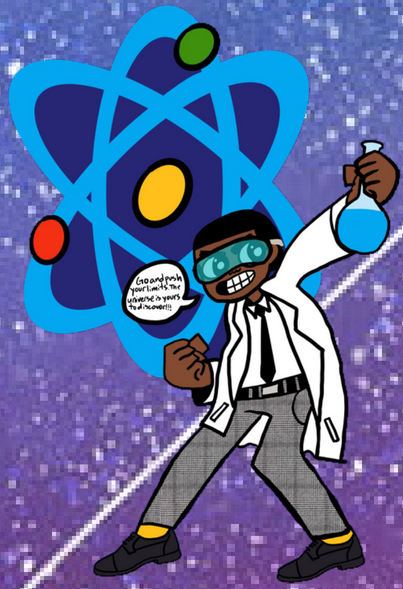
Re-Envisioning Culture Network

A Syllabus Guide


Go and push your limits. The universe is yours to discover!!!

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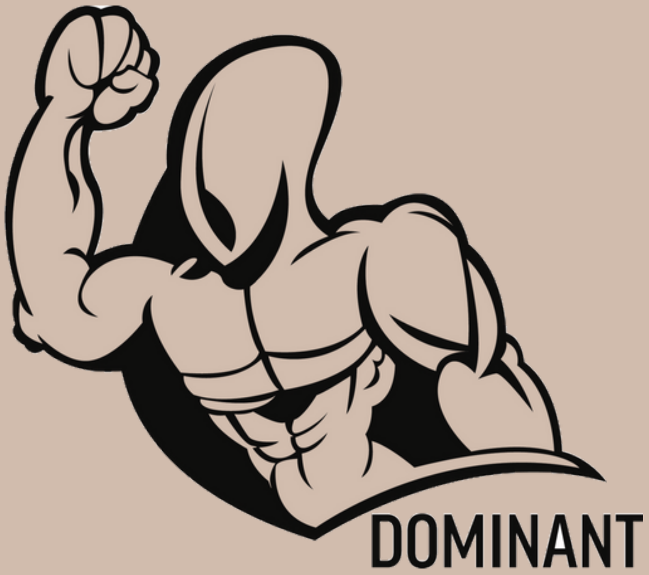
The Re-Envisioning Culture Network Syllabus aims to honor Black identity and culture while acknowledging the barriers that Black undergraduate students face through definitions, art, storytelling, and poetry. We invite those who read this syllabus to learn more about the terms, research, and experiences around Black racial identity, an intersectional gendered-raced identity and Black culture within the United States. This is not an exhaustive list but hopefully a start to your journey towards consciousness.

