

# race-gender-and-sexuality-what-s-religion-got-to-do-with-em...

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## SPEAKERS

Megan Goodwin, Krusty the Clown, Simon, Age 3, Simpsons, Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst, Detox



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 00:17

This is keeping it 101 a killjoys introduction to religion podcast. This season our work is made possible in part through a generous grant from the New England Humanities Consortium, and with additional support from the University of Vermont Humanities Center. We are grateful to live teach and record on the ancestral and unseeded lands of the Abenaki, Wabanaki, and Aucociso peoples.



Megan Goodwin 00:40

What's up nerds?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 00:43

Hi, hello. I'm Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst a scholar of religion, Islam race and racialization and history, and I'm one half of our killjoy duo.



Megan Goodwin 00:53

You sure are. Hi, hello, I'm Megan Goodwin, a scholar of American religions race and

gender and the other, taller half of our killjoys duo. It's been a few weeks since we finished off Smart Grrl Summer. And I'm sure you missed us kill-joying about--we missed you! Good news nerds. We're back and we're kicking off a whole new season. Actually, we're kicking off a whole new year. We have eight episodes this season, a winter break because it's important to take breaks, and then we have a whole 'nother season. And you may have noticed a new intro. We are funded this academic year by the New England Humanities Consortium, with additional support from the UVM--that's University of Vermont--Humanities Center. This support almost exclusively funds the labor of Katherine Brennan, a UVM undergrad and total religion nerd--one of us!--who corrects our transcripts in order to make this podcast accessible. Yay. Welcome, Katherine.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 01:43

Such good news. But all right. All right, settle down. It's time for the lesson plan. Today's lesson plan is actually quite simple. We're going to talk about what we're going to do this season and why last season and in Smart Grrl Summer we introduced religion and why we need to pay attention to it. And also why what we think we know is almost always grounded in some kind of imperialist thinking. This season, we want to walk you nerds through the ways that religion plays with other big, amorphous, challenging ideas, specifically, race, gender, and sex.



Megan Goodwin 02:25

So today's thesis is sort of the thesis of this semester, religion is part of things like race, gender, and sex, and how those terms get deployed, defined, been played with in various places. But religion is also separate from those terms. Even if those ideas are inextricable. We'll argue all season that we need to think about religion as part of, or acts upon, and is also separate from race, gender and sex so that we can understand religion in all its different permutations better.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 02:54

Awesome. Well, so let's keep it 1-0-1.



Megan Goodwin 02:58

Let's do it!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 02:59

On today. The segment where we do some Professor work. So yeah Megan when I hear us telling these nerds within the first--what, four minutes of this podcast?--is that another season, another set of confusing complicated things to talk about?



Megan Goodwin 03:17

Huzzah!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 03:19

I just about drooling over how good this is gonna be



Megan Goodwin 03:23

delicious!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 03:24

We've talked to you through how religion in our daily lives is impacted by all of this heady nerdy stuff, like theories of imperialism, like legal definitions like the histories we are purposefully not taught. And we ended our first season (or last semester) with me kind of yelling that I want everyone truly everyone to know that white Christian, European and American colonizers fundamentally inscribed racial and religious superiority in every single system, religious and otherwise. So: that's the task of this semester nerds. That's what we're doing. We're going to keep introducing more and more elements to think about. And this season, it's all about race and gender and the intersections thereof and therein. But Megan, this is so big. How do we even get started? Where should we begin? Religion is ginormous enough that we had 14 episodes all toward we're planning another 18 or so. And now, you're telling me and also, we're telling you nerd that there are other conceptual frameworks that further--how shall we say it--gunk up our understanding? What do we do?



Megan Goodwin 04:35

Okay, well, I'm going to reduce the urge to think of theory as gunk, though I see you--



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 04:43

It's in my nature--



Megan Goodwin 04:43

So I can't separate my gender, my sex, my race, my religion, my identity from each other. Like they--when I do this in class, I physically move across the room and explain like, I'm not a woman on Monday and like queer on Tuesday, and a pagan on Wednesday, and then like, I'm passing for able-bodied on Thursday. All of that stuff is happening all at the same time. They happen all at once in my person, and they're shaped by when I live, where I live, the class I have access to, my health, my ability status, all of it. It's it's a damn mess, Ilyse. --and suggest that maybe, maybe we're offering our beloved nerds new tools to dismantle the master's house. So if religion is what people do, not just what a person does or thinks or believes, then the multi layered systems we live in, that we're part of, and that are part of us as individuals and communities influence and are influenced by religion.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 05:44

Yes, it is. It's sloppy.



