Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged in the 1980s as an intellectual and political movement foregrounding race and racism in the development, institution, and practice of U.S. law. Challenging the long-held belief that race-based inequities deviate from the liberal ideals of the law, CRT understands the psychic, social, political and material subordination of the racially marginalized to be intrinsic to US law, legal theory, and legal practice. This course traces the history of CRT as it began as an intervention into the legal discourses and juridical practices of the 1980s and continues into the present day as a guiding framework of the global movement for Black lives. Our class proceeds by reading seminal texts and architects of CRT alongside contemporary African American authors, essayists, and poets. We will analyze foundational essays by Kimberlé Crenshaw, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Roderick Ferguson, Cheryl Harris, and Saidiya Hartman, among others. In the spring 2017 semester, we will also take the prophetic writings and prescient warnings of James Baldwin as our touchstone and guide.

Our course attends to the conceptual and political intersections of critical race theory, woman of color feminism, queer of color critique, and theories of African American literary production and practice. We will explore the central tenets of critical race theory, including racial essentialism, intersectionality, radical identity politics, and redistributive justice. We will also cover specific legal topics, like police brutality, affirmative action, immigration, mass incarceration, and reparations for the descendants of racial slavery. And we will investigate how these topics have been taken up in 20th and 21st-century African American literature. The overarching inquiry of this course is: (1) how might the law be complicit in upholding racial hierarchy as well hierarchies of gender, class, sexuality, and citizenship, and (2) how might the law and literature be used to dismantle those same hierarchies?
Learning Objectives:
(1) Students will become familiar with key themes, authors, and texts in Critical Race Theory.
(2) Students will become conversant in conceptual, social, and political theories of race, gender, sexuality, and citizenship.
(3) Students will examine the critical connections between U.S. law, legal theory and practice and African American literary production.
(4) Students will learn to speak and write cogently about literature across genres.

Required Books:
James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time
Richard Delgado and Jean Stephancic, Critical Race Theory: An Introduction (2nd Edition)
Kiese Laymon, How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America
Mia McKenzie, Black Girl Dangerous
Claudia Rankine, Citizen
Jesmyn Ward, Editor, The Fire This Time
Colson Whitehead, The Underground Railroad: A Novel

Attendance and Participation:
Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for this class. Such preparation includes reading, research, and preparation of an oral presentation and 2 papers.

Please note that your active participation is crucial to the success of this class, to the endeavor of our shared exploration, and to the process of our collective learning. As a member of this class, you are expected to attend class whenever the college is open, to arrive ready to engage in thoughtful discussion of assigned texts, to pose meaningful questions, and to forge eventually your own independent analyses. Your participation must be grounded in reading; your comments and questions should incorporate and direct us to relevant textual evidence.

*This class will occasionally ask you to read, hear, view difficult material and to engage in sometimes painful dialog. Your language, modes of address, questions, and contestations must be respectful and considerate of all other participants in Critical Race Theory.

*Unless used for CRT classwork (reading, note-taking, viewing relevant course material, etc.), the use of laptops, tablets, cell phones, and/or any other electronic means of communication is strictly prohibited in class.

Class Presentation/Discussion:
In order to begin to use CRT as an analytic frame and portable methodology outside of our class, undergraduate students will be required to stage a conversation between an independently selected, outside text and one week’s assigned reading. For this assignment, you will work in teams of three to introduce a text to the class that relates in a meaningful
way to the week’s assigned reading. For example, your team might share a poem, manifesto, landmark legal decision, or work of visual art; play a song; or screen a brief film clip, YouTube video, television commercial, or music video.

Your team will then contextualize the material for the class and explain how the selected text and the week’s reading inform and/or contest each other. (Please plan to arrive to class a few minutes early to set up A/V equipment as needed.) The reading, hearing, or viewing of the material and the initial remarks should run between 10 and 15 minutes. After discussing your selected outside text in relation to the week’s reading, you will open our class discussion of the week’s reading. In sum, your team should expect to take primary responsibility for the first 30 minutes of the class, pointing out key concerns of the week’s reading, posing questions to the class, and inviting engagement.

**Papers:**
Midterm: Undergraduate students are required to write a 5-7 page paper that critically engages with two or more assigned texts. In this assignment, you are expected to provide a critical summary of the main points of the essays, present a thoughtful critique of their argument, attend to the modes of presentation of the writing of each text (use of personal narrative, for example), and read the points of each text alongside, against, and through one another.

Final: Undergraduate students will complete a 7-10 page final paper that engages deeply and uses effectively the concepts learned in Critical Race Theory. *Instructions for the final paper will be distributed in class. In lieu of the undergraduate midterm and final papers, graduate students are required to submit a seminar paper of approximately 25 pages at the end of the semester.

