SC303.01: The Social Construction of Whiteness
Spring 2010, Carney 005
Mondays and Wednesdays 4:30-5:45 p.m.

Prof. Deborah Piatelli
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Office hours: Mondays 2:30-4:00 p.m.
Thursdays 4:30-6:00 p.m.

Course Description
This course explores the social construction of race through the lens of whiteness. Why talk about whiteness? Contrary to popular belief that we are now living in a post-racial society, systemic racial discrimination and inequality persists. By considering whiteness as both a race and historical system of privilege, we can gain a deeper understanding of the persistence of racism that can better inform our strategies to end it. Over the course of the semester, we will examine the distribution of privilege within American society at both the interpersonal and institutional levels, as well as consider how whiteness operates within the social constructs of class and gender. Through writing and in-class group discussion, you will examine your own identities and lived experiences and consider how consciously or unconsciously they are affected by these processes, as well as consider strategies for challenging racism and privilege at the individual and structural levels. Since this course deals with topics that are emotional at a gut level, it is important that we respect and listen to each other’s views. I try to encourage and maintain a classroom dynamic that is conducive to honest, open discussion. Although these topics may be uncomfortable to talk about, it is important to realize that we can learn a great deal from each other through active listening and dialoguing.

Course Objectives
* Gain a deeper understanding of the historical relationship between white privilege and inequality.
* Be able to clearly define and differentiate the concepts of prejudice and racism.
* Describe privilege and racism in its individual and institutional forms in contemporary society.
* Identify and articulate your personal feelings, fears, attitudes and behaviors about the issues of privilege and racism by exploring your own experiences and identity development.
* Conduct a mini-sociological research project on how whiteness operates in everyday discourse.
* Develop specific strategies designed to challenge racism on individual and structural levels.
**Required Texts (available in bookstore and on reserve)**


**Course Requirements**

**Class participation (25% of your grade)**

Class participation is required as much of the learning will take place in the classroom through participation in class discussions. It is expected that when you are in class you will participate. Students are expected to come to each class session having completed the assigned readings and prepared to discuss the material. I will take note of the frequency of your participation as well as excessive absences and lateness as this has an effect on group discussion.

**Seven (7) Reflection Papers (25% of your grade)**

I am asking that you submit a reflection paper to me at the end of each week as noted on the syllabus (for a total of 7 reflection papers). Note that the frequency of these papers will decrease as you begin to write your thematic papers (see below for a description of those papers). These papers should be a maximum of three (3), double-spaced pages and emailed to me no later than Friday at 4:00 p.m. for the week they are due. In these papers, you may discuss how you are interacting with the course material and discussions (the ideas presented by the authors, the way that you are integrating the readings into your thinking, they way your personal experiences may/may not related to the issues raised by the readings/discussions). The writing can be informal, but should be thoughtful, reflective and connected to the readings and discussion. These papers should NOT simply be a summary of a reading or film, but rather enable you to relate the readings/film/class discussion to each other, to readings from other weeks, and/or your own life. You may also explore ideas that may not be covered in class or that you may be hesitant to assert verbally. These papers can focus on one class session or both class sessions for that particular week.
Possible questions to think about when writing: How do the readings, films, and/or discussions make me feel? Do I sometimes feel uncomfortable? Why? Do the readings make me think differently about my own life experiences? Does the author raise issues I have not thought about before? Is there something that has been bothering me that I have felt reluctant to bring up in class? Is the class raising issues I want to learn more about? Is this class making me think about things in new ways?

Each paper will be evaluated based on its thoughtfulness, insight, and engagement with the course material and discussion. Statements will be evaluated on a weekly basis, and I may email you brief comments. While your grade will be computed at the end of the semester, you can see me to inquire about your grade to date at any time. I will draw on your reflections (anonymously) in the classroom to foster discussion. I also encourage you to share your reflections either in small group discussions or in the larger classroom discussion.

Four (4) Thematic Papers (50% of your grade)
I am asking you to complete four (4) short papers (approximately 5-7, double-spaced pages) on a particular theme discussed in class. These papers are more formal than the reflection papers and MUST draw on readings from the course syllabus. Thematic papers #3 and #4 also include presentations. See Blackboard Vista for further descriptions on these assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Paper #</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 (10%)</td>
<td>Due Wednesday, February 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>#2 (10%)</td>
<td>Due Wednesday, March 17</td>
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<tr>
<td>#3 and informal</td>
<td>Due Monday, April 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>presentation (15%)</td>
<td>Due Wednesday, May 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>#4 and formal</td>
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<tr>
<td>presentation (15%)</td>
<td>Due Wednesday, May 5</td>
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Late work. If you have extenuating circumstances, you must come see me BEFORE the due date to discuss a possible extension; otherwise you will lose 5 points each day the assignment is late.

A note on academic integrity
Sharing of information and ideas are encouraged. However, when working on individual assignments, it is expected that you do your own work. In cases where you are required to use published work, you must cite the work. If you plagiarize or cheat in some other form, you will fail the assignment; repeated episodes will result in failure of the course. If there are any questions on proper method of citing, please see me. For more information on Boston College’s academic integrity policy, please visit: www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity.
Course Schedule

Wednesday, January 20
How do we talk constructively about race?

