africa, China, Indigenous Nations, etc.?
2. Do the historical, political, economic contexts influence the way (s) in which the word “race” is used?
3. How might Michel Foucault’s concept of “discourse” be useful in understanding the use of the word “race?”

Part 1B: Colonialism and the Construction of Race
Chapter 4: Towards Scientific Racism by Gustav Jahoda

1. What are the consequences of arguing that humans can be scientifically divided into different species?
2. How did the differentiation of races based on “scientific” observation differ from past methods of evaluation?
3. What were skull measurements originally intended for and how did this differ from their eventual use?

Chapter 5: Antecedents of the Racial Worldview by Audrey Smedley

1. What two features of English society made it likely that they would carry out colonial policies?
2. What perceptions did many English hold about the Irish and why?
3. What similarities exist between Spain and England with respect to their ability to differentiate between themselves and those they colonized?

Chapter 6: Latent and Manifest Orientalism by Edward W. Said

1. What is “the Orient” and how does it differ from Orientalism?
2. What is the difference between latent and manifest Orientalism?
3. What were the basic truths that comprised latent Orientalism?

Chapter 7: The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power by Stuart Hall

1. According to Hall, what is a discourse and what is its importance?
2. What does Hall mean by the phrase “a regime of truth?”
3. What, for Hall, is the relationship between discourse and power?