Race & ethnicity

1. European colonialism *(continued)*
2. Origins of racial & ethnic categories
3. Prejudice, inequality, & racism
4. *Theoretical tradition 2*: conflict theory
5. Group discussion

CONTENT WARNING

The slides in this lecture contain some disturbing images, including racial stereotypes and images of Nazi scientific instruments. Images like these have been used to justify and propagate racist institutions and further prejudice, violence, and genocide.

I include these images to help understand the historical origins of contemporary racial categories. They serve as examples of the visual schemas and methods that were commonplace among Europeans during the Colonial and Enlightenment eras. I believe it is important to be able to examine such images in order to critique and dismantle racial and ethnic prejudices, cultures, and institutions today.

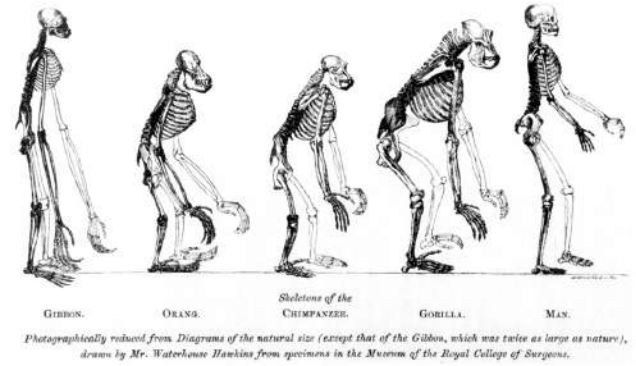
EUROPEAN COLONIALISM

Terra Nullius

- View of land without settlement or active cultivation as empty
- Language of conquest becomes language of discovery
  New World; Age of Discovery; Explorer

Manifest destiny

- Term specific to United States, but ideology widespread
- Colonized land is “culturally” empty
- Duty to “uncivilized” people to teach about true religion and proper society
- Characterized by Europeans as a burden or responsibility

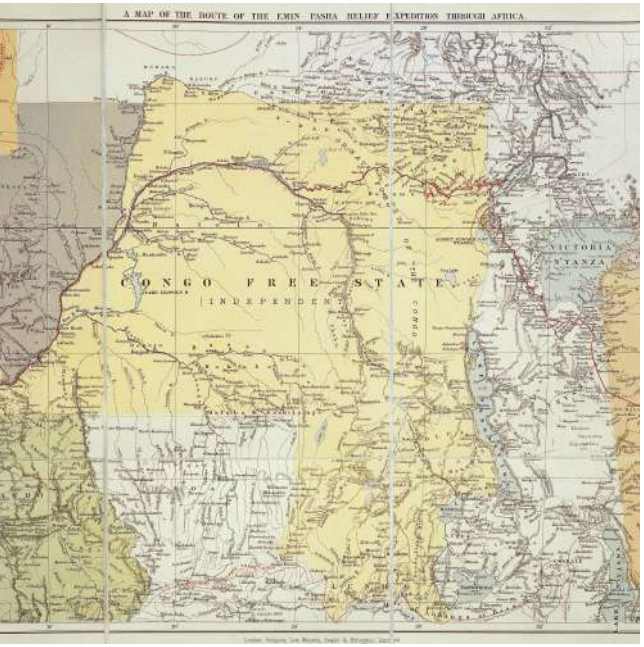


Skeletons of the

Photographically reduced from Diagrams of the natural size (except that of the Gibbon, which was twice as large as nature), drawn by Mr. Waterhouse Hawkins from specimens in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons.

Dehumanization

- Conceptualization of non-European populations as less than human
- Environmental determinism
- Justifies both *terra nullius* and manifest destiny



Geographical boundaries

- Colonial powers viewed geographical delineation as primary
- Not common in much of the world
- Boundaries used to frame discourse both between colonial powers and between colonizer/colonized

Destruction of cultures/societies

- **Genocide**
  Entire populations singled out and killed
  Cultural frameworks systematically destroyed
- **Internalization of colonial ideologies**
  Ideologies of colonization became accepted (to varying degrees) by colonized cultures

Indigenous displacement

- **Populated land claimed by settlers**
  Existing nations forcibly displaced or replaced
  Violently, formally, or informally
- **Complicated by settler struggles for independence from colonial metropoles**
  Simultaneous fight against colonial control and complicity in colonial domination

Race/racism

- **Modern understanding of race**
  Global slave trade made possible by and supported colonialism
  Contemporary racial categories defined by colonial European thought

