

# PHIL 291, Section 01, "Advanced Seminar on Epistemology or Metaphysics: Classifying People"

T 18:00-20:45

SH 241

Spring 2023

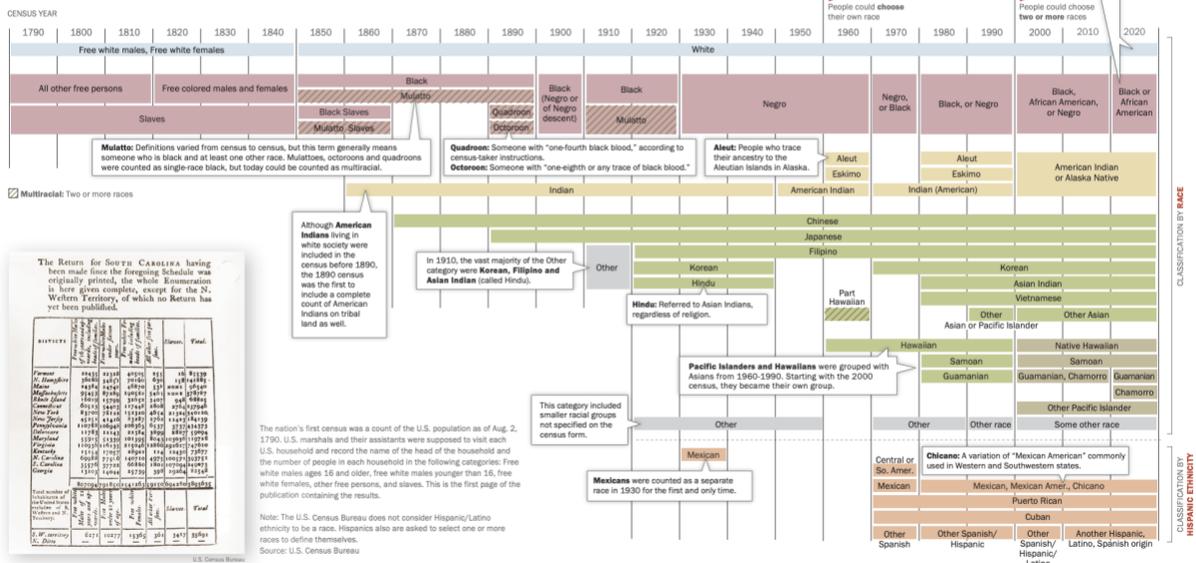
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## What Census Calls Us A Historical Timeline

This graphic displays the different race, ethnicity and origin categories used in the U.S. decennial census, from the first one in 1790 to the latest count in 2020. The category names often changed from one decade to the next, in a reflection of current politics, science and public attitudes. For example, "colored" became "black," with "Negro" and "African American" added later. The term "Negro" was dropped for the 2020 census. Through 1950, census-takers commonly determined the race of the people they counted. From 1960 on, Americans could choose their own race. Starting in 2000, Americans could include themselves in more than one racial category. Before that, many multiracial people were counted in only one racial category.

For the first time, people who check one or both of these boxes are asked to write more about their origins, for example German, African American, Jamaican, etc.



Credit: Pew Research Center

This course is about efforts to classify people—to divide them up into groups that are presumed to be reflective of fundamental characteristics. Efforts to classify people occur perhaps most prominently in the sciences—social, human, biological, medical—and in public policy. But they are also widespread in everyday life, such that some psychologists have suggested that this tendency to classify is part of our cognitive machinery.

In this course, we will consider the impact that classificatory projects—especially those that claim scientific expertise and authority—have on the world. We'll think about how categories of gender, race, ethnicity, mental disorder, and disability shape the way we see others and ourselves.

**Prerequisites:** At least one upper division course in epistemology or metaphysics, or instructor consent.