

**Privilege and Race in Global Perspective**  
**POL348**  
**Fall 2025**

**Professor:** Matthew J Walton  
Sidney Smith Hall Rm. 3005  
Email: [matthew.walton@utoronto.ca](mailto:matthew.walton@utoronto.ca)  
Office hours: Wednesdays, 1-2pm (on Zoom)  
                  Thursdays 1-2pm (in person)  
                  Or by appointment

**Grader:** Miko Zeldes-Roth ([m.zeldesroth@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:m.zeldesroth@mail.utoronto.ca))

**Class Meetings:** Tuesdays, 11am-1pm, BL313

**Course Description:**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has emerged as a profoundly impactful field of study, whose influence has travelled far beyond its original grounding in legal studies in North America. It has spawned a host of subfields that adopt CRT methods and orientations, but seek to identify the particularities of subject positions beyond the distinctly racial focus of the field. It has also developed alongside studies of Whiteness and privilege, particularly intersectional and contextual understandings of privilege. However, much of the academic and policy analysis from CRT and its offshoots still remains focused on racial identity structures common to the US context. This course will consider how notions of race and privilege “travel,” understood in at least two ways: First, racialized categories and logics have spread across the globe over several centuries, interacting with and reshaping existing identity categories. Second, thinking analytically, we want to ask how effectively they can describe or explain the dynamics of other privileged identities in contexts outside of a North American White/non-White categorization.

We will review arguments that seek to situate race and “Whiteness” globally, as well as other localized iterations of ascriptive privilege, trying to identify particular characteristics, dynamics and mechanisms of privilege, including its nested nature when moving from the local to the global. Similarly, we will look at how colonial histories and ongoing settler-colonial occupations have shaped identity categories and the relationships between them in specific locations. In doing this work, we will also study the ways in which theoretical formulations of race do and do not map on to identity categories such as indigeneity and ethnicity. This will help us to discern the limits of CRT’s insights in understanding identity hierarchies elsewhere, as well as the ways in which studies of privilege in other places can help inform broader academic and policy discussions on addressing privilege and its accompanying effects.

*[PLEASE NOTE: While course assignments and delivery/participation methods may seem extensive, the number and type of assignments is designed to lower the stakes for any given assignment, to give you an opportunity to practice and develop a range of important skills, to help you build up to larger, more comprehensive assignments, and to reinforce acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI. The multiple modes of delivery and participation are intended to allow you to engage with course materials on your own time as much as possible, and to provide multiple pathways for doing so, knowing that some students will face technological or other impediments and that some are not necessarily comfortable participating in large group settings. Please feel free to talk to me if you have questions or concerns about the course design.]*

### **Course Readings:**

All required and additional course readings are available online, either as copyright-compliant postings on the course Quercus site or as links to the University of Toronto Libraries electronic collection. You are responsible for completing all readings by the dates indicated on the syllabus. The additional readings are optional but strongly encouraged. I also strongly encourage you to look at several of the class discussant responses each week as they are posted by your fellow students.

### **Course Requirements:**

**Class Participation (10%):** This part of your grade will be calculated through the equal weight of three components:

1. The completion of occasional “Short Write” responses, usually assigned on Quercus, with responses submitted there as well.
2. Attendance at and participation in the weekly small group discussions from Weeks 5-10.
3. Other forms of in-class or online engagement, including: direct participation during full-class discussions; commenting in weekly open discussion threads on Quercus; or talking with me about course ideas over email or during office hours.

I know that not everyone is comfortable speaking regularly in class, so I hope this range of possible methods provides an option that works for you. I still expect you to attend class regularly and maintain contact with me in order to ensure that you are meeting my expectations regarding course participation.