Institutions

- **Many "standard" modern institutions emerged in a colonial context**
  Legal frameworks (e.g. property rights)
  Family
  Education
  Trade (domestic and international)

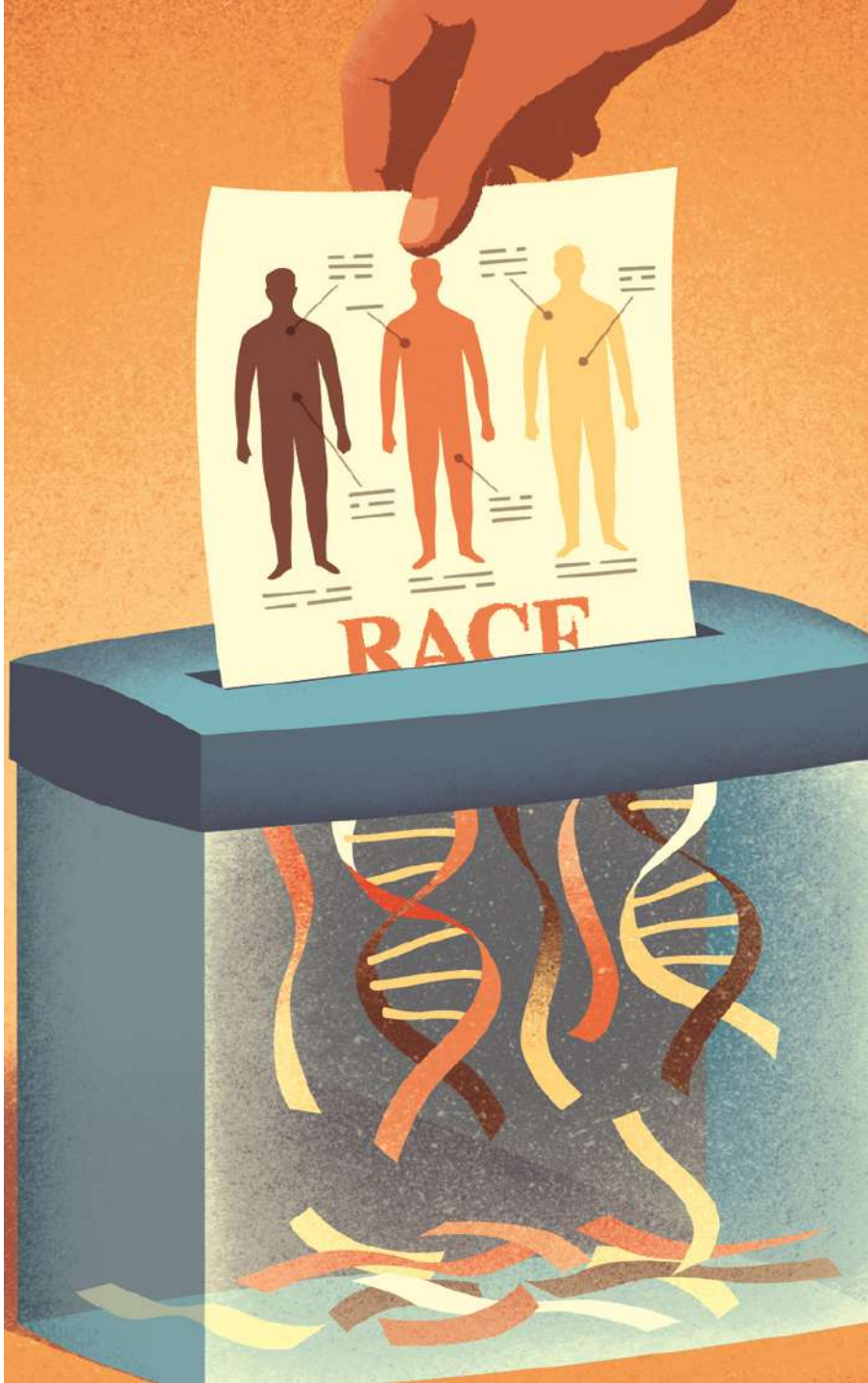
Current colonial presence in Canada

- **Continued British rule**
  Minimal real control, but symbolic and some de facto power
- **Violence against indigenous populations**
  Violent conflicts and disease killed large numbers of people living in Canada before European conquest
  Continued explicit and implicit violence
- **First Nations displacement**
  Existing nations forced to cede territory through conquest and (often reneged) treaty
- **First Nations sovereignty struggles**
  Continued view as subordinate and illegitimate
- **Cultural indoctrination**
  Widespread prejudice toward indigenous practices
  Residential schools