Megan Goodwin 05:48

Correct. But we have been saying all along that religion is messy because people are messy. And now we're going to continue to parse what all that means. So why don't we talk through these terms? Why race? Why gender? Why sex? Why are we starting here in Keeping it 101, season two?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 06:05

Obviously, the work we're doing over the next nine-ish, eight episodes, is specifically to define and work through. So I'm not gonna give you all those answers right now. But let's use today's time to clue our delightful nerd listeners into the "why," because that's good pedagogy. It's good teaching to be transparent about why we picked these terms over and above other terms. All right, let's start with the obvious answer. The obvious answer is that race and gender is in part where our research is and we work smarter, not harder. We kinda know this ish.



Megan Goodwin 06:47

We do.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 06:48

But even though that's a laz--that's an obvious answer. It's also a little bit lazy. And I think that the real answer might be that to me, and we're drawing on so many folks here, and you'll hear in our homework and as we go through these episodes that we are citing like a Robocop--like it's so much citation. Like why do we need race? Why do we need gender? It's almost honestly hard to articulate because there's no straight up reason we imagine these things separate from one another in the first place.



Megan Goodwin 07:17

Oh, wait, I have a question.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 07:18

Yeah.



Megan Goodwin 07:19

Do you know any people that don't have gender or race?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 07:23

I don't, do you?



Megan Goodwin 07:26

I not to the best of my knowledge. So maybe we're talking about it because this literally affects all the people in all the world.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 07:35

Hmmm.



Megan Goodwin 07:35

Hmmm.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 07:35

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Race and gender are just frankly, two of the biggest and most obvious places to start with terms that are related to and impact religion, but that are also different and yet overlapping and yet distinctive. It's messy, but also because everybody has it, they're really good places to play with this idea of both the boundaries of religion-- and where religion is not so hard and fast, where the boundaries are porous. To me, I think that all of those things are really vital and visible and omnipresent. What's your take? Why did we land on race and gender as our two primary ways to think and teach about religion this semester?



Megan Goodwin 08:19

Well, obviously we we work on these, although a fun thing about our dynamic is I keep insisting that you work on gender and you keep insisting that I work on race. And obviously, we do both of these things. But it also requires this sort of cheerleading of like, No, actually, this is already part of our work. So it has to be part of our work, because we are working on humans, all of whom have race and also gender. And that makes it easier for us to pull all of these lessons together to assign our homework to explain the concepts. And it's an important honestly that two professor ladies draw on their expertise while running a grant funded public humanities podcast. You can



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 08:58

Yeah, good point. Interesting.



Megan Goodwin 09:01

We're kind of excited about this grant, y'all, a lil'bit. But Ilyse, we also chose these areas for our expertise, because we can't think about religion without them. We wouldn't be able to be experts in religion without being capable--if not expert--in talking about sex, gender and race. Truly. Like I cannot do my work without thinking about religion through theories of intersectionality. Which is a framework--that term was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, and we're going to spend our whole next episode talking about intersectionality and how it relates to gender, sex, sexuality, race, and religion. So stay tuned for that. But intersectionality--the way that these categories of identity and oppression overlap, but

are also distinct they can be separated out. Religion isn't race religion isn't gender, but gender and race shape how we do religion, and religion shapes how we do race and gender. So they act upon each other in communities, on our individual bodies, they're all tied up so tightly and so closely that they shape, and they alter, and they influence one another.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 10:08

Yeah, as usual, Megan, you're right.



Megan Goodwin 10:10

I'm very smart.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 10:12

We know a thing about all this, because we can't know anything without it. And nerds, you'll likely have noticed that in prior episodes we're also talking about this stuff. This isn't new to the pod. What is new is that we're shining a light on it and naming it as the foremost set of ideas we're thinking about this time around. And I'll be honest, I'm stalling. Since defining quickly--quickly, what we're going to do today is going to take episodes to work through. It is what we've taken whole ass decades to read and think and write and teach about, yeah, we are not done reading and thinking and writing and teaching. And so making that answer like why did we pick this wasn't easy. We're wordy. And Goodwin, since I wrote the script I'm going to be a meanie, and a nudge, and make you go first. Can you give our listeners an extended definition for not just why we chose gender? But what is gender? Why is it one of our key nodes of exploration?



Megan Goodwin 11:12

So mean. So big and you know it's so mean, because truly I could start right now right, at this moment, and not stop defining gender until tomorrow. But I am going to try to do this in a 1-0-1 way. So the formula we use in my classes is that gender is identity assigned at birth (sex, the meaning that we've assigned a specific body parts what we sometimes think of as biology, although biology makes it sound like it's objective, when we know it's not). So gender is identity assigned at birth plus desire (whom how what if you want to do with the parts that you were born with, or parts that you have added later). So identity plus desire plus expression (how you signal your identity and your relationship with your body) plus culture (how your expression of your identity and your relationship with your

body gets read by those around you). Okay?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 12:04

Wait, okay, you say that one more time. So gender is



Megan Goodwin 12:09

identity assigned at birth,



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 12:11

plus,



Megan Goodwin 12:12

plus desire,



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 12:15

plus



Megan Goodwin 12:16

plus expression plus culture.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 12:22

Okay.



