UN263.01: Journey to Racial Justice Advocacy
Spring 2014, Stokes 145N
Thursdays, 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

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Seminar Description

This one-credit, discussion-based seminar (pass/fail) is sponsored by the Office of AHANA Student Programs and the Dean of Arts and Sciences and will meet once per week for two hours for a total of ten weeks. This seminar will facilitate the development of a critical racial consciousness by building a cognitive understanding of racism and provide the space to critically reflect upon one’s life experiences in the context of privilege. This is a crucial step to becoming a racial justice advocate. Contrary to popular belief that we are now living in a post-racial society, systemic racial discrimination and inequality persists. Discussions will explore the social construction of race and its implications of society through the lens of whiteness. 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. Through writing and in-class group discussion in both small and larger groups, students will examine their own identities and lived experiences and consider how consciously or unconsciously they are affected by these processes, as well as discuss and develop strategies for challenging racism and privilege at the individual and structural levels. Students will come prepared to discuss scheduled subject matter, but each session will provide the opportunity for plenty of free-form 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. Therefore classroom participation is a mandatory requirement for this course. In order to move from reflection to dialogue to action, each student will be asked to participate in an action of their choice and present their experiences engaging in racial justice advocacy.

“Hidden biases are bits of knowledge that are stored in our brains because we encounter them so frequently in our cultural environments. Once lodged in our minds, hidden biases can influence our behavior toward members of particular social groups, but we remain oblivious to their influence. Most people find it unbelievable that their behavior can be guided by mental content of which they are unaware.” [Banaji and Greenwald, 2013 in Blindspot, pp. xii]
Seminar Objectives

- **Increase one’s cultural competency**: Identify and articulate your personal feelings, fears, attitudes and behaviors about the issues of privilege and racism in order to build a better understanding of self. Develop an empathetic understanding of a perspective different from your own and demonstrate receptiveness to being challenged on views and beliefs. Recognize and discuss how white privilege operates in everyday discourse.

- **Build the components of a racial consciousness**: Explain the historical relationship between white privilege, inequality and racism and how it has and continues to structure contemporary society. Understand one’s own racism and racial prejudices and how that influences one’s behavior and interactions with others. Articulate your own path to racial conscious and identify steps for becoming more racially aware.

- **Develop a racial justice advocate identity**: Describe the ways in which you can be a critical racial justice advocate in your everyday life. Actively participate in racial justice during the semester and express increased motivation to be actively engaged in racial justice during/after college life.

Seminar Requirements

**Class Attendance and Participation (50% 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 you come to each class session having completed the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss the material. You will also be asked periodically to bring a discussion question to a class session. The quality of your participation as well as absences and lateness will be noted as this has an effect on group discussion.

**Structured Reflection Papers and Journal (20% of your grade)**
You will be asked to keep a typed-written journal throughout the semester. This journal will serve as a tool for personal reflection, but also provide the basis for sharing experiences within the class sessions. In this journal, you should 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, the 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 draw upon the reading and discussion. Your journal should NOT simply be a summary of a reading or class discussion, but rather demonstrate how you are relating the readings/class discussions 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. Possible questions to think about when writing: How do the readings and/or discussions make me feel? Do I sometimes feel uncomfortable? Why? Do the readings and discussions make me think differently about my own life experiences? Does the author or class discussions 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?
You will be asked to write four, short structured reflections within your journal. Your journal, containing both your unstructured and structured reflections, will be **emailed to Prof. Piatelli no later than 4:00 p.m. on the due date listed below.** See Handout/Blackboard for a further description of these reflections and we will go over the requirements in class well before the due date.

- **Structured Reflection 1**
  - Due: Friday, January 24
- **Structured Reflection 2**
  - Due: Friday, January 31
- **Structured Reflection 3**
  - Due: Friday, February 14
- **Structured Reflection 4/Final journal**
  - Due: Friday, March 21

**Action Project and Presentation (30% of your grade)**

Students will be required to participate in an action during the semester and reflect on that experience, in the context of white privilege, through journal writing, class discussion and a classroom presentation. See Handout/Blackboard for further guidelines on this assignment and we will discuss this project frequently during the semester.

**Grading scale and late work:** This course is pass/fail. In order to best support your learning and evaluate the professor’s effectiveness in the classroom, it is imperative that you submit your work on time for feedback. If you have extenuating circumstances that will prevent you from doing so, you must come see Prof. Piatelli BEFORE the due date to discuss a possible extension; otherwise late papers will not be accepted.