Indigenous (non-colonial) territories in Turtle Island (North America)

This map is a work in progress
For more information visit Native-Land.ca

Origins of racial & ethnic categories



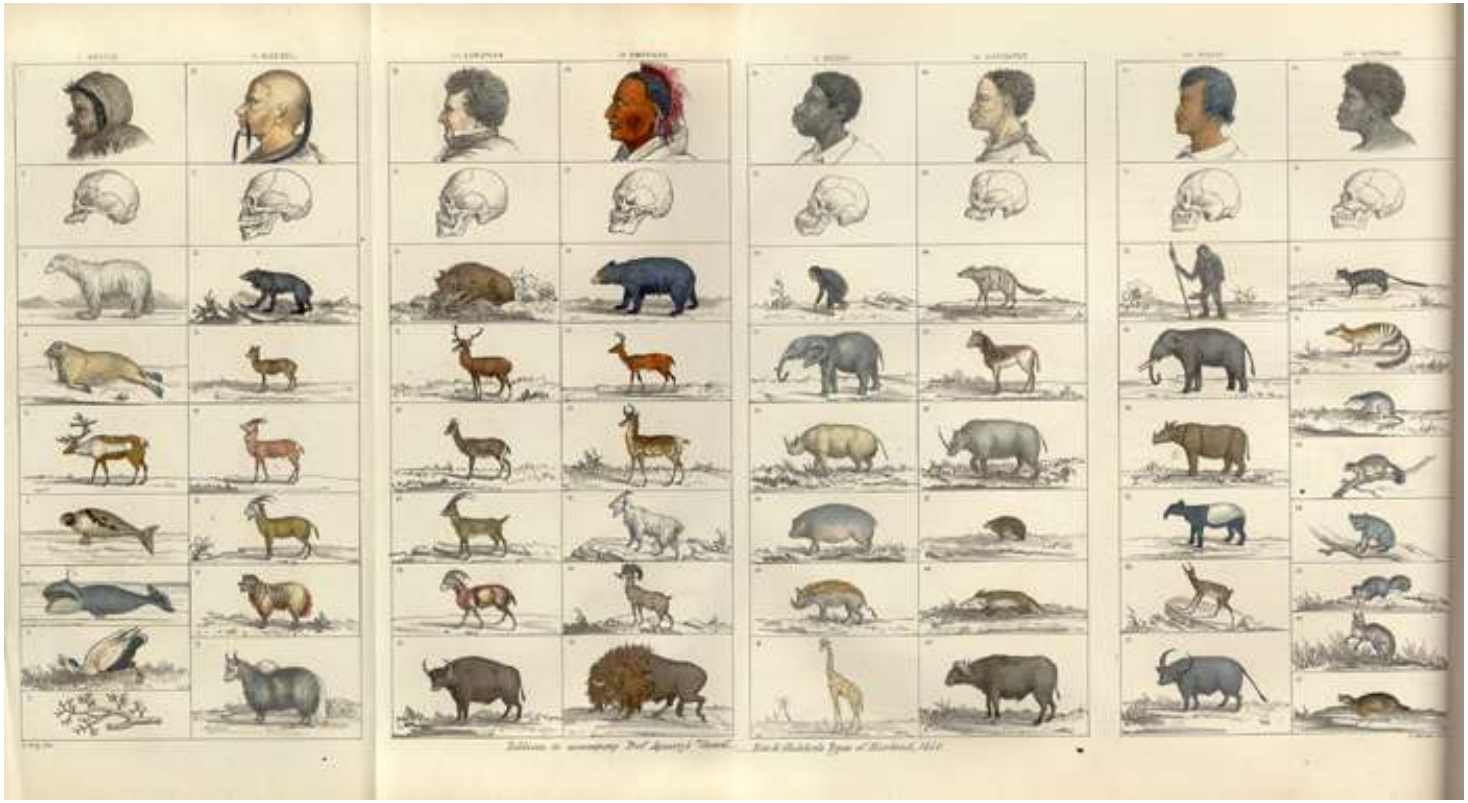
European enlightenment

Emphasis on *taxonomic descriptions*

- Hierarchically structured categorizations

Emphasis on *naturalistic classification*

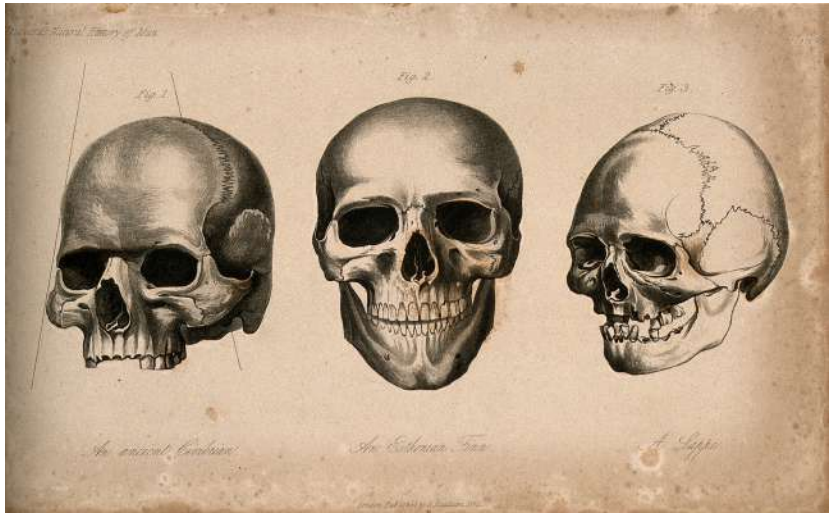
- Differentiation resulting from observable physical contexts



Catalogue of different human 'species', by Josia Nott (1854)

Colonial enterprises and Enlightenment thought led to the emergence of formalized (and inconsistent) definitions of "race"

Historically, highly variable and inconsistent, but based mainly on ***phenotype*** and/or ***ancient***



From Dr. Prichard's *Natural history of man* (1843)

Phenotype (physical description)

- Skin type; skeletal structure; hair form; facial proportions; …

Ancestry (Geography/genealogy)

- **Polygenism**: theory that different subspecies of human emerged from different geographies
- **Natural selection of race**: theory that natural races emerge from categorically different (and geographically located) selective forces

EXAMPLE: NAZI RACIALIZATION

Racial inheritance precisely delineated

(See also racial hypodescent in the United States and "Indian status" in Canada)