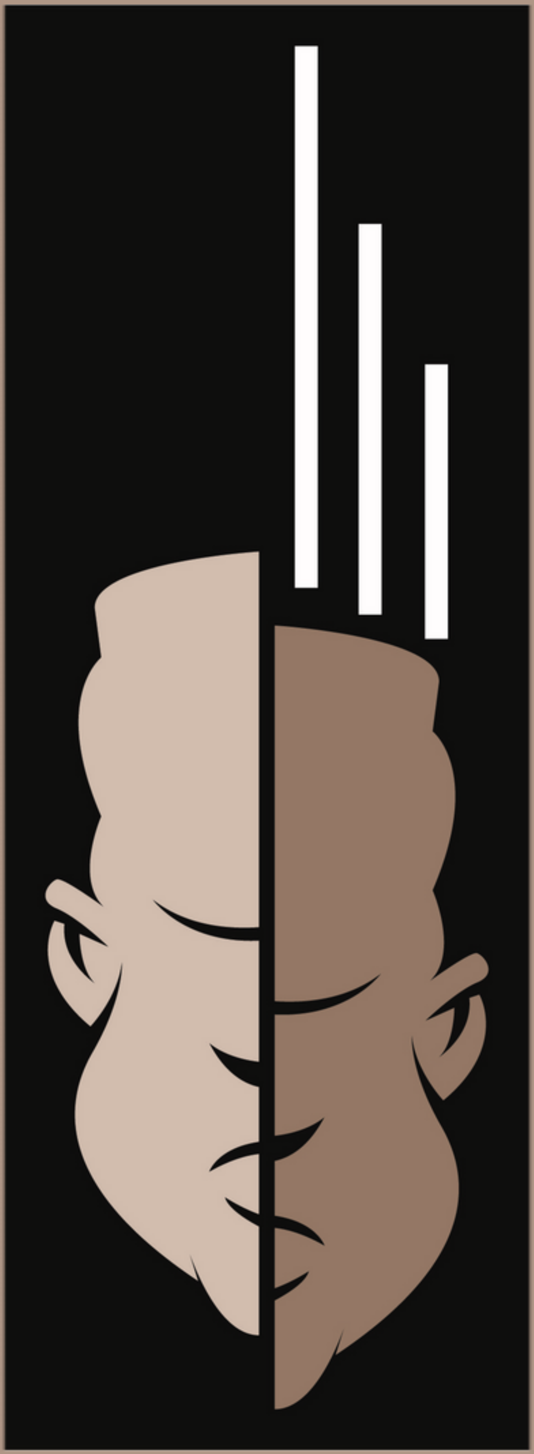
Systems of Oppression

Dominant: Maintain an identity or perspective that is considered the norm or standard in which all other perspectives and identities are judged; being in a position of power as assigned by the social system.

Subordinate: Maintain an identity or perspective that is disenfranchised, exploited, and victimized given that the identity or perspective is not being perceived to be norm or standard because of how power is assigned by the social system.



Additional Resources:
“5 Faces of Oppression” by Iris Young, “Who Am I?” by Beverly Tatum, and “Unopportunity Race”



MINORITIZED

Minoritized: To be dejected, regulated to the minority in power, presence and possibility given dominant groups, mainstream cultural practices and instiutions.

Tokenism: Targeted structural appropriations of subordinate identities; promoting, featuring, and supporting individuals from subordinate groups whose identities and experiences can be accommodated in ways that align with and support stereotypes, standards, and ideals of mainstream culture as an attempt to maintain power through meritocracy and individualism.

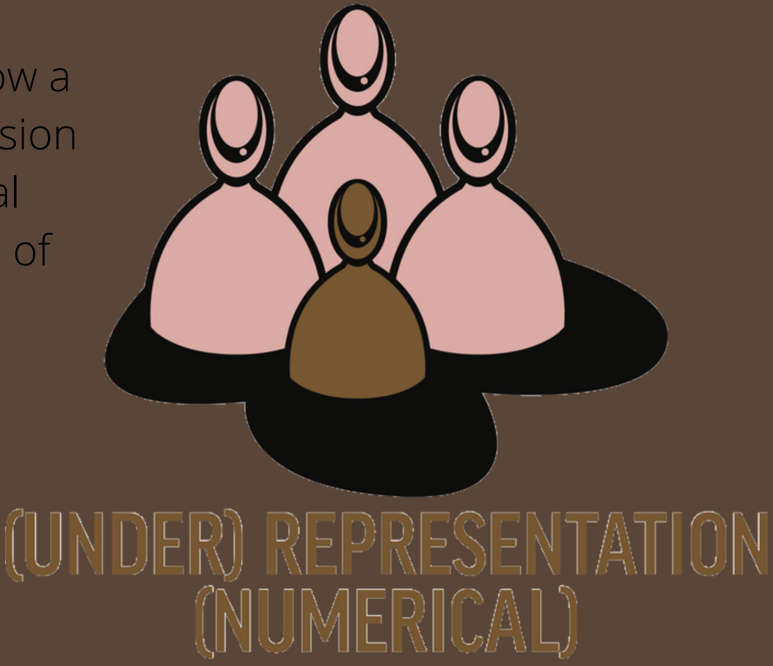
MARGINALIZED

Marginalization: To be regulated to the "margins" of society because of the various targeted social identities maintained; regulated as "not useful" by society.

