

TRANSGRESSING RACE:

MIXED-RACE GENDERS AND SEXUALITIES IN POPULAR CULTURE

GNDR_ST 371

SUMMER
2020



Conversations about the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality often assume distinct and stable racial categories. But what happens to gender and sexuality when racial boundaries aren't so clear? This course will look at popular culture representations of racial mixing, passing, and ambiguity in order to explore how racial transgression serves both to disrupt and reinforce norms of femininity, masculinity, and sexuality. While the

“color line” between black and white was, according to W.E.B. Du Bois, “the problem of the twentieth century,” the 21st century’s celebration and commodification of multiculturalism and colorblindness change the social meaning of interracial sexuality and multiracial identity. Contemporary depictions of interracial sex and romance may map continued anxieties about the danger and appeal of crossing the color line (think *Get Out*), or they may celebrate colorblindness as a virtue and idealize the mixed-race nuclear family (think Cheerios commercials). We will consider how sexuality is deployed in such depictions to re- or de-stabilize racial categories and hierarchies. We will also analyze the sexualized fetishization of racial ambiguity and the transformation of idealized masculinity and femininity in our “post-racial” media landscape. By examining celebrities whose racialized identities shift across and through performance, from Keanu Reeves to Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, and Shakira to Kim Kardashian, we will ask what mixed-race identity does to gender. Categories of race, gender, and sexuality have never been static or stable, and this course asks us to consider the cultural work of those bodies, performances, and representations that bring that instability to the surface.

Cara Dickason

TTh 10am-12:30pm
Six Week Session