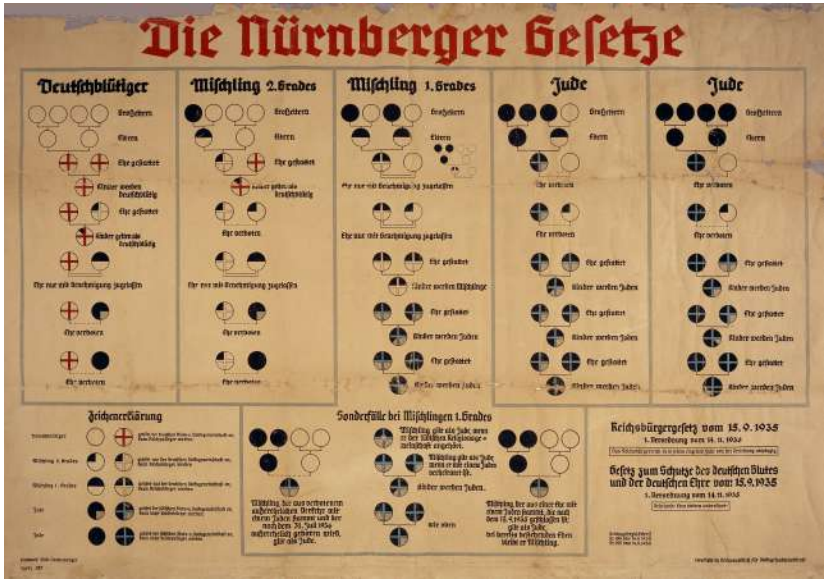


Chart describing Nazi "Nuremberg Laws" defining Jewish racial inheritance (1935)

Racialized physical criteria

(In cases of ambiguity, physical definition of"Jewishness" prevailed)

Nazi instrument used for measuring facial features

Failures of *biological* definitions of race:

Neither *phenotype* nor *genotype* can account for race

- Much more variety within any category of humans than between them
- Huge variety in human biology, but no sharp divisions

Historically, no consistent defintions

- Racial categories and criteria differ substantially depending on time and place
- The most *consistent* aspect of racial definitions is that they tend to support a society's dominant power structures

Current (strong) consensus among biologists and physical anthropologists is that there is no empirical basis for race as a *biological* reality

Race as social construct

- If race is not biological, does that mean race is not real?
- Race as a *social* rather than *biological* category
- Racial classification affects people's experiences, behavior, and perceptions

Racial categorization is *persistent*

- Changes to racial schema are slow
  - Connection to ethnicity and community
  - Perpetuated by structural inequality
  - Use as an administrative category by governments (and social scientists)

