

Essay 3: Postracial Mythologies (5-7pgs):

The final project for the semester allows us to move slightly away from the comparatively exclusive work that we have hitherto been doing with anime. In the interest of facilitating conceptual transference, this project will allow you to choose any kind of text that you would like, and examine it for the duration of between five and seven type-written pages.

And "any text" here does mean throwing the doors wide open. You may still work with an anime series if you would like, of course, but you may also chose from other genres of TV programming, films, or video games. The point is for you to chose a particular kind of audio/visual text and offer up a thoughtful and cogent blend of analysis and critique.

What is "**Post-racial**"?

In this context, we are working with the assumption that the term connotes a world in which race is of secondary (or tertiary) significance to other markers of identity in a given society

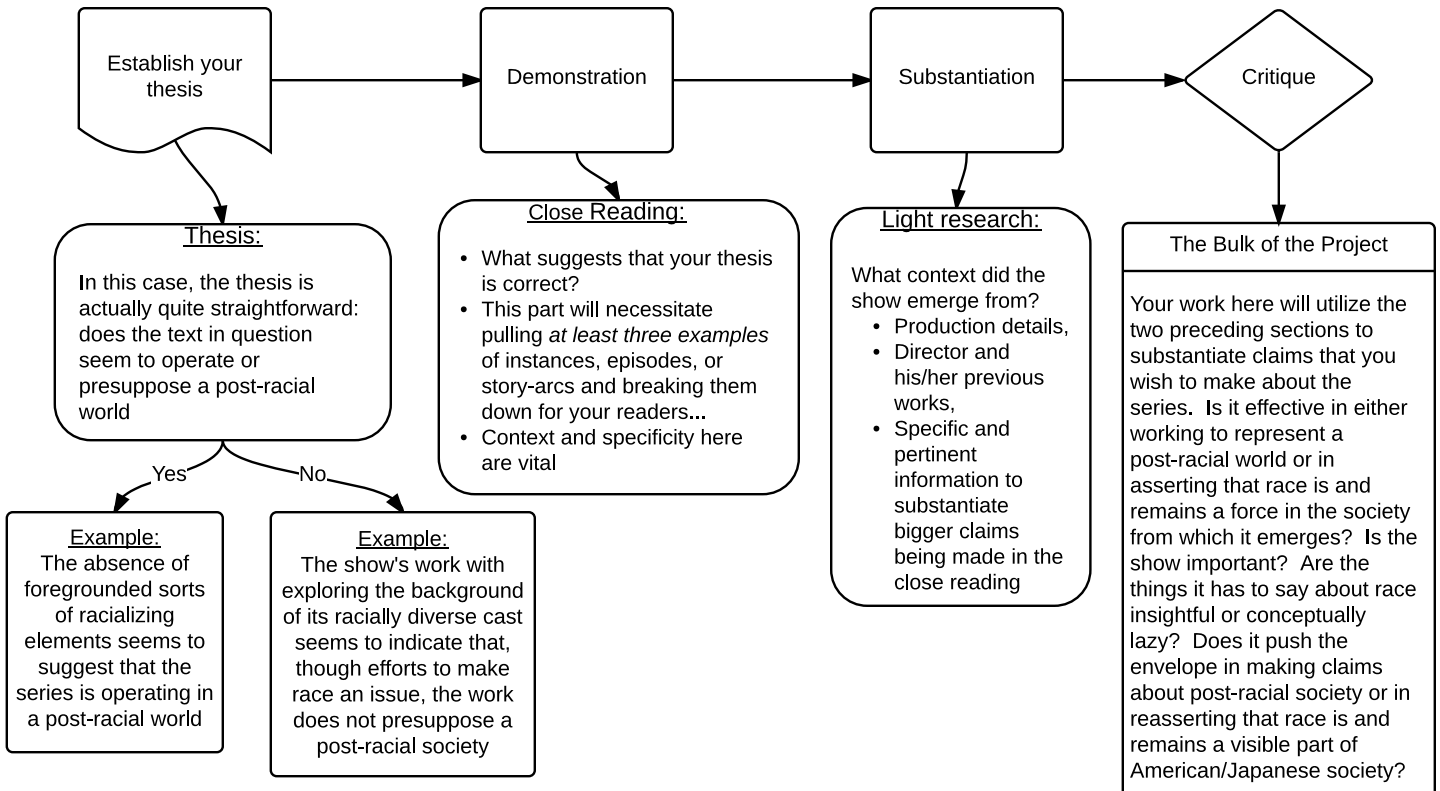
This assignment necessitates:

1. Find a given **text** that interests you (and text here can be anything: TV, Film, Video Games. It does not have to be anime, but it can be)
2. Reacquaint yourself with it (re-watch, and do some preliminary research)
3. Use the various skills that we've worked on throughout the semester to offer a critique of the text and its relationship (implicitly and/or explicitly) with the elements of postraciality

Your work here will consist largely of a **critique**.

This means that you will be assessing the text and wrestling with questions of how well it seems to accomplish the aims that it sets for itself. You will draw somewhat from your personal reactions, but will strive to objectively investigate the text too, and rely on evidence from close reading and research to make your claims.

The Paper Will Be Broken Down Thusly:



The superior project here:

Will have a clearly defined and well-posed thesis statement.

Will not just be a series of opinions and subjective thoughts about the series

Will make effective use of the Close Reading and Research for the purposes of the Critique

Will make sustained and logical investigations of the ways race exists in the series in question

Will make a clear point regarding the show's stance relative to a concept of post-racial society

Some suggestions for topics and approaches:

- In Shonda Rhimes' 2012 television series, *Scandal*, through the framing of the relationships between series' protagonist Olivia Pope (Kerry Washington) and her white male love interests, the work could be argued to be both challenging and re-articulating historical modes of marginalizing Black women relative to white men. Therefore, even though the series seems to be operating in a world where their race of the characters "does not matter" relative to their jobs or access to financial or political power, the show still actively repudiates any naive notions of a post-racial America.
- The animated television program, *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, with its world of non-white characters, and work done in representing various racial identities analogous to those of Asia and beyond, poses a unique challenge to the American audience by de-centering the conception of the white male experience as normative for high fantasy. Yet, within the show itself, the characters' race is subordinated to their national identity (as is seen in the Fire Nation's wars of conquest); the show therefore seems to posit that—in its fictional world, at least—race is *less* important than other markers of identity.
- The 1997 Japanese role-playing game (JRPG), *Final Fantasy VII*, is participatory in a mode of racializing that renders the Black character, Barret, in a problematical light by virtue of its complicity with certain stereotypical modes of representing Black masculinity. The character is clearly a hodge-podge of racial stereotypes, but within the context of the game (even in its Sci-Fi reality with dragons and giant robots), his race might not be said to be a defining characteristic of his lived experiences. Therefore, whilst it is clear that Japan of the late 1990s was not without issues of Racial discord on a national and international level, it would seem as though FFVII as a game, is suggesting a world in which race as defined by skin color, is not important.
- The 2007 UK television series, *Skins*, presents a thoroughly diverse cast of characters, and whilst it might be argued that the representational modes at work remain somewhat indebted to problematical strategies, the series as a whole attempts to present life for adolescents in a nuanced way with respect to racial and cultural identities. It would, it seems, not be a work that would at all suggest any sort of post-racial interpretations.

Final Project: Panel Discussions

Remember, you have two options...

Academic Conference Lite:

For the final project of the semester, students will be asked to select their respective work on Essays 1, 2, or 3 and form groups of three to four based on commonalities of topic or approach.

In addition to each individual composing a 500-word abstract to recapitulate his/her previous work, these groups will form the basis of a panel which will conduct an interrelated series of presentations of the material they produced for the benefit of the class as a whole.

Grades will be apportioned according to clarity of presentation, creativity of audio-visual components, and general efficacy of the medium of the panel discussion.

Alternatively:

Comic Con-Style Panel:

Students also have the option of coming together as a group and creating a hypothetical anime of their choice that reflects well the issues of race, representation, narrative, and genre tropes.

Each member of the group will compose a 500-word synopsis of a particular facet of the "show", and present as part of a three/four-person panel, explaining the subject for the benefit of the class as a whole.

Grades will be apportioned according to clarity of presentation, creativity of audio-visual components, and general efficacy of the medium of the panel discussion.