**Class Discussant (15%):** Each student must sign up to be a discussant at **three** class sessions during the course of the term. (Sign-up will be online and must be completed by the second class.) For each discussant session you are expected to read all assigned readings closely (I recommend that you also read the additional readings) and write a 500-600 word critical response. This is **NOT** a summary of the readings, but should include personal reflection on what the readings make you think about and could include questions about the readings that you wish to pose to the class, as well as your provisional responses to those questions. Each of these response papers must be posted to the course page in the appropriate “Discussion” thread **no later than 11:59pm the day before class**. These papers do not have to be fully developed essays, nor do they need to address all of the readings, but they should demonstrate to me that you’ve prepared for the discussion and considered some of the implications of the reading(s). You do not have to prepare a formal presentation for class. Note that I still expect all of you to have read the assigned readings and a selection of other students’ discussant responses and to be prepared to participate in our discussions. Discussant responses and the questions and ideas they generate will form part of the framework for our group discussions in class. Discussant responses will be graded on a scale of “check-plus” (87), “check” (75) and “check-minus” (65). Summaries of the readings, without personal reflection or interpretive engagement, will be scored no higher than “check.”

**Small Group Reflections (10%):** During Weeks 5-10, students will be randomly assigned to small groups of 4-6 members, which will rotate every 3 weeks. Each class session will include 25-30 minutes in these small groups to discuss the readings and respond to specific prompts that I will provide. Each student will write **two** 300-500 word reflections on the dynamics and process of the small group discussions, in response to a separate prompt provided by the professor. These will be informal, personal reflections designed to get you to think about how knowledge is generated and how different discussion formats can facilitate peer learning and understanding. Each of these reflections should be posted to the course page **no later than 11:59pm on the last class day for the period (Week 7 & Week 10)**. I encourage you to think about submitting these earlier than the deadline, as you are allowed to reflect on small group work from any or all of the weeks in a particular topic. Reflections will also be graded on a scale of “check-plus” (87), “check” (75) and “check-minus” (65).

**Preliminary Speculative Essay (5% thesis/outline, 20% essay):** Each student will write an essay of 1,200-1,500 words, responding to a prompt provided by the professor. This essay will be somewhat

speculative, in that you will be asked to critically assess one of the concepts or arguments of the first few weeks to consider how theories of racial privilege, developed mostly in North American contexts, might be applicable or adaptable to other axes of identity in other parts of the world. However, I still expect a level of organization and clarity of argument that is different from the more informal reflection that characterizes the Class Discussant responses. You will be required to cite something from the relevant readings (and you are welcome to use additional sources). You may use any standard citation style but you must be consistent. We will provide more guidance on essay writing in mini-workshops during class.

**Thesis/Outline (5%): Due on Quercus no later than 11:59pm on Week 4**

[\*\*Graded on a scale of “check-plus” (87), “check” (75) and “check-minus” (65)]

**Essay (20%): Due on Quercus no later than 11:59pm on Week 6**

**Culminating Project (10% proposal/annotated bibliography, 30% project):** Each student will complete a culminating project of open format that will incorporate and develop ideas learned during the course. While this could be an additional formal essay (of around 2,000 words), we encourage you to consider an artistic creation, a multi-media presentation, a performance, or some other type of output. We will be very open to creative formats, so please feel free to think outside of the academic box and bring your whole self to this assignment. The first stage of the assignment will be a proposal (400-500 words) and an annotated bibliography of works you expect will inform the project. (Additional details on the format of an annotated bibliography will be provided.) Culminating Projects that are primarily non-textual should have an accompanying explanation/reflection (at least 500 words). The last week of class will be dedicated primarily to students sharing their Culminating Projects.

**Proposal/Annotated Bibliography (10%): Due on Quercus no later than 11:59pm Week 9**

**Project (30%): Due no later than 11:59pm on Week 12**

*\*\*PLEASE NOTE: Between all of the different assignments, every student will have something due Weeks 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 12. Also note that Class Discussant Responses are due by 11:59pm the day before class, so I can have time to incorporate your ideas into our class discussion. All other assignments are due by 11:59pm the day of class.*

