

The session on information literacy played a key role in the development of my students in the Psychology of Racism. We spent a great deal of time in the course discussing theories and empirical studies that have been conducted related to race and racism. Therefore, the exercise of analyzing past and present media images provided the opportunity for students to apply the material.

One of my major goals for the course was for students to recognize and examine racism in their everyday lives. Two events happened close to the time of the course that allowed for in-depth analysis of current events. Students frequently expressed sentiments that racism was anachronistic. They viewed it as a problem of the past. Hurricane Katrina and the political cartoons portraying Allah were events that students could not push off as "the past."

Using the framework of information literacy competency, students were led through an objective critique of photographs portraying individuals wading through hurricane waters with goods. They discussed why the photos were labeled differently given that the actions were similar and the only evident difference was the race of the subjects. The discussions about the cartoons centered around how the portrayal of Allah by non-Muslims affects the Muslim population and the fine lines between free speech and offensive behavior. Discussion and critique of these topics brought to life the theories students learned in class. Students contemplated questions such as "What factors would influence the individuals who provided captions for the photos to label them differently?" "How would dominant religions react to portrayals of their faith that are forbidden?" Students also examined how racial identity, how an individual incorporates race into their identity, influenced the ways in which they and others perceive the images. This exercise was powerful,

Professor Kira Hudson Banks' Response to "Analyzing Dynamics of Race" Instruction Session

because it allowed students to see patterns of power and privilege emerge through present day circumstances.