Megan Goodwin 12:24

And I want to pause here because I don't want to suggest that your identity assigned at birth is permanent, is fixed, is reflective of who you actually are. But we are always in relationship to the gender to the identity were assigned at birth. Okay, okay. Okay, so we're, we're going to assign some helpful teaching tools like the gender unicorn, which is courtesy of the Trans Student Educational Resources, and its derivative the gingerbread person, designed by Sam Kellerman, who has taken a lot of flack for arguably



appropriating the trans unicorn or earlier versions of this gingerbread person. But I think both of these models are helpful. And they make for good discussion points in class. So we'll hook you up there. Great. Alright, so having done having done the equation of gender, I want to emphasize three main things about gender. Starting with number one gender: we made it up. Gender is meaning we make on and about our bodies. I like to think of it as the way that we look at certain bodies and decide that they like certain colors or activities or have certain intellectual capacities, or preferences for like, I dunno, baking and power tools. Our assumptions about what bodies mean, and what they're for and how we should express that meaning and purpose, are culturally contingent and constructed. So here is our first keyword alert of the season.

D

Detox 13:50

It's our secret word of the day.

M

Megan Goodwin 13:53

Social construct. A social construct is a thing we made up to make sense of our bodies BUT that doesn't mean it doesn't matter, or is fake, because social constructs have real world consequences. So we learn how to do gender from the folks around us, and how they think we should do gender. So our family, our friends, our communities--we can decide to do gender either in ways that seemed recognizable and correct to those around us. Or we can fuck it up. Like we already talked about drag, which is one way that people play with gender. But we're never starting from a clean slate or from a blank slate. And that's what we're talking about when we're talking about social construction. Most of our parents actually had ideas about what our bodies meant even before we were born because sonograms reveal our body parts. And we think those body parts means something we make those body parts means something. So number one, gender, we made it up.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 14:47

Got it. check!

M

Megan Goodwin 14:48

Thanks. Check.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 14:51

I like that. This is very mathy first you had an equation now you've got a list with numbers. I am just I'm excited for all of these--all of this.



Megan Goodwin 15:00

I like I need a list because otherwise things get so messy so quickly.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 15:06

So well aware. And you're welcome.



Megan Goodwin 15:12

Okay, so one gender, we made it up. Two, when we're talking about gender, we're never just talking about gender, or ideas about how folks should do gender are all tangled up and how we think they should do sexuality. Gender starts not actually with the identification of body parts, but with our assumptions about what those body parts are for. And what we should therefore want to do with them. Which is to say we should, we assume, want to make more bodies, Adrienne Rich calls this compulsory heterosexuality, we'll come back to it. So gender is about sexuality. But it's also about race and class and ability, and all those other social constructs that make up our identities, and our relationships to one another and ourselves. So number two, again, when we're talking about gender, we're always also talking about race, sex, ability, class, all those other identity markers. Okay, number three.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 16:08

Hit me with it.



Megan Goodwin 16:10

I will hit you with my best shot. Just because we made it up does not mean gender or race or sexuality are fake or don't matter. Doing gender or race or sexuality "wrong" has real world consequences. People kill other people for doing gender wrong. Social construct doesn't mean fake, but it does mean that we can learn to make new meanings of bodies and hopefully make more space for us to be different from one another, safely. So when we're asking questions about gender, we're wondering how else people think about their

bodies, how else it might be possible to think about bodies, what else people do with their bodies and why, and how many more things and meanings people make of their bodies than just making more bodies with them.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 16:54

Yeah, can I ask a question Megan?



Megan Goodwin 16:56

Please!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 16:57

if you could give me the like two sentences--and this is so mean I'm so sorry--I'm going off script.



Megan Goodwin 17:04

The worst! Okay, go ahead.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 17:08

What does any of that have to do with religion? If you could give us the like summation?



Megan Goodwin 17:12

I'm super glad that you asked me that actually, and I will tell you! What it has to do with religion is because--we already talked about religion as a social construct, and we talked about the fact that religion and culture make one another--we both learn how to do gender from religion, even if we ourselves are not religious. And we make religion, our way to understand our bodies and our gender and what we should be doing with our bodies. So they are co constitutive, they reinforce and remake one another.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 17:48

Thanks! Is an example of that something like religiously-defined notions of marriage?