### **Delivery/Participation Methods:**

- Readings (available through Quercus; to be done in advance of the scheduled class meeting)
- Reading Questions (*optional*; posted weekly on Quercus; designed to help guide your study and provide confidence that you are recognizing and understanding some of the main arguments from each reading)
- Class Discussant Posts (assigned short response papers—described above—that are posted publicly on Quercus to share students’ reactions to and analysis of the readings; I will read all of these in advance of the scheduled class meeting and use them to plan our group discussion)
- Open Discussion Thread (*optional*; for posting brief questions, ideas, responses or concerns about the readings that you’d like to share with classmates and incorporate into our group discussion)
- Class Lecture (each class will begin with a brief, and sometimes more interactive, lecture, introducing the readings and thinkers and their contexts, laying out a framework for discussion)
- Small Group Discussions (beginning Week 5; in class, after a brief introductory lecture, we will split into groups; I will provide 2-3 discussion questions each week to guide 25-30 minutes of small group discussion)
- All-Class Discussions (during lecture and after the small group time, we will reconvene to share insights from the small groups and discuss further implications of the readings)
- Office Hours (held in-person and virtually for 2 hours a week, as indicated above; also available by appointment via Zoom or another platform)
- Announcements (reminders of assignments due, updates on course plans or changes)

## **Course Policies:**

### Late Work/Make-up Exams

Please plan to submit your work on time and do your best to meet the set deadlines. Cultivating strong time-management skills is an important part of your university education. At the same time, I know that life can intervene. My goal is to help you learn the materials and complete the assignments to the best of your ability, even if this takes a few extra days. If you find yourself needing an extension, please reach out as soon as possible. In requesting an extension, please include:

1. The reason for your request (but please note that you are not required to disclose medical or other personal information in detail).
2. A proposal for a new deadline.
3. Additional documentation (like a doctor's note) is helpful but not required.

All late work that is not excused in advance is subject to a penalty of **2% per day of lateness**. I guarantee that I will give every request serious consideration. Your success in this course and your personal well-being are both important to me.

### Accessibility Policy

I do my best to welcome students with diverse learning styles and needs in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. I know that this formal process can be slow, so I want to encourage you to come to me in advance to talk about any accommodations you might need or challenges you might be facing. I am also open to hearing about ways in which the course environment or structure might unintentionally exclude or disadvantage certain people and will work to respond to any such concerns.

I'm always willing to work with **any** student to help facilitate your participation and success in this course, whether you have a formal accommodation granted or not. I recognize that a range of other circumstances might affect your ability to engage fully with course expectations. Please feel free to come to me to discuss any difficulties you are experiencing and we can work together to address them.

### Attendance Policy

I expect you to be engaged with course matters as much as you are able, including doing the weekly readings, listening to pre-recorded lectures, and attending and participating in class discussions. I also recognize that your ability to access materials or participate in discussions might fluctuate, due to technological limitations, environmental stresses or other factors. If you're having trouble keeping up, please get in touch with me and we can work together to find a suitable way forward.

### Grading Policy

I will be happy to discuss any grades given on assignments. I will do my best to communicate the criteria I'll be grading on in advance but please ask questions if you are confused. If you feel that there is an error in grading, you can take it up through the following procedure (Please note that I will only discuss issues with grading during the 7 days after the assignment has been handed back):

1. Wait a minimum of 24 hours after receiving your grade to contact me.
2. Put in writing the reasons why you are dissatisfied with the grade.
3. Bring the assignment/exam and your written statement to my office hours to discuss.

For assignments graded by the Grader, the same policy applies, and your first submission to discuss a grade should be to the Grader. If you are still dissatisfied with the resolution, you may contact me, providing the previous communication with the Grader and a further explanation of why you think the assigned grade was not appropriate.

### AI Policy

I strongly urge you to use resources other than Generative AI tools in your work in this class. Many of our assignments are responsive and reflexive: I want to know *your* thoughts and reactions, not an energy-guzzling chatbot's aggregation of perspectives scraped from stolen data! Therefore, you are **not** permitted to use Generative AI tools for Short Writes, Class Discussant Responses or Small Group Reflections. I am, however, open to considering proposals for targeted use of these tools that acts as a complement to your own brain and your own work. If you plan to use Generative AI in any way for the Preliminary Speculative Essay or Culminating Project, you *must* clearly state in the outline or proposal how it will be used, get approval for that use and then follow that plan. However, Generative AI tools **cannot** be used to generate ideas for responses to essay prompts or textual interpretations. This does not constitute original work and will not be approved. Any use of Generative AI that is not approved is **not** permitted.

