

## POL S 404: The Politics of Sleep

## Theme: Race

The social organization of ethnic difference  
Race is an historical category that emerges alongside colonialism and imperialism, and to justify them  
Hugely variable historical and cultural rules for racial group membership, sometimes only very tenuously linked to the appearance of individuals

### Racist stereotyping and sleep:

- <https://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2009/11/12/the-sleepy-mexican-stereotype-in-a-vintage-ad/>
- <https://www.americanantiquarian.org/Freedmen/graphics/epstereo1x.jpg>
- Consider the example of the sleeping Mexican statuette:
- <https://www.wfae.org/post/what-makes-sleeping-mexican-so-divisive#stream/0>

### “Black Power Naps”: anti-racist art

- <https://blackpowernaps.black>

“To get a sense of the exclusiveness of ‘normal’ sleep, we might look at the lives of those who were most actively pushed outside its walls during the time of its creation. Just as Thoreau was trying to liberate himself from the expectation to sleep and wake on schedule in a world run by clocks, trains, and factory bells, an entire population to the south was struggling in a much more basic way to gain control over the rhythms of their bodies.” (121-122)

### Histories of racism

- On Reiss’ description, how was sleep used as a tool of discipline and a way of managing slave economies in the US of the mid-1800s?
- How were racist stereotypes about sleep, work, and energy used to justify economic relations?
- How were these stereotypes flipped or resisted?

## Contemporary racism

- What racial stereotypes have we inherited about sleep, work, and rest? How have they evolved?
- How can they be resisted?

## Whiteness

- A racial category that has evolved and contracted or broadened in different places at different times.
- Also associated with stereotypical attributes: e.g. "the Protestant work ethic" as a feature of Northern European white people.

"In this article, I argue that the bodies that U.S. sleep medicine produces are aspirationally "white" — that is, they are orderly, benign, unexceptional bodies, made "white" through medical interpretation and intervention. They are rendered white through their transformation into abstract data that are taken as corresponding to a known diagnostic category, and they can be treated to produce orderliness through the fostering of particular capacities, especially the ability to sleep at normative times. Drawing on the anthropology of race and science studies, I argue for a definition of whiteness that extends beyond racialized bodies to the abstract bodily capacities established through scientific and medical knowledge production. This framework provides a way of understanding bodies that exceeds their racial markers and instead focuses on how, through the demonstration of particular capacities, individual bodies meet the expectations of contemporary U.S. society, embedded primarily in the spatiotemporal ordering of everyday life built on a history of racialized privilege and ideas about what normal, white bodies can and should do." (447)

## Reading Wolf-Meyer

- Make a list of the qualities Wolf-Meyer says are constitutive of "white" bodies in the context of biomedicine generally.
- How is whiteness reproduced in the context of sleep medicine, according to him?

## Presentations

### Presentations coming up:

- **March 13: Naima, Nathan, Mike**
- March 20: Tim, Craig
- March 27: Beth, Fraser
- April 3: Daniel, Katie
- Feedback on presentations?

### The final paper:

- First draft is due **by March 27** and is worth 20% of your grade.
- Maximum length is 3000 words (**including** notes and bibliography).
- Detailed advice is now available on the website under "Evaluation."
- You should have **started** work on this project.

### Working on the final paper:

- Feel free to bring ideas to office hours to get advice.
- On March 20 we will spend time in class brainstorming and helping each other advance the paper project, so you will need to have at least an outline and a short bibliography (of things you've read) by then.
- After March 27 you'll get first drafts of two of your peers' papers. On April 10 when we use class time to work on revising the papers, you'll give feedback to those peers.

### Next week: health

- Read chapter four of Wolf-Meyer's book, "Desiring a Good Night's Sleep"
- Read Hale and Hale, "Is justice good for your health?"
- Chapter six of Wolf-Meyer is about drugs for sleep disorders, and is optional.
- Reading questions will be up by Friday.