Racial categorization is *consequential*

- Dramatic influence on lived experience

Ethnicity

- Identification with a certain cultural, linguistic, religious, or national heritage
- Focus on *inheritance* of culture, traditions, history, and beliefs

Ethnicity versus race

- Tightly connected—distinction is fuzzy at best
- Race frequently defined socially in terms of physical characteristics (despite problems with that definition)
- Race tends to be defined *externally* (at least initially) while ethnicity tends to be defined *internally*
- Racial boundaries often sharper, more difficult to cross

Prejudice, inequality, & racism

RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

- ***Race***, ***ethnicity***, and ***nationality*** are important aspects of many people's identities
- Define ties to a community, sets of traditions, and shared culture and past
- True for racial categories, despite their oppressive origins and social ascription
- Complex relationship between internal culture and external hierarchies

Co-defined with power structures

- Race, ethnicity, and nationality are often employed in the definition and maintenance of ***power relations***
- Power relations between ***groups***
- Power relations between ***people***

Some modes of *formal* state oppression

States may employ racial, ethnic, and national categorization to justify formal policies of dominance

Mass homicide

- Holocaust
- First Nations, Inuit, Métis
- Congo Free State

Segregation

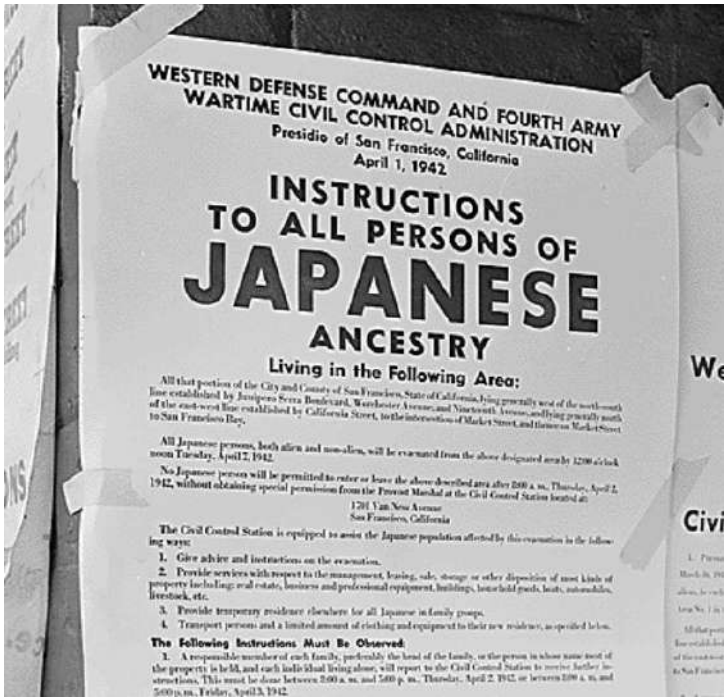
- South African Apartheid
- American slavery and "Jim Crow" laws
- Suffrage (voting) restrictions

Expulsion

- Acadian expulsion
- First Nations, Inuit, Métis
- Jews (1492) and Moriscos (1609) from Spain

Assimilation

- Residential schools
- Colonial religious conversion
- Banning behavior/dress (e.g. Loi 21)



Some modes of *non-state* oppression

Racial, ethnic, and national oppression exists outside of formal legal frameworks (but may still be supported by legal frameworks)

Physical violence

- Increased violence against racialized groups
- Selective enforcement of laws
  - MMIWG
  - Police violece
  - "Stand your ground" laws

Unequal opportunity

- Education
- Employment and wages
- Housing (redlining)
- Credit
- …

Everyday perceptions

- Discrimination in treatment and expectations
- "Status characteristics"
- Self-perception

Privelege

- Dominant groups define "normal"
- Marginalization of others
- De facto benefit
  - Trust versus distrust
  - High versus low expectations
  - Benefit of the doubt versus suspicion

Conflict theory

THREE THEORETICAL TRADITIONS

Throughout the semester, we will be be using ***three broad theoretical lenses*** to make sense of social phenomena:

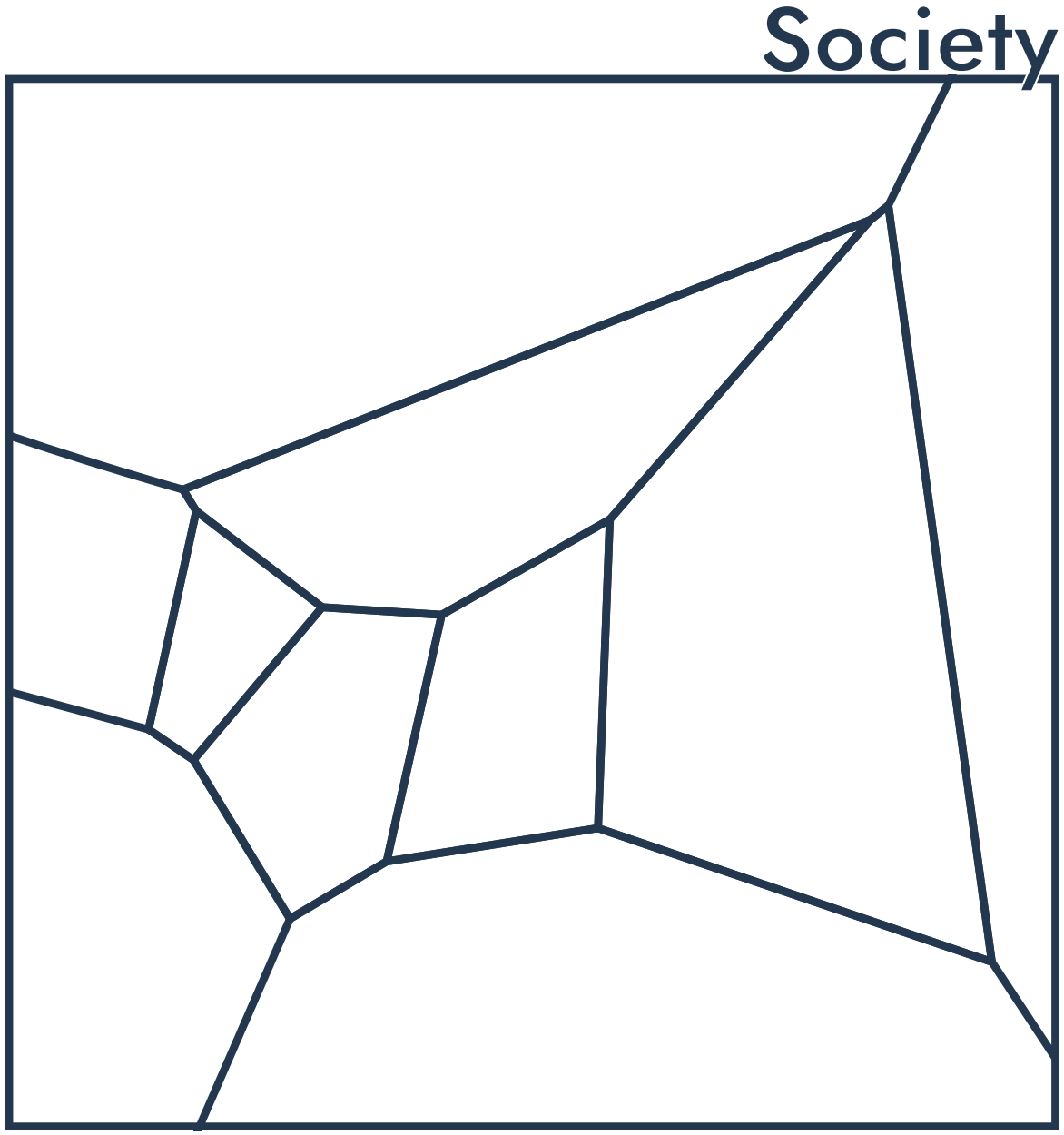
1. Structural functionalism

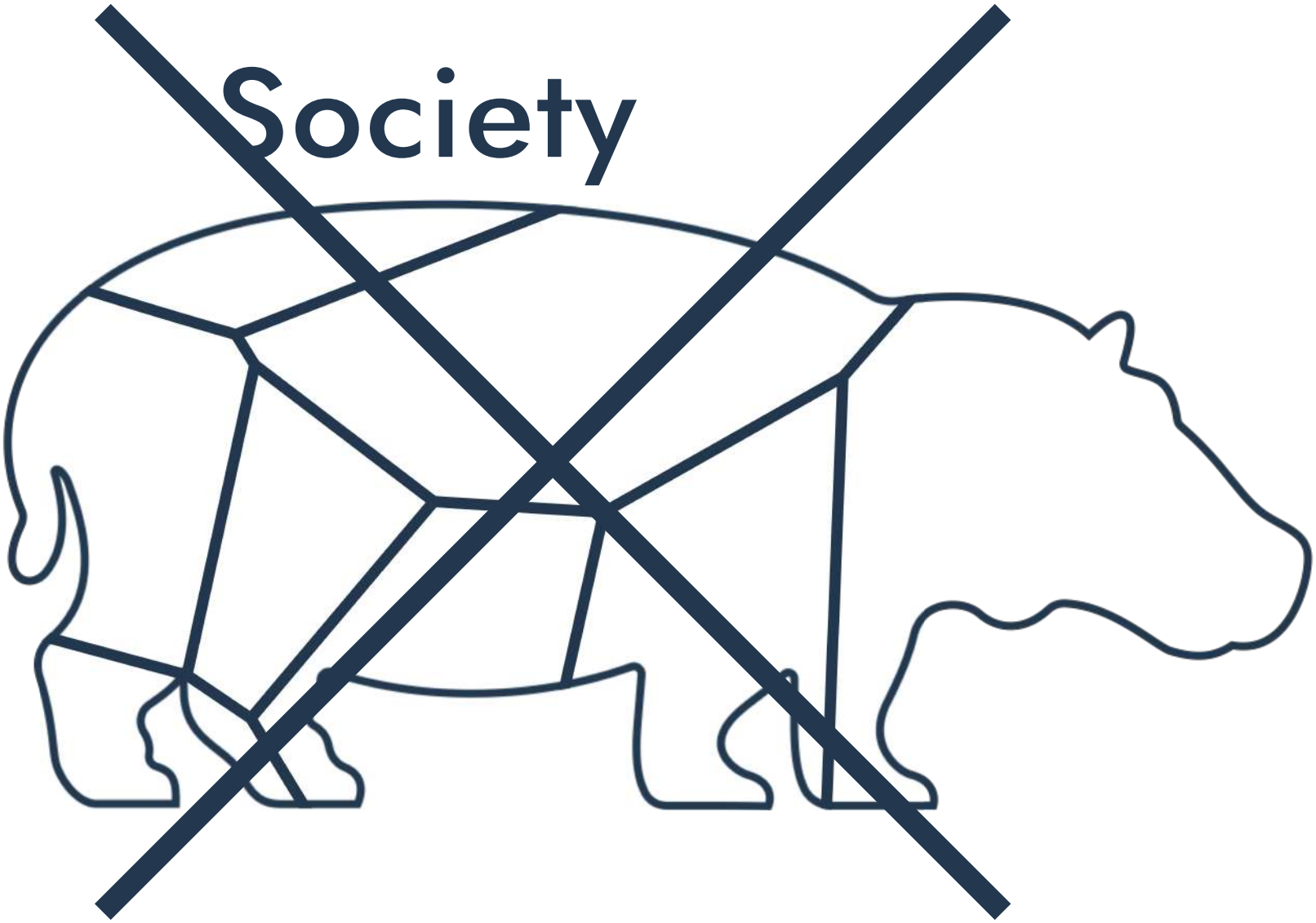
Today

2. Conflict theory

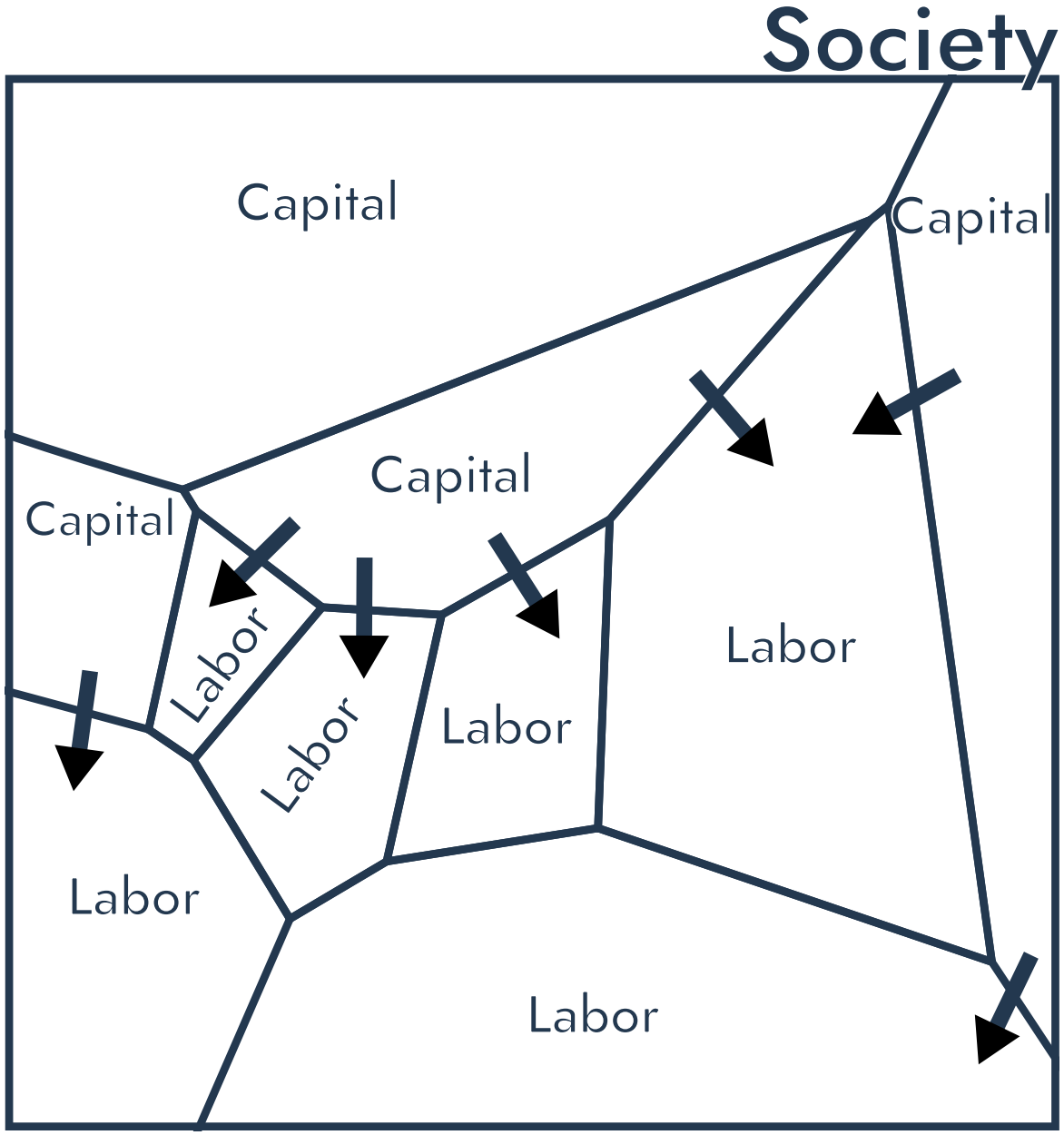
3. Symbolic interactionism

CONFLICT THEORY




Society

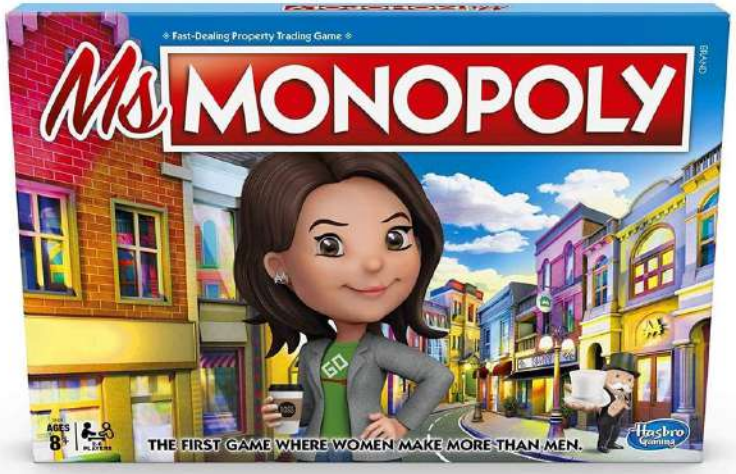
CONFLICT THEORY



Some major themes from conflict theory:

Alienation (Karl Marx)

- Humans relate to the products of their work in a very real way
- Capitalism disconnects workers from the goods they produce
- This necessarily yields feelings of alienation, dehumanizing workers



Ideology (Karl Marx)

- The ideology of the oppressors is adopted by oppressed
- Ownership of means of production yields material and ideological power
- Unified ideology of a culture is not due to a sense of collective belonging (as in Durkheim) but the imposition of that ideology by those in power

CONFLICT THEORY

Some major themes from conflict theory:

Authority (Max Weber)

- Domination does not always come from a direct use of force
- Government authority based on monopoly on "legitimate" means of force
- Authority is given as much as taken Rational-legal, traditional, and charismatic authority

Multi-faceted (Weber, Du Bois, …)

- Conflict is not just about capital versus labor
- Many dimensions of society are defined by conflict within and between them
  Class, status, party stratification (Weber) Race, "Double consciousness" (Du Bois)
- Many contemporary theoretical approaches can be thought of in the tradition of conflict theory (or critical theory)