SC303.01: The Social Construction of Whiteness
Fall 2010, Devlin 227
Mondays 4:00-6:20 p.m.

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Office hours: Tues/Thurs 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.

Four (4) Reflection Papers (15% 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 4 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. See Blackboard Vista for a further description of these papers.

Three (3) Thematic Papers (40% of your grade)
I am asking you to complete three (3) 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 in a more detailed manner. See Blackboard Vista for further descriptions on these assignments.

| Thematic paper #1 Historical Memories of Race (10%) | Due Monday, October 25 |
| Thematic paper #2 Racial Identity Development (15%) | Due Monday, November 8 |
| Thematic paper #3 Observing and Analyzing Racetalk (15%) | Due Monday, November 22 |

Action Project and Presentation (20% of your grade)
We will discuss possible ideas for action projects and expectations on the content and format of your presentation to the class. See Blackboard Vista for further thoughts on this assignment.

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

Monday, September 13
How do we talk constructively about race?

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

I: THEORIZING RACE AND WHITENESS

Monday, September 20
Why study race and whiteness?
The social construction of race

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

Monday, September 27
Researching race
Historical constructions of whiteness

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

Reading:
* Rothenberg, Chapter 7 in Part two (Charles Mills, Global White Supremacy)
Monday, October 4
Historical constructions of whiteness (continued)
Fluidity of whiteness

Readings:

Monday, October 11 - Columbus Day No Class

Monday, October 18
Prejudice, racism and privilege

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

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)

Monday, October 25
Heterogeneity of whiteness

Readings: CHOOSE LEW OR TWINE
* Rothenberg, Chapter 1 in Part three (Stephanie M. Wildman and Adrienne D. Davis, Making Systems of Privilege Visible)
* Wise, Tim. Entire book
II. RACISM AND PRIVILEGE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Monday, November 1
Exploring our racial identities

*Readings: CHOOSE RENN, RODRIGUEZ OR WONG*


* 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)


Monday, November 8
Thematic Paper #2 Due
White talk
Whiteness, interracial relationships and the family

*Readings:


* Trepagnier, Chapter 2 (Silent Racism)

HAPPY THANKSGIVING
Wednesday, November 15

Whiteness and racial profiling
Whiteness on the college campus

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

Readings:
* Lehr, Dick. Entire book

Monday, November 22

Thematic Paper #3 Due

Whiteness and affirmative action
Whiteness and the educational system

Film (on your own): True Colors (20m). Two parts
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyL5EcAwB9c
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOS3BBmUxvs

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

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

Monday, November 29

Presentations

Monday, December 6

Presentations