How and why do states define, engineer and manipulate racial classification schema and with what effects? The Schematic State: Race, Transnationalism, and the Politics of the Census (forthcoming, Cambridge UP) explores this broader question by examining the political development of racial classifications on the national censuses of the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. Through a comparative analysis of over one hundred years of census-taking in these three countries of the Black Atlantic, the book maps the changing nature of the census from an instrument historically used to manage and control racial populations to its contemporary purpose as an important source of statistical information, employed for egalitarian ends. Emphasizing the constitutive and often transnationally-textured relationships among statistics, state-building, and race-making, the book argues that the modern state is neither the pluralist’s neutral arena nor the benign state of an imaginary post-racial world. Rather, the state is fundamentally schematic. This framework exposes race-making as a process marred by contestation and contradiction and demonstrates that the primary goal of the schematic state is to make the population legible, turning the fluid and politically contested substance of race into stable, identifiable categories to be used as the basis of law and policy.

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