

**Race, Society, and Structural Inequalities:
Selected Global Perspectives**



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DU English Track – Fall Semester 2026

Race, Society, and Structural Inequalities: Selected Global Perspectives



Course overview

This module examines race and structural inequalities from a global and comparative perspective, moving beyond the predominant U.S.-centred framework that often shapes discussions of race. While acknowledging the importance of the U.S. experience, the course explores how systems of hierarchy, exclusion, and inequality emerge in diverse historical, political, and cultural contexts.

Through case studies from **France**, the **United Kingdom and the Commonwealth**, **East Asia**, **South Asia**, **Africa**, and the **Middle East**, students will investigate how colonialism, ethnicity, caste, migration, labour, food practices, and emerging technologies produce and reproduce social inequalities. The module emphasizes that while the language of “race” is not universally adopted, analogous systems of social stratification and exclusion exist across societies.

Students will critically examine themes including colonial legacies and historical memory, ethnicity and nationalism, caste-like social systems, migrant labour regimes, food insecurity and cultural stigma, as well as how artificial intelligence, surveillance, climate change, and demographic transformation may shape future inequalities. By comparing such diverse contexts, the course encourages students to see structural inequality as a global phenomenon with locally specific manifestations, while developing the analytical tools to identify common mechanisms of power, exclusion, and resistance across different societies.



Key objectives

- ✧ Understand key concepts in race, ethnicity, structural inequality, and intersectionality from a comparative perspective.
- ✧ Analyse how different societies construct and maintain systems of social hierarchy.
- ✧ Compare historical and contemporary forms of exclusion across regions and cultures.
- ✧ Evaluate the relationship between law, institutions, labour, migration, and identity in producing inequality.
- ✧ Critically reflect on emerging forms of inequality associated with technology, environmental change, and demographic shifts.



Proposed syllabus

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Class 1	France After the Code Noir: Memory, Race, and Inequality Slavery, colonial legacies, and Republican politics of recognition in contemporary France <i>(Taubira Law, slavery, colonial memory, 2026 repeal of "Code noir", contemporary France...)</i>
Class 2	Empire's Afterlives: Britain, Migration, and Race How colonial histories shape citizenship, identity, and inequality today <i>(Commonwealth, Windrush, immigration, multiculturalism, racial inequalities in the UK...)</i>
Class 3	Who Belongs? Ethnicity and Nation in Asia How states define identity, citizenship, and national belonging <i>(Han/Uyghur in China, Japan's "homogeneous nation" discourse, minority identities...)</i>
Class 4	Born This Way or Made Unequal? Caste and Social Hierarchy How inherited identities shape inequality across societies <i>(Dalits in India, Burakumin in Japan, Osu in Nigeria, inherited forms of hierarchy...)</i>
Class 5	The "Disposable Worker": Migration and Global Labour Borders, precarity, and the unequal value of human labour <i>(Gulf Kafala system, Japan's technical intern program, migrant precarity...)</i>
Class 6	You Are What You Eat? Food and Social Inequality How food reflects power, identity, and social boundaries <i>(North Korean famine, food stigma, "smelly foods", identity, class, and exclusion...)</i>
Class 7	Classrooms of Influence: Knowledge, Culture, and Soft Power Nations shaping minds through education, language, and ideas <i>(Confucius Institutes in Africa, North Korean Chōsen schools in Japan, British Council & Alliance française cultural diplomacy...)</i>
Class 8	The Politics of the Intimate: Private Lives, Public Nations Gender, power, and state regulation of fertility <i>(Romania under Ceaușescu, eugenics in Nazi Germany, queer citizenship, birthrate nationalism in South Korea and Japan, China's one-child policy...)</i>
Class 9	The Future of Inequality: AI, Surveillance, Climate, Aging, and Mobility How new technologies and global transformations reshape social divides <i>(AI governance, predictive systems, climate migration, aging societies, future citizenship...)</i>
Class 10	Written evaluation



Assessment details

The sessions are designed to foster critical thinking and develop global awareness. The thematic content presented will be followed by interactive, group-based activities that encourage active participation and engagement. Students' involvement in these activities will contribute to a participation grade worth 30% of the final course grade.

A final written evaluation will be held during Class 10, the last session of the course.

Students will have a choice of subjects, based on the themes covered. This evaluation will account for the remaining 70 % of the final grade.

Full details of the assessment procedure will be provided during the first class.



Select Reading List

Foundational theory

- ✧ Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.
- ✧ Fraser, N. (2022). *Cannibal capitalism: How our system is devouring democracy, care, and the planet—and what we can do about it*. Verso.
- ✧ Mbembe, A. (2017). *Critique of Black reason* (L. Dubois, Trans.). Duke University Press.

Thematic content

- ✧ Ambedkar, B. R. (2014). *Annihilation of caste*. Navayana. (Original work published 1936)
- ✧ Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev. ed.). Verso.
- ✧ Benjamin, R. (2019). *Race after technology: Abolitionist tools for the new Jim code*. Polity.
- ✧ Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing gender*. Routledge.
- ✧ El-Enany, N. (2020). *Bordering Britain: Law, race and empire*. Manchester University Press.
- ✧ Fanon, F. (2008). *Black skin, white masks* (R. Philcox, Trans.). Grove Press. (Original work published 1952)
- ✧ Heldke, L. (2003). *Exotic appetites: Ruminations of a food adventurer*. Routledge.
- ✧ Said, E. W. (1993). *Culture and imperialism*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- ✧ Thomas, D. (2007). *Black France: Colonialism, immigration, and transnationalism*. Indiana University Press.

Personal notes

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