

OER Implementation Grant Fall 2020 Report

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Course: SOC 224, Race & Ethnic Relations

Enrollment: 32 students

Description of course: This course is an introduction to the sociology of race and ethnicity and focuses on the historical construction and continued significance of these categories over time. Various racial and ethnic group experiences are studied in terms of their treatment by dominant social institutions and their access to social, cultural and political power in the United States.

This course is required for all Sociology and Criminal Justice majors. It attracts students from many other majors because of students' interest in the topic of race and because the course fulfills the requirements of many other programs/GE requirements: (S) Social/Behavioral Science, (D) Cultural Diversity, Women's Studies Program, Peace & Justice Studies Program, and Human Development Program.

Description of OER: In lieu of assigning two required textbooks (one of which is either a traditional textbook or a "reader" on Race & Ethnic Relations; the other is a multicultural history book by Ronald Takaki), I selected required course materials from journal articles, online social science reports, chapters from e-books, and streaming films. I purposefully selected work from a diversity of underrepresented scholars, including women and people of color (and the intersections between those marginalized social groups).

Advantages of OER: The advantage of selecting from online resources is that the course materials can be finely curated to cover the topics important to the course subject matter, which cannot possibly cover every topic within the Sociology of Race. Textbook "readers" can disadvantage the professor because they do not always cover the topics they might deem important for teaching the course within the contemporary milieu (for instance, my previously assigned reader did not include much material on undocumented immigrants and contemporary xenophobia).

Disadvantages of OER: The disadvantages of deciding to assign multiple articles is that it is much more time consuming to find and select appropriate materials, since there is vast literature to select from. I spent many more hours creating this course than I would in a regular semester, which was probably heightened by the all-remote format delivery because of the Coronavirus pandemic. In all, I selected 37 articles/reports/chapters and 11 films. In addition, I had to be sure that students would have easy, online access to all the materials and to build an organized course D2L page that would give students a clear understanding of what to read when (with all reading/film links provided within each topic/section). Other disadvantages of the OER was that copyright clearance was difficult to get for some chapters of books (this took some work to partner with librarians for each non-journal reading and streaming film access). For some selected chapters, copyright clearance was impossible, so an alternate reading was selected.

Edited/shortened versions of articles were not available for some selections; whole chapters or journal articles had to be assigned instead, resulting in some very lengthy assigned reading.

During the semester, another downside became apparent, as some selected readings were not available to students if more than a few people were “borrowing” the book/chapter at the same time. I found that if students do not have immediate access to readings, they tend to just skip that reading. It also made Zoom breakout room discussions difficult, since the students were attempting to access the readings all at the same time. To partially solve the problem, I provided PDFs of articles on D2L (and sometimes had to do this during class, eating up class discussion time). I did encourage students to download articles as soon as they had access to them, but many just do not engage with online materials in this way.

Student Survey and Feedback: In consultation with Kelly Banyas, I created an 11 question survey through Microsoft forms and had students fill out the survey during our Zoom class session on November 12, 2020. 31 out of 32 students responded to the survey. Below is a summary of the OER-related results:

- Students rated the quality of the readings assigned for the course as **3.94** (with 1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest score).
- Students rated their ability to access (to find online, read, and to download) the readings assigned for the course as **4.42** (with 1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest score).
- Students rated affordability as important to them in required course materials as **4.32** (with 1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest score).
- **52%** of students responded that they would rather have required online articles and chapters rather than a traditional textbook that they must purchase; **26%** said they would rather have a traditional textbook; **19%** wanted both types of required readings
- The overall negative feedback from students on selected readings is that they thought many of the readings were too long and/or too difficult to understand.
- The overall positive feedback from students on selected readings is that they enjoyed the four assigned articles from the *New York Times* and streaming films.

Reflection and Future Plan of OER use: Overall, I was pleased with how the course was improved through the use of OER. Selecting every reading forced me to construct a (in my opinion) more engaging course that allows students to connect the concepts and research from the Sociology of Race to other disciplinary work in critical race scholarship and contemporary journalism, such as the historical construction of race and immigration in the U.S., the psychological dimensions of race, and current journalism on the Black Lives Matter movement. For future offerings of this course, I will most likely try to find shorter versions or alternate readings of chapters/journal articles that were longer than 15 pages. I do not think I will go back

to an assigned textbook, although to be honest, I may consider a “reader” if it has excellent selections and is not too expensive -- length of readings is really an issue for students and readers are edited for clarity and length.

I have already planned to not assign a “reader” for my Gender in Society course for Spring 2021; there will be an inexpensive textbook assigned but supplemental readings and streaming films will be chosen from OER. Receiving the OER grant was an excellent opportunity to learn that it is possible to create your own reader by assembling OER.

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