Megan Goodwin 17:55

Absolutely. Or the fact that when people are telling other people People they shouldn't be queer we get stor--we get people yelling, "It's Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve," "The Bible says this is what marriage looks like." Except that spoilers, folks: People wrote the Bible, and they had specific ideas about what bodies were for. So. But then we tell more stories, and we make more of religion and religion becomes the reason or one of the reasons that we understand bodies in certain ways.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 18:32

Thanks, Megan.



Megan Goodwin 18:34

You're welcome. Haha. What's race?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 18:39

Well, aside from race being a key word,



Detox 18:42

it's our secret word of the day.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 18:44

It is certainly bigger than the couple of minutes we have right now, which is why there are more episodes about all of this coming at you. And you'll notice that I am going to be a little bit edgy about making sure that you all hear us say that the little formula and 1-2-3 that Megan did on gender. And the little bit of definitional work I'm about to do on race is not the end of the story. And that's not just to get you to listen to more episodes, though, nerds, we love it when you click on us. It's because anything that we say in a short amount of time will inherently leave something out. And the whole idea here is that we're not unaware that we are leaving things out. Of course, we are leaving things out both in like a teaser way-- Come on, listen to the next episodes--and in just like a we ca--we can't yell at you for 10 years. So you're welcome. So let me start by like being hashtag basic. Race, like gender, is a social concept and construct and it is often defined as a group of people who share characteristics. That sounds simple enough for such a vast troubling set of

ideas. But also, historically and contemporarily those characteristics can be defined in all sorts of ways. And they have looked like a tally of so-called scientific features, observable facts, and you hear my scare quotes because I'm about to undo all that shit in a minute. Here are some of the ways that we have tallied scientific features, skin color, of course, but also hair type, hair texture, the size and shape of bodies and bodily features. So that includes everything from height and weight to the shape of facial features, or the shapes of curves on female-identified bodies. And that could look like lips, hips or noses to the length of limbs. One of the creepiest documents I've ever read was an 18th century. Now I'm really off book I'm sorry, is 18th century archival matter that was measuring the length of all these villagers' fingers and there's just right like you hear all of the scientific we're just data collecting and you can also hear what eugenics looks like. So, "characteristics" also include things that we might have a harder time observing, pointing to recording or naming. Things like--scare quotes friends--industriousness or its partner laziness. Things like openness, volatility, hot blooded-ness. Things like trustworthiness, cleverness, docility. For lots of people these kinds of characteristics may not seem like anything on their own. I'm sure that if we, if we break this down into the individual, we have all at some point been trustworthy and not, clever and not, hostile and not.



Megan Goodwin 21:56

We've definitely been hostile.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 21:58

That is my status in the world. But when these characteristics are applied to a whole group, and when that whole group is being told that that characteristic is a predictable way to think about that group in perpetuity, then we're talking about a key feature of race theory and within the history of the science of race, albeit really simplified. And I want to be clear here I'm using "scientific" on purpose. Modern science, much like the modern University was founded in the notion of species, of categories, and of racism.



Megan Goodwin 22:41

Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. is science connected to imperialism?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 22:47

Sure is Megan.



Megan Goodwin 22:48

Damn it. Sorry, keep going.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 22:52

So where race is the theory of all these things, racism is an ideology where we believe in that system of race. And we--we white people--export it around the world and institutionalized systems of race so that people have different access to systems, and different embeddedness within systems. We're going to get into all of that in a minute. But the idea that our race of people can be identified, classified, categorized, all of this rests on a series of blood, notions of what we would now call genetics, ideas about purity, that were tested and are tested in scientific labs. These ideas about race, however, broad and amorphous, like "trustworthiness" became and still are treated as fact.



Megan Goodwin 23:50

This is gross, and I hate it. Okay, Ilyse, it sounds to me like you're saying: race, like gender, is a social construct, although race and gender are not the same social construct. But like Wait, so if race is a social construct, does that mean that it's fake? And it doesn't matter? No, no, that's that's INCORRECT



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 24:15

race is a social construct. But I'm also saying that hella racist white folk have formalized racisms with the backing and power of scientific discovery, imperialism. And that doesn't mean that race isn't real, not even a little it means that race is exceptionally real. And just because we have an idea about something that is pernicious and violent, and just because we may have based those ideas on erroneous, disprovable thinking, does not mean that an idea is not real. So when people say "all people are the same," or "underneath our skin, we have the same features" or my favorite within scientific communities is something like the "99 point whatever percent of our genomes are exactly the same," and like--as if that is to make our differences negligible or unreal. That's all bullshit. race is, real racism is real race and racism have real consequences in the world and are therefore real.



Megan Goodwin 25:14

Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 25:17

But this is also where Megan the term racialization matters. And that's a keyword alert.