Representation

(Under) Representation (Epistemological): Thoughts or ideas being excluded from perspectives around what is considered and recognized as knowledge or fact.

Representation/Underrepresented: How a group identity is counted or included. Inclusion can be numerical (physical) or ideological (thought, knowledge, and understandings of reality).



(Under) Representation (Numerical): Visibly stands out against a background of dominant identities. Counting someone's physical presence.

Intersectionality: Term coined by Kimberele Crenshaw, but concieved prior to, that acknowledges and structurally examines the multiplicative nature of identity and the unique ways in which systems of oppression operate for individuals who maintain multiple targeted identities. This perspective was established by examining Black women in the workforce and how the laws uniquely applied to them to maintain their inferioirity in insularly racial or gender progressive spaces.

(Under) Representation (Reality): Perspectives, thoughts, or ideas being excluded from understandings around what is considered and recognized as reality or real.

Social Identities

Social Identities

Social identity: The various demographic labels used to describe or define an individual; categories used to classify people that have been developed by society (e.g. race, gender, socioeconomic status, ability, religion, sexualilty, etc.).

Gender: Characteristics, traits, behaviors, and expectations, determined by society to be associated with an individual's biological sex.

Sexuality: Social identity that details an individual's romantic feelings and attraction.

Race: A classification or grouping of individuals based on their morphology and ancestory that is historically, politically, culturally, and socially determined.

SES (socioeconomic status): A social construct detailing an individual's social status given their economic or financial status. SES is comprised of more than how much a person or family makes, it also includes their educational status, as well as the educational and occupational status of their parents.

Additional Resources:

What is Race? and What is Gender?

Institutional Types

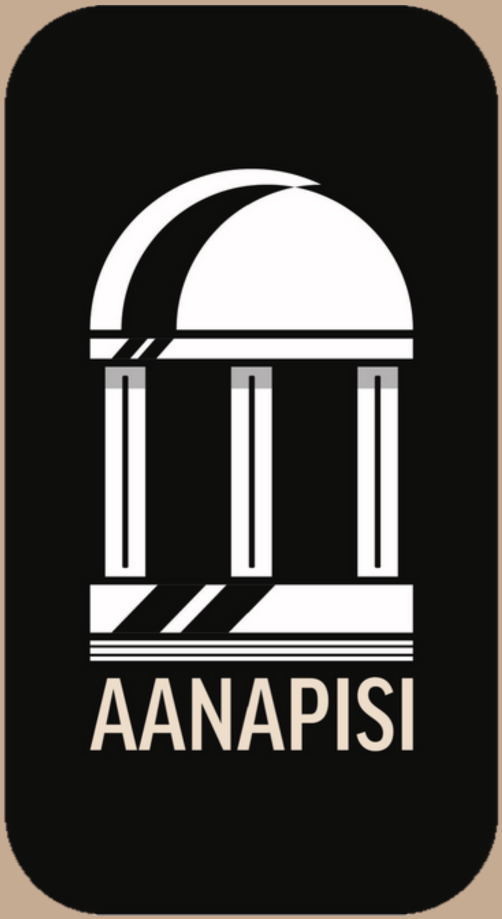
There are several types of institutions a student can choose to attend to pursue their degree of interest. Each institution primarily serves a unique population of students and has a different purpose. A person might choose to attend a **Predominantly White Institution (PWI)**.

An African American student may choose to attend a **Historically Black College and University (HBCU)** to embrace the institution's culture and community feeling. Many HBCUs began as Teaching schools or Normal Colleges whose mission was to train teachers in the 1800s.

Institutional Types

Other students might decide to pursue a two-year degree from a community college before transferring to a four-year institution or use their degree to gain access to career-related skills before going into the workforce.