**Grading:**
Attendance and Participation = 25% of your grade.
Presentation = 15% of your grade.
Midterm Essay = 25% of your grade
Final Essay = 35% of your grade

**Accommodations:**
If you have a documented disability and wish to arrange for appropriate accommodations, please see me immediately.

**Academic Integrity:**
You are expected to fulfill your class requirements honestly. Plagiarism is when you use someone else's ideas, language, or work and pass if off as your own. This is theft, and it is cheating. Plagiarism is unforgivable in this class, as in all of your classes in this university. Students found guilty of plagiarism risk failure of the course and appearance before the university's board of judicial affairs.
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Note: We will follow this syllabus as closely as possible. If after class has gotten underway, I discover that some revisions are necessary, I will make them accordingly. You will be told of changes in advance.

WEEK 1
Jan. 17: Class Overview

WEEK 2
Jan. 24: Richard Delgado and Jean Stephancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (Sections 3-5)
Jan. 26: Richard Delgado and Jean Stephancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (Sections 6-7); Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, “The Structure of Racism in ‘Post-Racial’ Colorblind America” (LATTE);

WEEK 3
Jan. 31: James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (3-56)
Feb. 2: James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (57-106); Kiese Laymon, *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America* (Author’s Note and Prologue)
Open Class Session in Shapiro Multipurpose Room

WEEK 4
Feb. 7: Jesmyn Ward, Editor, *The Fire This Time* (3-32); Lisa Marie Cacho, “You Just Don’t Know How Much He Meant To Me’: Deviancy, Death, and Devaluation” (LATTE)

WEEK 5
Feb. 14: Kiese Laymon, *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America* (73-125, Epilogue);
Feb. 16: Junot Díaz, “Monstro” (LATTE)

WEEK 6
WEEK 7
Feb. 28: Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property” (LATTE); Robin DiAngelo “White Fragility” (LATTE)
March 2: Colson Whitehead, The Underground Railroad: A Novel
Midterm Paper Due

WEEK 8
March 9: Colson Whitehead, The Underground Railroad: A Novel

WEEK 9
March 14: Colson Whitehead, The Underground Railroad: A Novel
March 16: Colson Whitehead, The Underground Railroad: A Novel

WEEK 10
March 21: Mia McKenzie, Black Girl Dangerous (1-51); Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (LATTE)
March 23: Black Lives Matter Symposium
March 24: Black Lives Matter Symposium

WEEK 11
March 28: Mia McKenzie, Black Girl Dangerous (52-111); Roderick Ferguson, “Nightmares of the Heteronormative” (LATTE)
March 30: Mia McKenzie, Black Girl Dangerous (112-169); Jesmyn Ward, Editor, The Fire This Time (205-215)

WEEK 12
April 4: Prof. Abdur-Rahman’s WGS Faculty Lecture: “The Diminishing Circumstance: On Losing and Black Queer Possibility”
April 6: Jesmyn Ward, Editor, The Fire This Time (33-88)

WEEK 13

WEEK 14
April 20: Jesmyn Ward, Editor, The Fire This Time (99-155)

WEEK 15
April 25: Claudia Rankine, Citizen; Dylan Rodriguez, “Black Studies in Impasse” (LATTE)
April 27: Claudia Rankine, Citizen
WEEK 16

May 2: Claudia Rankine, Citizen

May 8: Final Paper Due

NOTABLE DATES IN SPRING 2017

February 1: Transparent Screening and Panel Discussion with Rebecca Walker, Wasserman Cinematheque, Sachar International Center, 7:00pm
February 2: DEIS Impact CRT Open Session, Shapiro Multipurpose Room
February 20-24: Midterm Break
March 23: Black Lives Matter Symposium, Khalil Gibran Muhammad Keynote
March 24: Black Lives Matter Symposium, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor Keynote
April 4: Prof. Abdur-Rahman’s WGS Faculty Lecture: “The Diminishing Circumstance: On Losing and Black Queer Possibility”
April 10-18: Spring and Passover Break
1) What motivated you to take this class, and what do you hope to gain from it?

2) Even though CRT began as a legal theory, its framework has been usefully applied across disciplines in, for example, education, sociology, cultural studies, and political theory. How do you imagine using CRT to advance the study of your major?

3) How do you feel about discussing issues of identity, group difference, social inequity, and power? To what extent do you feel that these topics belong in the study of literature?

4) Racism is often understood to be a primary, perpetual mechanism of social injustice. Nonetheless, many believe that studying racism extends rather than eradicates it. What are your thoughts?