Detox 25:23

It's our secret word of the day.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 25:26

The concept and construct of race includes essential ization of groups based upon traits imagined to be inherent, hereditary and prognostic. So that is to say rooted in a pseudo biology and therefore scientifically real. And you hear me doing scare quotes--



Megan Goodwin 25:45

okay, so we are saying race looks at a person and sees what they look like and assumes they know something about that person. Something essential.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 25:57

That's right.



Megan Goodwin 25:58

Okay.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 25:59

Okay. Not just about that person, but about all people who look like that person. Hmm. This isn't just about the individual. This isn't like I met you, Megan. And I was like, okay, Megan is a tall white ginger lady, and she is loud and brash and funny, and



Megan Goodwin 26:18

that's accurate.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 26:19

Therefore, all tall gingers who are white are also loud and brash and funny. Right, that's, that's the difference of, "Oh, I met Megan and she is like this" versus, "hey, all people in this category are like this," and



Megan Goodwin 26:36

--and then I'm gonna make some laws about it.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 26:39

Yeah, and I'm making an inane, I want to be clear, I'm making an inane example. That's not how this works in real life. So that process of labeling and creating and then making real a race is called in some ways racialization. And we realization is the process that marks individuals as having immutable traits because of their membership or association with a particular group. Racialization identifies individuals as both belonging to one cogent group and possessing those inherent hereditary and prognostic characteristics. Racialization helps us think about why--like in any categorization when there are infinity loopholes and permutations and policing things--you can still have an idea that white people do x. Black Folk do y. Jews do this. Because even though all those people look differently, we have an idea of what that racial category inherently is, and we therefore make hereditary and prognostic ideas about it. Because questions like what color constitutes white, for example, is a question we know has had historically really variable answers. And not just in cultural ways, but in legal ways, which is something we're going to get to in a few episodes, and we have c--we have done before. When it comes to religion, asking that question of are Jews and Muslims a race might seem really silly to some of our listeners, except, historically, Jews and Muslims have been and also have not been categorized as races. So how do we know when a race is a race? And when does all this change? And all of these are questions not to disprove that race is real, but rather to highlight the vital import to those of us who think about religion. Religions are not races but religions are racialized.



Megan Goodwin 28:50

Awesome. I am going to be really mean and ask you to give me the two sentence version of that what the race and religion have to do with one another, Ilyse?





Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 28:58

Race and religion, just like gender and religion are co constitutive: they make each other and they interact on each other, so that one's identity is tied up by doing all of these things at once.



Megan Goodwin 29:15

So like, even though the Bible was written a really long time ago, and race by comparison is pretty new. We still have people using the Bible to make sense of bodies that are raised in certain ways people who are raised in certain ways. Question mark.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 29:34

Yes, exclamation point.



Megan Goodwin 29:39

Gross.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 29:40

Okay. Okay. We'll build on all of this, we promise but for now, I really think that we've done enough defining AT our nerds. What do you think, Megan?



Megan Goodwin 29:48

So many definitions--No, never enough definitions, but Okay, fine. I'll give you a break. Then.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 29:53

What do you think you think they've earned it?



Megan Goodwin 29:55

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 29:56

All right. It's time for primary sources,



Megan Goodwin 29:58

primary sources.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 30:01

This is the segment where we talk in the first person about our given topic because good feminist pedagogy acknowledges the I in teacher. Megan, let's talk about how we experience race and gender, no big deal.



Megan Goodwin 30:12

Oh, okay. We're gonna keep this super short but also in the spirit of locating the eye and good pedagogy requiring vulnerability. I will tell you now that my first master's degree is in women's studies and I earned that master's degree at drew University, whilst Tracy West and Virginia Burris, we're not only teaching there, but we're teaching the Women's Studies prosem, the class that all Women's Studies scholars have to take to graduate with their degree. And I was that person that all folks who teach gender studies will recognize who on the first day of class was like, "it's not that I don't think gender is important, but I don't think feel oppressed?" And also I know that Yeah, no, that was me. And like, "women are 51% of the population. So why are we always talking about minorities?" I did that.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 31:11

Oh, honey.



Megan Goodwin 31:12

like, A) I did that at all. But B) I did that where Tracy West and Virginia Burris could see and hear me do it. So that happened.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 31:22

And will you tell our nerds um, why why those particular people would be so embarrassing to hear you grow into your awareness?



Megan Goodwin 31:33

um, they're, they're the kind of big deals in the study of religion and gender..



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 31:37

Little bit.



Megan Goodwin 31:38

to say... it minorly huge. I won't say that it's the same thing as like rolling up on Judith Butler, who is one of the the luminaries in gender theory and saying like, I don't feel oppressed, but it's also not not that. So anyway, we all start somewhere and that's where I started. And...



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 32:09

we're glad you made it through.



Megan Goodwin 32:11

Sorry. Sorry to my foremothers!



