Critical Theory and Social Change: Confronting Racism in the Contemporary U.S.

A TWO-DAY WORKSHOP
organized by the Social Thought & Political Economy Program at UMass Amherst

Thursday, March 24
6:30 Opening Reception, Cape Cod Lounge, Student Union Building
7:00 Keynote Lectures by Mariana Ortega and Touré Reed, Cape Cod Lounge

Friday, March 25
11:45-1:15 Breakout Sessions, Campus Center 804-08; 905-09; 911-15; 917
2:30-4:00 Closing Plenary, Cape Cod Lounge

How do we understand the roots of racism and its consequences for people and communities? How do we interpret the different forms racism takes, its relationship to capitalism, and its intersections with other types of oppression? How do we analyze the dynamics between racist ideologies and racist social structures? And how do diverse social and political theories inform the strategies we adopt in anti-racist organizing?

This workshop will begin on Thursday, March 24th at 7:00 with back-to-back lectures by two scholars, Mariana Ortega and Touré Reed, who share a commitment to anti-racist organizing but represent different academic disciplines and adopt different theoretical approaches to analyzing racism. On Friday morning, students, faculty, and members of the larger community will engage in small-group dialogues about the tools critical theory offers for anti-racist social movements. We will conclude the workshop on Friday afternoon by coming back together to share what we have discussed, recognize our differences, and identify strategies for moving forward in solidarity.

Keynote Speakers

Mariana Ortega is a philosopher at John Carroll University, where she organizes the Latina Feminist Roundtable. Engaging with existential phenomenology, critical race theory, and Latina feminisms, she has contributed in new ways to research on identity and difference, most recently with her concept of “multiplicitous selfhood.” Her work has been published in Radical Philosophy Review and Critical Philosophy of Race, among other journals. She is co-editor with Linda Martín-Alcoff of the anthology Constructing the Nation: A Race and Nationalism Reader. Her monograph In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity and the Self is forthcoming from SUNY Press.

Touré Reed is a historian at the University of Illinois Chicago who analyzes the complex intersection of race and class in the United States. He is the author of Not Alms But Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950, which demonstrated the class biases that pervaded social reform movements and resulting in an emphasis on behavioral, rather than structural, remedies to the disadvantages faced by Afro-Americans. He is also co-author of Renewing Black Intellectual History: The Ideological and Material Foundations of African American Thought and is currently engaged in research for a new book titled New Deal Civil Rights: Class Consciousness and the Quest for Racial Equality, 1933-1948.

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