

You are cordially to attend a
UCR SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT COLLOQUIUM

Raúl Pérez, PhD, *The Souls of White Jokes: How Racist Humor Fuels White Supremacy*

Thursday, October 27, 2022, 1230-2pm

In person: INTS 1113 CHASS Interdisciplinary Symposium Room

Via Zoom (Must be signed in to UCR Zoom):

<https://ucr.zoom.us/j/98896703068?pwd=TktEbkR1TU1DcXJFNndCNEVhKzVpdz09>

Having a "good" sense of humor generally means being able to take a joke without getting offended. Laughter is often seen as a way to ease tension in an overly politicized social world. But do the stakes change when the jokes are racist? In *The Souls of White Jokes*, Raúl Pérez confronts this unsettling question, arguing that doing so is crucial to understanding the persistence of racism and white supremacy in American society. Drawing from W.E.B. Du Bois's prescient essay "The Souls of White Folk" (1920), Pérez synthesizes scholarship on race, humor, and emotions to uncover how humor can function as a tool for producing racial alienation, dehumanization, and even violence. Pérez tracks this use of humor from blackface minstrelsy to contemporary contexts, including police culture, politics, and far-right extremists. Rather than being harmless fun, a thing of the past, or "just a joke," Pérez illustrates how the current widespread use of racist humor plays a central role in reinforcing and mobilizing racist ideology, solidarity, and inequality today. **Book Link:** <https://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=30308>

Raúl Pérez is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of La Verne, and previously an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Criminology at the University of Denver. His scholarship has been awarded and supported by the American Sociological Association, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the University of California Center for New Racial Studies, the Working Class Studies Association, and the American Humor Studies Association. His research has been published in journals such as *American Behavioral Scientist*, *Discourse and Society*, *Ethnicities*, and *Sociological Perspectives*. His first book, *The Souls of White Joke: How Racist Humor Fuels White Supremacy* has been recently published by Stanford University Press. His work has also been featured in various media, including *The Washington Post*, *TIME*, *NBC*, *AXIOS*, *The Grio*, *Remezcla*, *Latino Rebels*, and *Zócalo Public Square*.