Minority Serving Institution (MSI): Umbrella term used to classify all institutions who primarily serve "minority" students. **Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI), HBCUs,** and **Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI).**



Additional Resources:

Harper, Patton, & Wooden (2009), Carnegie Classifications, and MSI

CRIMINAL
KIND
BAD
UNQUALIFIED
RESILIENT
WORTHY
KING
INTELLIGENT
INNOCENT
LAZY
LOVED
TRENDY
HATED
GHETTO
GUILTY

Names

Names

In 1909, **Colored** was an acceptable term for an African American, as we see in the names of entities like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). By the 1920s, avant-garde Blacks in New York began to use the term **Negro**. Organizations such as the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and Negro sports leagues used the term Negro in their names. In the 1960s, Black Power groups and Malcolm X began using the term **"Black"** and pushed back on the term Negro because of its association to the oppressors and a second-class citizen mentality. In the late 1980s, the term **"African American"** is introduced and Jessie Jackson, as a spokesperson of the National Urban Coalition, stated, "To be called African American has cultural integrity."

On the other hand, names the dominant group uses to describe African Americans are considered oppressive and disparaging. The term **Coon** refers to the Barracoon or the barracks used to hold African captives on the West coast of Africa during the Atlantic Slave trade. **Sambo** and **Mammy** were terms used to describe blacks that followed the rules or knew their place in the society from the dominant groups' perspective. The term Negroid, shows a similar heritage of African descent like African American, but is based off of scientific racism and is not an empowering concept. These terms were created with a deficit lens and reinforced that African Americans are genetically inferior to white Americans.

Gender and sexuality identities have evolved significantly from female and male and heterosexual and homosexual to be more inclusive of others in our communities. When a person's gender identity aligns with their biological sex, this person's gender identity is considered cis-gendered. Terms like female and male represent biological designations of individuals. Terms like **man, woman, womyn** represent gender identities that are either cis gender, trans* gender, gender non-conforming, gender fluid, and non-binary.

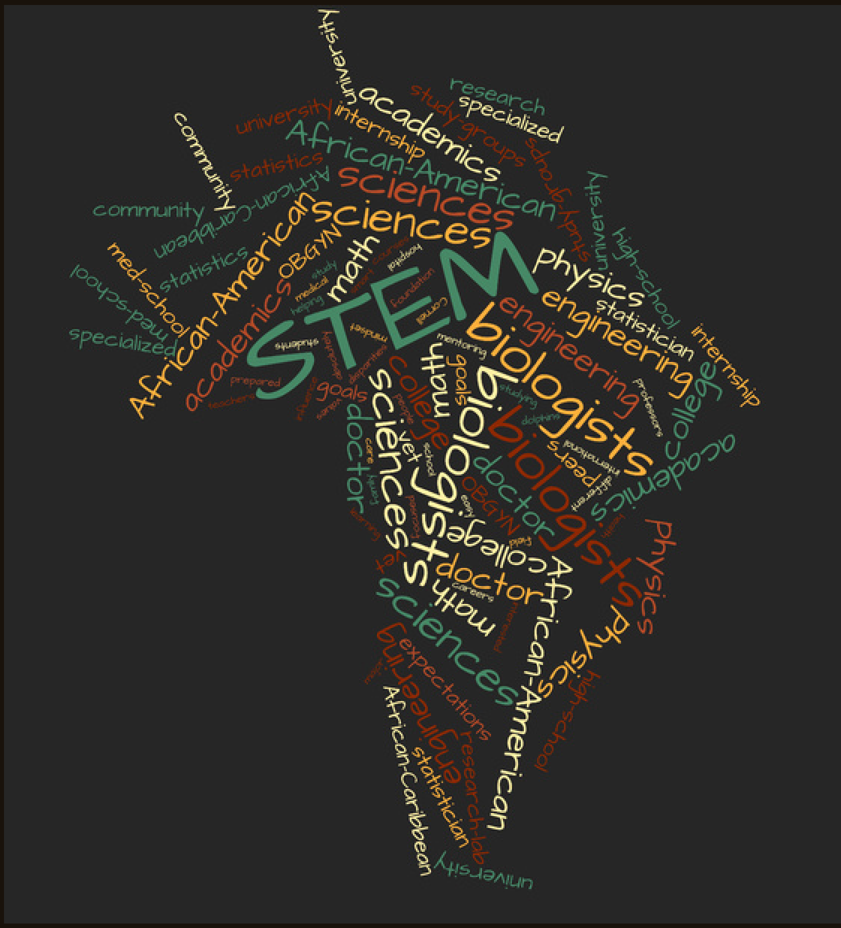
Several inclusive terms help everyone in the community describe their sexual identity and pronouns to define themselves. Historically, people who describe themselves as **Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Questioning, Asexual, Pansexual, and Plus (LGBQA+)** have been marginalized by dominant society members. Persons who are still exploring who they are are either attracted to, emotionally, romantically, or sexually fall under the Questioning umbrella term. They might also use gender-neutral pronouns such as Ze /zee/ or Hir /here/ instead of she/her or he/him to describe themselves.

