

Your ninth blog entry, which you will post on [www.NetflixStudies.com](http://www.NetflixStudies.com), is due before **5:00 p.m. Sunday, July 1**. Before posting your comments (which should be at approximately **600 words**), you should [1] watch the first episodes of *Dear White People* (season one), *On My Block* (season one), and *Luke Cage* (season one); [2] listen to *KCRW's The Business* podcast (May 14, 2018 episode) featuring an interview with Justin Simien (creator of *Dear White People*); and [3] read the following online article:

- Nico Lang, “Luke Cage and the Racial Empathy Gap: ‘Why Do They Talk about Being Black All the Time?’” *Salon* (October 5, 2016): <https://www.salon.com/2016/10/05/luke-cage-and-the-racial-empathy-gap-why-do-they-talk-about-being-black-all-the-time/>

Since launching its first original series over five years ago, Netflix has earned a reputation for developing unusual, experimental programming catering to an increasingly diverse demographic of audiences, who are drawn to everything from “hardcore” science fiction shows like *Altered Carbon* to “lightweight” baking shows like *Nailed It!*. More importantly, the online media giant has also given persons of color, including African American, Asian American, and Latino/a writers and directors, opportunities to tell stories specific to their communities in ethnically mixed programs that would not have been greenlit by network television executives just a few decades ago. With examples ranging from *Master of None* (created by Alan Yang and starring Aziz Ansari) to *She’s Gotta Have it* (a small-screen adaptation of Spike Lee’s 1986 film of the same title), Netflix TV series are partly distinguished by their foregrounding of the kind of creative talent — both onscreen and offscreen — who more accurately represent U.S. multicultural life in the twenty-first century.

After watching the season one pilot episodes of *Dear White People*, *On My Block*, and *Luke Cage*, explain how **racial identity** and **multiculturalism** inform these TV series’ narrative worlds and shape the relationships of characters inhabiting them. Do these programs challenge traditional/stereotypical representations of ethnic minorities, as depicted in earlier American television shows? If so, which stereotypes in particular are being exposed and/or undermined? If not, then does the continued presence of such reductive images/ideas indicate a failure on the part of Netflix to adequately bring to light the sometimes benign yet systemic racism, discrimination, or prejudice that many minorities face on a daily basis in the United States? Do you think that exposure to these or any other politically progressive TV shows can change the minds/worldviews of bigoted viewers, or simply encourage the kind of intercultural understanding that is so needed in these divisive times?

In terms of these three programs’ spectatorial appeals, which characters did you find most compelling, and why? Are these characters’ problems/concerns relevant to you? Were you able to empathize or sympathize with their dilemmas, or did your own cultural identity/background make it difficult to identify with them? From an industrial standpoint, what kinds of pressures do many African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino/as face when trying to tell their stories through mass communication forms like television and film? Here you should draw upon (and cite) material presented in **the KCRW podcast of *The Business***, which features an interview with Justin Simien (creator and writer of *Dear White People*). What does Simien say about the “blackface party” that is depicted in the first/pilot episode of his Netflix series? And how was he made into a target of “coordinated attacks” online in the days following *Dear White People*’s April 2017 debut?

NOTE: the first 7½ minutes of the KCRW podcast are devoted to the Cannes Film Festival, Netflix, and the Harvey Weinstein fallout. The portion of the podcast in which Justin Simien, creator of *Dear White People*, is interviewed begins at the 7:45 mark. The entire interview runs for about 20 minutes.