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**DEFINING AND TALKING ABOUT  
RACE AND RACISM**

*SOC 1010: Deconstructing Racism  
Fall 2019*

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**BUSINESS**

- ▶ Course Website (you all now have access).
- ▶ Course Reading (please let me know if I forgot something you might need).
- ▶ “Racism at Bowdoin” Project (inviting David Israel to class).
- ▶ Pamela Zabala’s thesis
- ▶ Diagnostic Essay Assignment Distributed on Wednesday.
- ▶ Any questions about the syllabus?

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WHAT DO WE MEAN BY **RACISM**?

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**RACISM**

- ▶ a social system (ideology) or set of beliefs about the claimed superiority of one racial/ethnic group over another.
  - ▶ it shapes relationships (defined through social relations)
  - ▶ it is used to justify unequal social arrangements between dominant and majority groups.
  - ▶ THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS **REVERSE RACISM!!**

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### SOCIOLOGICAL TOOLS OF "RACISM"

- **Macrosociology:** seeks to understand how social dynamics shape society as a whole.
- **Microsociology:** seeks to understand local interactional contexts (face-to-face interactions; small groups; local communities).

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### SOCIOLOGICAL TOOLS OF "RACISM"

- **social embeddedness:** the idea that economic, political, and other forms of human behavior are fundamentally shaped by social relationships (and vice versa).
  - a way of learning about the world that combines logically constructed theory and systematic observation.
  - draws on a variety of research methods to yield data that can be tested, challenged, and revised.

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## WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY?

- ▶ **sociological perspective:** a way of looking at the world through a sociological lens.
  - ▶ making the ordinary/familiar strange.

## SOCIOLOGICAL TOOLS OF "RACISM"

- ▶ Our world — our reality — is **socially constructed**.
  - ▶ **social construction:** something is real, meaningful, or valuable because society tells us it is.
- ▶ We are **socialized** into accepting these social constructs as true or real.
  - ▶ **socialization:** the process by which individuals internalize the values, beliefs, and norms of a given society and learn to function as members of that society.
  - ▶ **norms:** rules governing how we should behave.



## 5 FALLACIES ABOUT RACISM

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### 1. THE INDIVIDUALISTIC FALLACY

- ▶ **FALLACY:** Racism is restricted to a specific set of ideas.
  - ▶ **prejudice:** thoughts and feelings about a racial or ethnic group that is unlikely to change regardless of evidence against it.
  - ▶ **discrimination:** harmful or negative acts (not mere thoughts) against people deemed inferior on the basis of their racial/ethnic category regardless of individual merit.





## 2. LEGALISTIC FALLACY

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- ▶ **FALLACY:** Abolishing racist laws (laws in principle) automatically leads to the eradication of racism in everyday life (racism in practice).
  - ▶ ***de jure* legal progress:** "based on the law"
  - ▶ ***de facto:*** "based in fact."
- ▶ **REALITY:** Changes in law does not mean changes in attitudes.
  - ▶ e.g. Segregation

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## 3. TOKENISTIC FALLACY

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- ▶ **FALLACY:** The presence of people of color in influential positions means the eradication of race-based obstacles.

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