Additional Resources:

Marin (1991), Smith (1992), and Rivera Maulucci & Mensah (2014)

Culture

Culture (Mainstream/ Societal): A social system of meaning and customs that is developed and maintained by people in power (e.g., those with dominant social identities) to assure its adaptation and survival. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors and styles of communication.



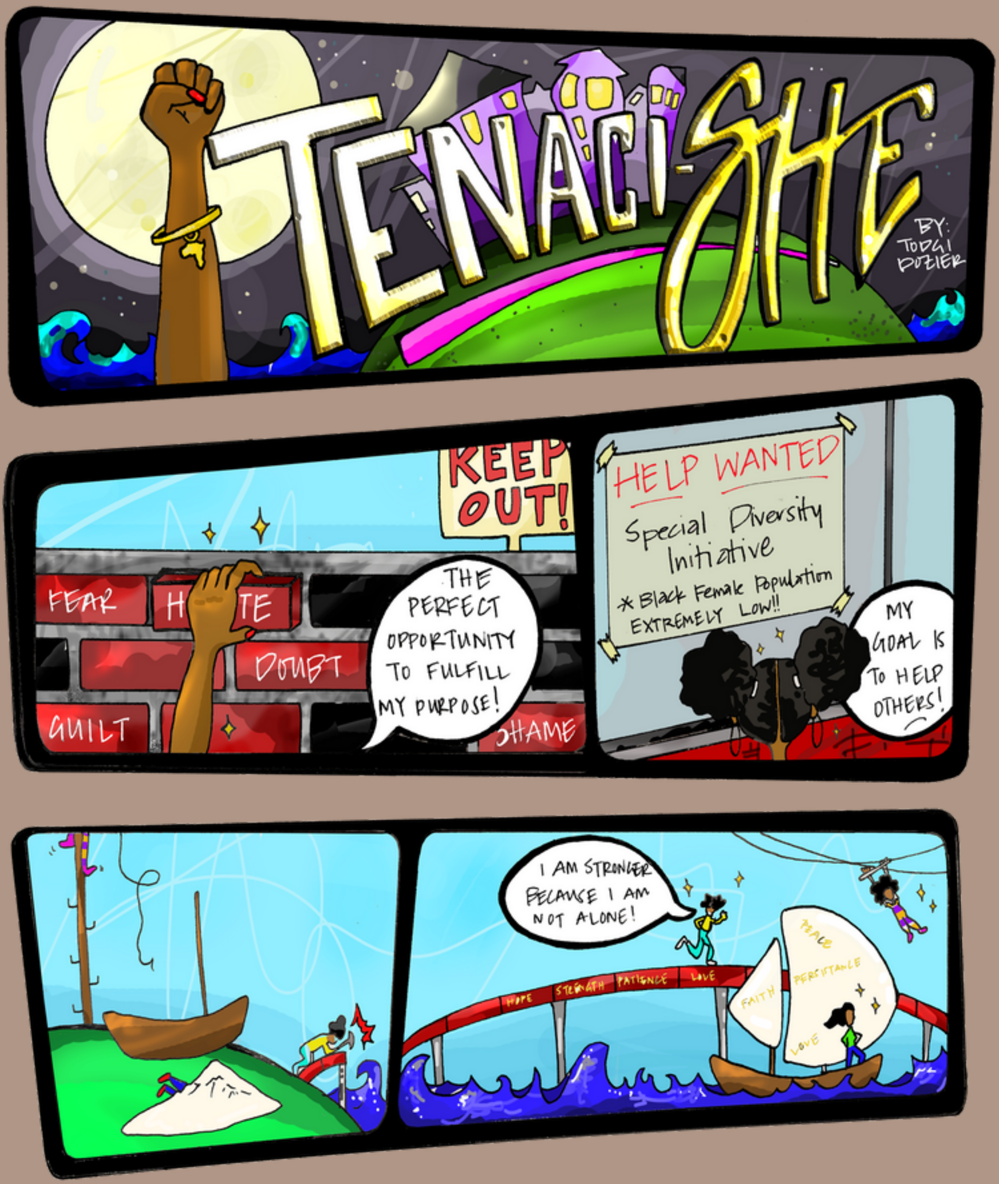
Culture (Environmental): Characteristics, patterns, beliefs, values, ideologies, and practices that describe environmental contexts given the collective behaviors and perspectives demonstrated by those operating within a context. Systemic view of the envrionment.