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 32:18

All right, well, I don't know how to follow that. But I guess, I guess to keep on theme, I'll talk about being Jewish question mark.



Megan Goodwin 32:27

I've got something new for you. Yeah.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 32:30

I guess I guess I want to talk about this racialization I'm keeping on race since you did gender. I want to talk about being racialized as Jewish I guess. So as our nerds know, because this is now the Ilyse--the Ilyse's family history pod. I am, I am an adopted person. And adoption is often really coated in, in in race and racism and so, um, so that exists and so getting real information about who my parents were was really important so that we

could know if I was a legitimate Jew. Like I said, I'm one of these other primary sources, but also like would I pass as a member of our white family. So racialization for me is all this multi-layered stuff, but but being racialized as Jewish was sometimes about like Holocaust trauma so like a as a person with brown eyes and olivey skin and curly brown hair, and I'm super short. My grandparents used to joke in the way that people who survived shit can joke--you may not joke like this dear nerds unless you've survived shit, but they could. And they would say stuff like you'd never make it out, not with that tone and hair. Like that was like the running gag.



Megan Goodwin 33:53

ouch



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 33:54

Yeah, super Ouch. But sometimes and so that was internally like we as Jews, under stood what it meant to be a "good looking" Jew in a post-Holocaust way. And like, that's a problem. I want you to hear that as trauma, Nazi trauma. But there's also this weird way that a vague, not as pale space so like not as pale as the family which I was living or the family that is mine was a thing to be policed and asked about and sussed out. There was a real curiosity around it. And so like the coach I had, I was a pretty competitive soccer player and I had a coach for a while who I will not name (but I want to) who thought I was the nanny's kid getting a club soccer sponsorship from my white employer, like from like, whomever my parent might have been white employers. So yeah, that didn't really have a point. But I think racialization is at once Jews recognizing me as a Jewish person who would be the wrong sort of Jewish-looking person AND this soccer coach who knew my family from like synagogue of all places, but also looked at me and didn't think I looked Jewish enough, white enough to be my parents rightful kid, and so must have been, um, the nanny's kid wear nanny is racialized as being a non white at-home employee.



Megan Goodwin 34:20

I mean I think it does have a point in that it illustrates--again in ways that hurt my stomach--that you learn to make meaning of your tiny little body, from your family, from your community, and in ways that are all wrapped up with the like real trauma and violence that can be associated with race. Sorry, that's gross.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 35:52

It's okay. That coach's son once asked me to prom and I punched him. He was a dick. He thought I wasn't as good at soccer at him by



Megan Goodwin 36:00

He was clearly wrong.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 36:01

That slidetackle broke his wrist. Anyway, that was primary sources.



Megan Goodwin 36:06

Speaking of violence--primary sources



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 36:18

We shouldn't talk.



Megan Goodwin 36:20

Glad that we decided to start Season Two off light, you know? Anyway. All right pop a squat y'all it is storytime the segment where we quote and unpack important scholarship.



Krusty the Clown 36:31

Hey kids, it's story time.



Megan Goodwin 36:34

We are using Judith Weisenfeld's concept of religio-racial identity throughout the season. So of course, we need to start with our germinal work, *'New World A-Comin: Black Religion and Racial Identity During the Great Migration'*. I want to say out loud before I read you this quote that we use slash I are playing a little bit fast and loose here because Dr. Weisenfeld is such a precise, meticulous thinker and she uses religious or racial identity in very specific It's in her book, and we're going to expand upon those in the season. Let me just I'll show you what I mean. So in *New World a Comin* Weidenfeld writes, "I use the term 'religio- racial identity' to capture the commitment of members of [innovative Black religions during the early-to-mid 20th century] to understanding individual and collective

identity as constituted in the conjunction of religion and race...In some sense, all religious groups in the United States could be characterized as religio-racial ones, given the deeply powerful, if sometimes veiled, ways the American system of racial hierarchy has structured religious beliefs, practices, and institutions for all people in its frame." (5) So the short version there is, Weisenfeld obviously acknowledges that race shapes in forms builds all people's understanding of how we do religion, but in her book, she's very specifically looking at these early 20th to mid 20th century black religiously innovative groups. So when she's talking--talking about religious, religio-racial identity in the book, she's specifically talking about this one group at the same time. I'm going to cheat a little bit and read from her recent piece "The House We Live In," which is responding to a \_Journal of the American Academy of Religion\_ roundtable that is expanding upon her work. Here Weisenfeld, quote, "insist[s] on continuing to develop approaches to the study of religion that attend to the kinds of questions about difference and power that the study of race and religion affords and that prioritize the voices and experiences of historically marginalized people in our theoretical frames." (456) So Ilyse, what do you hear when we're talking about religio-racial identity or the way that Weisenfeld is framing the relationship between race and religion?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 38:44

