POSTMODERN BLACKNESS
COLLAPSE OF MODERN GRAND NARRATIVES
Subject positions dictate that there is no knowable self. It implies that we are who we are only in relation to those we interact with. The character I have chosen to apply this to is Vladek. Vladek’s character is constantly changing in this story. When interacting with his son, Artie, Vladek is very concerned about Artie’s possessions (his jacket) and also with Artie’s opinion of him (i.e. the wooden coat hanger). In direct contrast, Vladek is harsh and bitter when interacting with his wife. He often speaks poorly of her and belittles her actions and person (as in, when he complains she’s always concerned about money, and how the dinner was less than perfect, the chicken was dry). Not just these examples, but also those of Vladek in the ghetto (patient and calming with Ania, but distrusting of other Jews in hiding with him) indicate that the character of Vladek is very much unknowable to the reader, and perhaps even unknowable to himself.

Post-modernism states that there is no knowable self, in not in relation to others and our interactions with them. Vladek’s actions demonstrate a change in character with the majority of “others” he encounters. This leads to the question of who Vladek truly is, or perhaps if there really is one Vladek that is more real than the others. Postmodernism and the contingent subject position suggests there is no knowable self; Vladek’s character can be seen as proof of this. Since his character is forever changing based on those around him, there cannot be seen any one Vladek that is true or more significant that the others. The self is not knowable.
Identity is a grand narrative destabilized in postmodernism.
Identity is contingent, socially constructed, dynamic and unstable.
There is no knowable fixed ‘core self’ or identity for all times, places, interactions and relationships.
Race, class, gender and sexuality are four key identity markers.
SOME BASIC DEFINITIONS

race
- Large group of people with common heritage (cultural)
- Categories within human species with presumed shared genetic characteristics (biological)

racism
- Belief that genetic characteristics are a primary determinant of human traits & capacities
- Attitude of some people in the majority toward some people in minority groups
OTHER WORDS FOR RACISM

- Prejudice
- Bias
- Discrimination
- Racial hatred
### New Ways to Consider Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Racism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Categories constructed socially through history</td>
<td>Structural power inequities based on racial categories that give privileges to one group over others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race is not a biological fact but a social myth</td>
<td>Racism = Race + Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racialization is the process of construction of the myth of racial group distinctions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Racialized groups’ rather than ‘minorities’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCEPTS IN CRITICAL RACE THEORY

- People of colour vs. non-white people
- Denial of racism
- Colour-blind racism or aversive racism
- Model minority
- White privilege
- Reverse racism
- Whitewashing
- Stereotyping
WHITE SUPREMACY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard definition</th>
<th>Definition of bell hooks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White power movement based on racial difference, discrimination, etc.</td>
<td>The currently existing system that gives privilege to white people in the US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The desire to see racial privilege given back to white people in the US</td>
<td>Intersects with patriarchy and capitalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“In the wake of the black power movement, after so rebels were slaughtered and lost, many of these voices were silenced by a repressive state; others became inarticulate. It has become necessary to find new avenues to transmit the messages of black liberation struggle, new ways to talk about racism and other politics of domination”. (2479)
IDENTITY IN POSTMODERNISM

- Subjectivity or subject-position as narrative
- Individual or subject is construct of postmodernism
- Postmodern discourse unconcerned with issues of gender, race and ethnicity
- Most postmodern theorists are white and male therefore they speak from a position of power
- “It’s easy to destabilize identity when you have one”
- Postmodernism addresses issues of difference and otherness
- Can postmodernism be relevant to Black anti-racist politics?
For bell hooks, Black identity is in the process of reclaiming public space and coming to voice.

It is not a singular identity with a fixed essence searching for authentic representation.

Rather there are multiple Black identities that cross class and gender lines (among other identity markers).

Black identities can be theorized as an affiliation rather than an essential inner being inherent in people.
Applying concepts on race, racism and identity
Shifting identity of Cameron Thayer (Terence Howard) in relation to:

- His wife Christine Thayer (Thandie Newton)
- Officer Ryan (Matt Dillon)
- Officer Hansen (Ryan Phillippe) in the two incidents
- His boss, Fred (Tony Danza)
Meetings in my office
- This afternoon
- Tomorrow morning
- Monday afternoon
- Or confirm another time with me

Reading for Wednesday:
- Waugh, Postcolonialism pp. 340-350

Friday
- Waugh, Postcolonialism pp. 340-350
- Assignment #4 Applying Theory is DUE