### Academic Integrity Policy

Cheating and plagiarism are offenses against academic integrity and are subject to disciplinary action by the university. Plagiarism is copying someone else's work and presenting it as your own (by not attributing it to its true source). This includes using unaltered AI-generated work, which comes from programs that have themselves been built on the theft of massive amounts of original work to create training datasets. If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me. I take this matter very seriously and will **NOT** tolerate plagiarism. Let me stress again: if you are unsure about how to properly cite an idea, please ask me. Otherwise, I expect university students to know proper citation methods, styles and norms. Your Essays will all be submitted using an online plagiarism detection tool; if you would like to request an alternate method of submission, please let me know and we can arrange this.

### **Course Readings:**

#### **Week 1 (Sept 2): Starting Points I: Racial Privilege**

##### Required Readings

Du Bois, W.E.B., 1935. *Black reconstruction: An essay toward a history of the part which black folk played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America, 1860-1880*. Harcourt, Brace. [\*\*pp.700-701]

Memmi, Albert. 1965 [1957]. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. [\*\*pp.10-18]

McIntosh, P. 2003. "White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack." In S. Plous (Ed.), *Understanding prejudice and discrimination*. New York, NY, US: McGraw-Hill.

Hutcherson, Lori Lakin. 2016. "[My white friend asked me to explain white privilege, so I decided to be honest.](#)" *Good Black News*, July 14.

##### Additional Readings

Wildman, Stephanie M. and Adrienne D. Davis. 2013. "Language and Silence: Making Systems of Privilege Visible." in *Critical race theory: the cutting edge*. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (ed.), Philadelphia, Pa: Temple University Press, 3rd edition.

#### **Week 2 (Sept 9): Starting Points II: Race and Critical Race Theory/Mini Writing Workshop I**

##### Required Readings

Lopez, Ian F. Haney. 2013. "The Social Construction of Race." in *Critical race theory: the cutting edge*. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (ed.), Philadelphia, Pa: Temple University Press, 3rd edition.

Perea, Juan F. 2013. "The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race." in *Critical race theory: the cutting edge*. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (ed.), Philadelphia, Pa: Temple University Press, 3rd edition.

### Additional Readings

Bell, D.A. 1995. "Who's afraid of critical race theory?" *University of Illinois Law Review*, Volume 1995, Issue 4, pp. 893 – 910.

### **Week 3 (Sept 16): Starting Points III: The Racial Contract/Mini Writing Workshop II**

#### Required Readings

Mills, Charles W. 1997. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. [\*\*Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 3 (pp.120-133)]

### **Week 4 (Sept 23): Starting Points IV: Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Class**

#### Required Readings

"Combahee River Collective Manifesto." 2018 [1977]. In *Feminist Manifestos: A Global Documentary Reader*. PA Weiss (ed.) New York University Press, New York.

Cohen, Cathy J. 1997. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ* 3 (4): 437–65.

Dawson, M.C. and Katzenstein, E.A., 2019. "Survey Article: Articulated Darkness: White Supremacy, Patriarchy, and Capitalism in Shelby's Dark Ghettos." *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 27(2), pp.252-268.

### Additional Readings

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review*, Volume 43, Issue 6, pp. 1241 – 1299.

(\*\*Preliminary Speculative Essay Thesis/Outline due)

### **Week 5 (Sept 30): Colonial and Racialized Onto-Epistemologies**

#### Required Readings

Mahmud, T., 1998. "Colonialism and Modern Constructions of Race: A Preliminary Inquiry." *U. Miami L. Rev.*, 53, p.1219-46.

Moreton-Robinson, A., 2004. "Whiteness, epistemology and Indigenous representation." In Aileen Moreton-Robinson (ed.), *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*. Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press.

### Additional Readings

Bernal, D.D., 2002. "Critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge." *Qualitative inquiry*, 8(1), pp.105-126.