I value Professor Weisenfeld's work inordinately. But I'm not someone, as I've said many times, who works on the United States. I definitely do not work on innovative Black religions and I don't work on the early to mid 20th century, and so, read through a really narrow frame Weisenfeld's work wouldn't--would be interesting and groundbreaking and awesome. But it would be one of those things that I appreciate like a work of art and say like, wow, that's beautiful. I'm going to walk through the museum. But I think with her the second part of the quote that you read from "The House We Live In," that this idea that we need to, we need to place the historical the voices and experiences of historically marginalized people at the center of our theoretical frames, really gets at why I find her work so valuable. So I think that for me, it's all about the application. And I hope I don't butcher her work when I think about it in my own frameworks, which is--which is on a new project I'm working on on global Islamophobia and its relationship to global antisemitism. So I'm looking at where those two different sets of racialized hatreds play with each other and are overlapped and are not. And so in, in reality Weisenfeld work shouldn't have much to say to me but I think precisely because she's playing with how the conjunction of religion and race are part of systems of hierarchy that then structure the way people do religion, act within religion, and have like systems and institutions available to them--all of that's so important tap to my thinking and to expanding my thinking that I hope she isn't mad that I want to import it and export it to other places.



Megan Goodwin 40:42

I I suspect she will not be bad. She, she she wrote an essay about how it's okay that people are doing different things with her work.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 40:51

You asked me what I felt though.



Megan Goodwin 40:52

I know. That's fair. That's fair. Again, it is, I think, intimidating to look at a book that does this beautiful, meticulous, just like Brilliant work and and be it's hard not to be worried about messing it up.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 41:07

Yeah I'll also say like to be a little bit in the weeds dear nerds that I think I know Professor Weisenfeld so roots herself as a historian, and I think historians are trained to think that they are not doing theory they are talking about the historical record. And I don't think that means we think we're talking about fact. But I do think that means we want to be precise and meticulous because we know that other situations and other places--even the same place 20 years later--will be radically different, the circumstances will have changed. And so I think I take real value in looking at her work as a historian as both meticulous history and expansive theory at the same time.



Megan Goodwin 41:50

right. And the part of the sentence that I cut out honestly was this hesitancy about universalization. Like I don't want to take my work and say this is what it means in all places, but I think that is one of the exciting things that really good history can do is teach us to look at different points in time and ask important questions. We have been super chatty this episode. So I won't go on and on about Dr. Weisenfeld's work, obviously, we will probably keep doing that all semester anyway. But a thing that I really appreciate about the piece that we read, and the work that she's done, is that it insists we think about race and religion, not just as spaces of trauma and violence, but also as spaces of radical creativity and joy and possibility. And for me, that's really important because it's really easy to get bogged down in the here is state violence here is interpersonal violence. I very often think about why things matter in terms of who gets hurt. And it's not that I think all of those things are important. At the same time, I think we do real violence to people of

color if we only talk about race as violence as state control as a negative thing, rather than also acknowledging that race and religion can and have also been spaces of real joy and creativity and imagining new ways of being in the world, new ways of making sense of history and and building worlds worth building.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 43:34

Yeah, Megan, I'm so glad that we're finally out loud using June's wise and valves work as our storytime because I think it's been pretty ridiculous how frequently we cite her and reference her in the show notes and call her out on Twitter, because I think both of us have gained quite a lot from reading, at least for me no role to come in. Because I as you know, I am a professor and so read widely and some read new roles have come in. And I've been very highly praised by all of the academic nerds who my whom I know and adore. But normally these are books about American religion that are interesting, and that I find really fun to learn about, but that have no real bearing on my own work because my own work isn't in American religions. And it's specifically not within the really particular historic groups that Professor Weisenfeld is citing. And so I wonder sometimes if I'm using religio racial identity in a way that she would load, because I really am sort of thinking about it and applying it as this idea where the system of racial hierarchy has structured religious beliefs, practices and institutions for all people in its frame. Now that doesn't sound like Something that would apply to South Asia. And I know of course, as someone who thinks about this, that racist systems are different across the world, and we're going to get to that in later episodes. But for me this idea that religion and race, religio racial categories can be this overarching theme has been really illuminating and helpful. And yeah, just really important as I as I sink into some new work on on race in South Asia, but also as I as I do this Islamophobia, anti semitism big project. And so yeah, I'm just really grateful to get to think with her and I think all of our listeners should should tune in both to when she's on the pod later this season, but also to this book, New World a-Comin and the JAAR roundtable article that we've linked to in the show notes.



Megan Goodwin 45:58

Don't pack up your stuff yet nerds, you've got homework!



Simpsons 46:01

homework, what homework.





