SC303.01: The Social Construction of Whiteness  
Spring 2011, Carney 105A  
Wednesdays 12:30-2:50 p.m.

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Office hours:  
Tuesdays 4:30-6:00pm  
Wednesdays 3:30-5:00pm

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 through an action project focused on racial justice.

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 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 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 the readings from the course syllabus in a more detailed manner. See Blackboard for further descriptions on these assignments.

- **Thematic paper #1 Historical Memories of Race (10%)** Due Wednesday, February 23
- **Thematic paper #2 Racial Identity Development (15%)** Due Wednesday, March 23
- **Thematic paper #3 Observing and Analyzing Racetalk (15%)** Due Wednesday, April 6

**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 for further guidelines 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](http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity).
Course Schedule

Wednesday, January 19
How do we talk constructively about race?

Reflection Due Friday

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

I: THEORIZING RACE AND WHITENESS

Wednesday, January 26
Why study race and whiteness?
The social construction of race

Reflection Due Friday

Readings:
* Rothenberg, Introduction; Chapter 1 in Part one (Richard Dyer, The Matter of Whiteness)
Wednesday, February 2
Researching race
Historical constructions of whiteness

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

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

Wednesday, February 9
Historical constructions of whiteness (continued)
Fluidity of whiteness

Reading:

Wednesday, February 16
Prejudice, racism and privilege

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

Reading:
* 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 23
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

Wednesday, March 2
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)

SPRING BREAK—NO CLASSES MARCH 7-MARCH 11
Wednesday, March 16
White talk/Race talk
Whiteness, interracial relationships and the family

Readings:
* Trepagnier, Chapter 2 (Silent Racism)
Wednesday, March 23
Whiteness on the college campus

Film in class: Some Place I Call Home: Racism on the Trinity College Campus

Readings:

Wednesday, March 30
Whiteness and racial profiling

Film in class: 9500 Liberty

Readings:
* Lehr, Dick. Entire book

Wednesday, April 6
(continued)

Wednesday, April 13
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)

**Wednesday, April 20**
(continued)

**Wednesday, April 27**
Presentations

**Wednesday, May 4**
Presentations