### **Week 6 (Oct 7): Racial Capitalism**

#### Required Readings

WATCH: Kelley, Robin D.G. 2017. ["What is Racial Capitalism and Why Does it Matter?"](#)

Bhattacharyya, G. 2018. *Rethinking Racial Capitalism: Questions of Reproduction and Survival*. London: Rowman & Littlefield. [Introduction and Chapter 1: Beginning]

### Additional Readings

Al-Bulushi, Y., 2022. Thinking racial capitalism and black radicalism from Africa: An intellectual geography of Cedric Robinson's world-system. *Geoforum*, 132, pp.252-262.

(\*\*Preliminary Speculative Essay due)

### **Week 7 (Oct 14): Positionality and Perspective**

#### Required Readings

Chatterjee, Piya. 2006. "Taking Blood: Gender, Race and Imagining Public Anthropology in India," *India Review* 5 (July/October): 551-71.

Borell, Belinda A. E., Amanda S. Gregory, Tim N. McCreanor, Victoria G. L. Jensen and Helen E. Moewaka Barnes. 2009. "'It's Hard at the Top but It's a Whole Lot Easier than Being at the Bottom': The Role of Privilege in Understanding Disparities in Aotearoa/New Zealand." *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Race and the Global Politics of Health Inequity, pp. 29-50.

#### Additional Readings

TBC

**(\*\*First Small Group Reflection due)**

### **Week 8 (Oct 21): Indigeneity as a Global Concept**

#### Required Readings

Kauanui, J. Kēhaulani. 2016. "'A structure, not an event': Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity," *Lateral* 5.1.

Reyes, Nicole Alia Salis. 2018. "A space for survivance: locating Kānaka Maoli through the resonance and dissonance of critical race theory." *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 21:6, 739-756.

Matute, I.D., 2021. Indigeneity as a transnational battlefield: Disputes over meanings, spaces and peoples. *Globalizations*, 18(2), pp.256-272.

#### Additional Readings

Sen, Uditi. 2017. "Developing Terra Nullius: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Indigeneity in the Andaman Islands." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 59(4):944–973.

**\*\*Please Note: No class on Oct 28 for Reading Week\*\***

### **Week 9 (Nov 4): Indigeneity as Privilege?**

#### Required Readings

Nah, A.H. 2006. "(Re)Mapping Indigenous 'Race'/Place in Post-colonial Peninsular Malaysia." *Geogr. Ann.*, 88 B (3): 285-297.

Murray Li, Tania. 2000. "Articulating Indigenous Identity in Indonesia: Resource Politics and the Tribal Slot." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Volume 42, Issue 1, pp. 149 – 179.

#### Additional Readings

Morton, M.F., Wang, J. and Li, H., 2016. Decolonizing methods: Akha articulations of indigeneity in the Upper Mekong Region. *Asian Ethnicity*, 17(4), pp.580-595.

**(\*\*Culminating Project Proposal/Annotated Bibliography due)**

### **Week 10 (Nov 11): Ethnic Privilege in Myanmar**

#### Required Readings

Walton, Matthew J. 2013. "The 'Wages of Burman-Ness': Ethnicity and Burman Privilege in Contemporary Myanmar." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 43 (1): 1-27.

Campbell, S. and Prasse-Freeman, E., 2022. "Revisiting the Wages of Burman-Ness: Contradictions of Privilege in Myanmar." *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 52(2), pp.175-199.

#### Additional Readings

Choo, L.W., 2023. Of citizens and strangers: the privilege of being Burman. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 53(8), pp.1429-1446.

**(\*\*Second Small Group Reflection due)**

**Week 11 (Nov 18): Navigating Ethnicity and Indigeneity in Myanmar**

Required Readings

Dunford, M.R., 2019. Indigeneity, ethnopolitics, and taingyintha: Myanmar and the global Indigenous Peoples' movement. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 50(1), pp.51-67.

Thawngmung, A.M., 2016. "The politics of indigeneity in Myanmar: competing narratives in Rakhine state." *Asian Ethnicity*, 17(4), pp.527-547.

Additional Readings

Cheesman, Nick. 2017. "How in Myanmar "National Races" Came to Surpass Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47 (3): 461-483.

**Week 12 (Nov 25): Conclusions/Presentations of Culminating Projects**

(No required readings)

**(\*\*Culminating Project due)**