Megan Goodwin 46:03

So we're just starting back, we're gonna suggest some good starter texts, some scholarly monographs and some digital open access explainers. If we're talking too fast, which is kind of our thing, don't forget about the show notes. Each episode has a website with detailed show notes that include transcripts, links, citations, and images, all of which is to help you learn more and so that we never pretend we know all of this on our own. So for today's homework nerds, there's a lot to cite. And this is not meant to be exhaustive. Like I said, like Ilyse said, we're going to be talking about this all semester. Ilyse, what do you got for homework?



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 46:37

We are coming off a summer of Black Lives Matters protest that some historians are estimating we're the largest public demonstrations in US history given breadth, scope and participation. So I know there's a lot of interest in race right now. And you can find all sorts of reading lists that got really popular over the summer. That's not what we're going to do here and--and since it was a to red--resist redundancy, I don't want to skip ahead to too far in a season that we'll get to a lot of this. I'm going to name just a few things that I think are easy to get to like open access articles or videos. And then because Megan said, I can't list all the things I had listed on the homework, I am going--I'm gonna stash them in the show notes, because she's not the boss of me and I write those. So for some big picture theories of race in the United States Omi and Winant not are a classic sociology standard, their book, *Racial Formation in the US* is something that people cite all the time, that I returned to you often, and I'll link they've got a really good interview on like on 10 year retrospective of the book or something that that I have used before and that I will link to in the show notes. For me when I think about race in the United States, I am always thinking I was stuff about Moustafa Bayoumi's "Racing Religion" article, which is basically a legal history of who can count as a citizen in the US. And it really masterfully shows that religion, and Islam in particular, is often this disqualifier for the category of white and therefore the category of citizen at various points in history. So racing religion is a must, must go to. And I'm gonna cheat a little and say that this might be kind of not 101 at all. This is definitely like seminar level 401 but my old UVM colleague and now Harvard Divinity School Professor Todne Thomas has a really lovely fantastically smart recorded lecture titled "Abstracting, Resurrecting, and Profaning Sacred Matter: Black Church Arson in the Museum." Again, I want to say this is seminar level, but if you are excited about race, Christianity, religion and recently Black church arson, then I think you want to think with Professor Thomas. And so we'll link to that talk, which is on YouTube. And then I will say that the Imminent Frame just did a series this past summer called a universe of terms. And the race entry is actually pretty good. And it features two scholars of Islam that I

personally find indispensable. Sylvia Chan-Malik and Junaid Rana, as well as a piece by Katherine Gruebner. So universe of terms, the race entry, and I'll link to all of that, and then I'm gonna sneak some other stuff in there just like broccoli and mac and cheese. You can't stop me.



Megan Goodwin 49:29

I compiled one of these lists that Ilyse mentioned just this summer with Yohana Agra Junker. It is called "This is not an anti racist reading list: or, the treachery of allyship," and it's building on Dr. Jackson from Northwestern question of what is a--an antiracist reading list for. And Dr. Jackson suggests that, honestly, reading lists don't do anything if they don't come with pedagogy, and if the folks working through them, don't then do these readings--not just read the readings, but go back out into the world and act in a way that shows they've thought more concretely and more constructively about race and the violence of white supremacy. If you're just starting to think about gender and sexuality and religion, I really like Mary McClintock Fulkerson's article, "Gender: Being It or Doing It." It is, to my mind the least scary introduction to Judith Butler I have ever encountered. And then I'm just going to assign you all of Judith Weisenfeld in the whole world. So you should read New World A-Comin, obviously, you should also read "The House We Live In." But she's done a ton of public facing work on film, space and place, and obviously, race and American religion, so we'll get you some links for that as well. She has a space and place essay in that universe of terms piece on the a minute frame, but she also has cool pieces on Birth of a Nation and the National Museum of African American History and Culture. There's just a lot of good stuff out there and you should read all of it.



Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 50:58

All right, well, that's it for us today nerds! We're glad we're back. And if you can spare the time to rate review the podcast we'd appreciate it. If you're teaching with it, let us know. And if you want to learn how to teach with us find us over on Twitter.




Megan Goodwin 51:10


You can find Megan (that's me!) on Twitter @ m-p-g-p-h-d & Ilyse @ p-r-o-f-i-r-m-f or the show @ Keeping It underscore 101. Find the website at Keepingit101.com.





Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 51:24

peace out nerds


 Megan Goodwin 51:26  
do your homework. It's on the syllabus.


 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 51:51  
What song is that?

 Simon, Age 3 51:52  
a podcast!

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 51:53  
the podcast song?

 Simon, Age 3 51:55  
from from from Auntie Megan.

 Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst 51:59  
Oh! Is Mama on that podcast too? Or just Auntie Megan?

 Simon, Age 3 52:04  
Mama's on there!