Culture (Individual): Beliefs, values, practices maintained by individuals or groups and how they inform and influence an individual's perception, understanding, and engagement within the world.

Additional Resources:

Parsons & Carlone (2013)

Tenaci-SHE


TENACI-SHE
BY: TODGI DOZIER
KEEP OUT!
FEAR
HATE
DOUBT
GUILT
SHAME
THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO FULFILL MY PURPOSE!
HELP WANTED
Special Diversity Initiative
* Black Female Population EXTREMELY LOW!!
MY GOAL IS TO HELP OTHERS!
I AM STRONGER BECAUSE I AM NOT ALONE!
HOPE
STRENGTH
PATIENCE
LOVE
FAITH
PEACE
PERSISTANCE
LOVE

The story of how undergraduate Black women persist in STEM: Tenaci-SHE is a visual depiction of the collective story of how 10 Black women attending either an HBCU or a PWI position their identity as Black women to persist in STEM (Morton, 2017). The panels tell the story of their journey to fulfill their goal or purpose, and how the obstacles that they faced external to their undergraduate research experiences, because of their identity as Black women, provided them with skills and tools to overcome new challenges they faced within their undergraduate STEM spaces. The wall represents society's attempt to regulate Black women to the lowest possible social status by "keeping them out" of or pushing them to the margins of society and opportunities for social mobility. As indicated in the panel, Black women "break free" of the barriers by taking them apart, brick by brick, as a form of resistance given their self-determined understandings of their identity and goals. When presented with targeted opportunities, like undergraduate research experiences, Black women leverage their identities through interest convergence to gain access so that they can fulfill their desires. When faced with new challenges in these spaces, Black women draw on the community of Black women present as a source of empowerment, and use the tools gained from resisting societal stereotypes (aka the bricks) as strategies for navigating across new domains towards their success.

Black at a PWI

By: Alexis Hunter

we have made it to the door
though many may have doubted us
we are determined

but we cannot help but wonder
what will happen
now that we are here

a Black man is categorized as a threat
before he even sits in his chair

a Black woman is labeled as angry
before she even opens her mouth

though our struggles look a little different
one thing is for sure

we are constantly having to prove
that we belong
that we are worthy

all we want is
to be protected
to be valued

for our Blackness to be centered
now that we are here

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