Monday, January 25
(continued)

**Readings:**
* Tatum, Chapter 2 (The Complexity of Identity)
* Tatum, Chapter 10 (Embracing a Cross-Racial Dialogue)

I: THEORIZING RACE AND WHITENESS

Wednesday, January 27
Why study race and whiteness?

**Readings:**
* Rothenberg, Introduction; Chapter 1 in Part one (Richard Dyer, The Matter of Whiteness)

Monday, February 1
(continued)

Wednesday, February 3
Social construction of race
Researching race

**Reading:**
Monday, February 8
Historical constructions of whiteness

Film in class: Race: The Power of an Illusion, Episode 2: The Story We Tell (56m)

Readings:
* Rothenberg, Chapter 7 in Part two (Charles Mills, Global White Supremacy)

Wednesday, February 10
Reflection Due Friday
(continued)

Monday, February 15
Fluidity of whiteness

Readings:
* Rothenberg, Chapter 4 in Part two (Neil Foley, Becoming Hispanic: Mexican Americans and Whiteness)

Wednesday, February 17
Reflection Due Friday
Prejudice, racism and privilege

Film in class: Tim Wise on White Privilege: Racism, White Denial & the Costs of Inequality (57m)

Monday, February 22
(continued)

Readings:
* Rothenberg, Chapter 3 in Part three (Peggy McIntosh, White Privilege)
* Tatum, Chapter 1 (Defining Racism)
* Trepagnier, Chapter 1 (Rethinking Racism) and Chapter 4 (The Production of Institutional Racism)
Wednesday, February 24

Thematic Paper #1 Due

Heterogeneity of whiteness

Readings:
* Rothenberg, Chapter 1 in Part three (Stephanie M. Wildman and Adrienne D. Davis, Making Systems of Privilege Visible)

SPRING BREAK MARCH 1-5

II. RACISM AND PRIVILEGE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Monday, March 8
Exploring our racial identities

Readings:
* Tatum, Part II (Understanding Blackness in a White Context, all chapters); Part III (Understanding Whiteness in a White Context, Chapter 6); Part IV (Beyond Black and White, all chapters)
* Trepagnier, Chapter 5 (Race Awareness Matters)
* Wise, Tim. Entire book

Wednesday, March 10
(cont.)
Monday, March 15
White talk

Readings:
  “The Style of Color Blindness: How to Talk Nasty about Minorities without Sounding
  Racist.” Pp. 53-74 in *Racism without Racists: Colorblind Racism and the Persistence of
  Publishers. **LIBRARY RESERVE**
  **LIBRARY RESERVE**
* Trepagnier, Chapter 2 (Silent Racism)

Wednesday, March 17
Thematic Paper #2 Due

Monday, March 22
Whiteness, interracial relationships and the family

Readings:
  Boston: Beacon Press. **LIBRARY RESERVE**
  Authenticity, Mutuality, and Social Transformation in Cross-Racial Relationships.” Pp. 83-
  104 in *Can We Talk About Race?* Boston: Beacon Press. **LIBRARY RESERVE**
  92 in *The Ethics of Transracial Adoption.* New York: Cornell Press. **LIBRARY RESERVE**

Wednesday, March 24
Reflection Due Friday
Whiteness on the college campus

Film in class: Some Place I Call Home: Racism on the Trinity College Campus (70m)

Readings:
  Black Students in White Colleges.” *Journal of Black Studies,* 22: no. 4:546-578. **LIBRARY
  RESERVE**
  “Enacting Diverse Learning Environments: Improving the Climate for Racial/Ethnic
  8. Washington, D.C.: The George Washington University, Graduate School of Education and
  Human Development. **LIBRARY RESERVE**
  Ideologies on Students of Color: Intergroup Relations at a Predominately White University.”
  *Journal of Negro Education,* 69, 1, 74-91. **LIBRARY RESERVE**
Monday, March 29
Whiteness on the college campus (continued)

Wednesday, March 31
Whiteness and affirmative action

**Film in class:** True Colors (18m)

**Readings:**
* Tatum, Part III (Understanding Whiteness in a White Context, Chapter 7)

EASTER BREAK APRIL 1-5 (but we still have class on the 5th)

Monday, April 5
Thematic Paper #3 “presentations”

Wednesday, April 7
Whiteness and racial profiling

**Reading:**
* Lehr, Dick. Entire book

Monday, April 12
Whiteness and the educational system

**Film (on your own):** The Problem We All Live With: Inequalities between Boston Urban and Suburban Schools. (22m)

**Readings:**
Wednesday, April 14  
What to do with whiteness

Readings:
* Rothenberg, Chapter 2 in Part four (Joe Feagin and Hernan Vera, Confronting One’s Own Racism); Chapter 3 in Part four (Paul Kivel, How White People Can Serve as Allies to People of Color in the Struggle to End Racism)  
* Trepagnier, Chapter 6 (Antiracist Practice); Chapter 7 (Epilogue)  

Monday, April 19  
No Class, Marathon Monday

Wednesday, April 21  
(continued)  

Monday, April 26  
Thematic Paper #4 presentations

Wednesday, April 28  
Thematic Paper #4 presentations

Monday, May 3  
Thematic Paper #4 presentations

Wednesday, May 5  
Thematic Paper #4 presentations  
Thematic Paper #4 Due