

Interdisciplinary Modes of Inquiry in Race and Ethnic Studies (RAES)  
Spring 2012

During Spring 2012 a group of faculty currently involved in the Race and Ethnic Studies Program engaged in a semester-long conversation on interdisciplinary modes of inquiry in race and ethnic studies in order to develop a common vocabulary and intellectual background from which to grapple with the challenges of interdisciplinary work in this area. We each suggested reading from our own disciplinary perspectives to develop a workshop reading list. We met roughly every other Friday during the second half of the semester. We read selections from the following texts:

Mary Bloodsworth-Lugo and Carmen Lugo-Lugo. 2010. *Containing (Un)American Bodies: Race, Sexuality, and Post-9/11 Constructions of Citizenship*.

Patricia Hill Collins and John Solomos (Eds.). 2010. *Sage Handbook on Race and Ethnic Studies*.

John and Jean Comaroff. 2009. *Ethnicity, Inc.: On the Commodification of Identities*.

Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler (Eds.). 1997. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*.

Francoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih (Eds.). 2011. *The Creolization of Theory*.

Christopher Miller. 1986. *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French*.

John H. Stanfield II (Ed). 2011. *Rethinking Race and Ethnicity in Research Methods*.

The readings generated extremely useful conversations about both content and approach for the Race and Ethnic Studies Program in terms of teaching, the organization of the RAES major, and the possibilities for organizing an introductory course for new majors. In addition, we were able to discuss different and more or less successful approaches to the senior seminar and moving students into a more interdisciplinary space for their own thesis research. Through our discussions we each developed concrete insights into the needs of RAES majors and ideas to test out in the courses we teach within the program.

The workshop also led us to reaffirm our goal of creating a common foundations course for the RAES major. We emerged from the workshop with a better sense of how to approach the remaining groundwork that will need to be done as we develop such a course, and we agreed to apply for an Innovation in Teaching and Learning grant in order to pursue this work next year with the goal of offering a foundations course the following academic year.

For future interdisciplinary workshops we recommend collaborative planning of the reading list and meeting off campus in a comfortable, casual environment. We also suggest embracing discussion that extends out from the texts to open up collaboration around pedagogy, course design, and interdisciplinary teaching and learning.