**A note on academic integrity**

For 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).

**Required Texts (available in bookstore and on course reserve)**


**For Reading Throughout the Semester (entire books available on course reserves)**


*Schmidt, Christine. (2010). From within: Practicing white antiracism in public schools. In Bonnie Berman Cushing, et.al. (Eds.), *Accountability and white anti-racist organizing: Stories from our work* (pp. 44-61). LIBRARY RESERVE

*Thompson, Cooper, et.al. (2003). Challenging the system from within. In *White men challenging racism: 35 personal stories* (pp. 175-248). LIBRARY RESERVE
Seminar Schedule

Thursday, January 16
Why are we uncomfortable talking about race and racism? How can we talk constructively about race? What does it mean to be a racial justice advocate?

The goals for session one are to set the tone for the remaining weeks by allowing students to express their personal fears in talking about race and define, collectively, guidelines for discussion and interaction. This class session will also ask students to reflect upon their role in working for racial justice in the many aspects of their lives, setting the groundwork for their semester action project. Through these discussions, students will begin to explore their ideas and definitions of privilege and racism that will continue in the next session.

Required Readings:
* Rothenberg, Introduction; Chapter 1 in Part one (Richard Dyer, The matter of whiteness)
* Tatum, Chapter 1 (Defining racism), Chapter 10 (Embracing a cross-racial dialogue)

Thursday, January 23
Reflection #1 Due Friday
What does it mean to view your life experiences through the lens of whiteness? How does an understanding of white privilege enhance our understanding of racism? Why should all people care about ending racism?

In this class session, we will build upon our definitions of privilege and racism and students will begin to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between the historical construction of whiteness and its contemporary forms as well as the costs of racism for not only people of color, but whites and society at large.

Required Film and Reading:
* Rothenberg, Chapter 2 in Part two (Phillip C. Wander, et.al., The roots of racial classification) and Chapter 3 in Part four (Peggy McIntosh, White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack)
Thursday, January 30

Reflection #2 Due Friday

What is racial identity and why is it important in facilitating productive dialogue and working against racism? What were you taught about race and racism? What are your own stereotypes about race?

Through reading, reflection and discussion, these two sessions will assist students further in developing a racial consciousness by exploring the process of racial identity development and consider the ways in which they have learned about race. Students will be asked to vocalize their ‘racism’ and reflect on how their own racial identity and beliefs have been shaped as well as those pivotal moments that have moved them forward in developing their racial consciousness. We will also discuss the role that understanding racial identity plays in facilitating productive dialogue with others and what practices we can engage in to move beyond fear, guilt, anger, and defensiveness that often paralyzes one from taking action. These sessions will draw heavily on the students’ experiences and journal writing as well as material from various research studies.

Required Readings:

* Tatum, Chapter 2 (The complexity of identity), 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)

Thursday, February 6

(continued)

Required Readings: CHOOSE ONE

* Carbado, Devon and Mitu Gulati. (2013). Acting out the racial double bind (or being black like Obama). In Acting white? Rethinking race in post-racial America (pp. 1-20). LIBRARY RESERVE
* Chesler, Mark, et.al. (2005). White students in the university. In Challenging racism in higher education (pp. 79-98). LIBRARY RESERVE
* García, José. (2007). The hatred within. In Andrew Garrod, et.al. (Eds.), Mi voz, mi vida: Latino college students tell their life stories (pp. 72-88). LIBRARY RESERVE
* Lee, Leah. (2007). Korea is my heart and soul, America is my mind and spirit. In Andrew Garrod and Robert Kilkenny (Eds.), Balancing two worlds: Asian American college students tell their life stories (pp. 108-122). LIBRARY RESERVE
* Torres, Vasti and LeManuel Bitsoi. (2011). American Indian college students. In Michael J. Cuyjet, et.al. (Eds), Multiculturalism on campus: Theory, models, and practices for understanding diversity and creating inclusion (pp. 169-190). LIBRARY RESERVE
* Wong, Frieda and Richard Haligan. (2006). The model minority: Bane or blessing for Asian Americans? Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 34, 34-
Thursday, February 13

How do I recognize racism and dialogue with those who hold racist views? How does discussing whiteness and race enhance our understanding of inequality frequently attributed to social class?

These three sessions will draw upon readings, reflection, and discussion to articulate further how privilege and racism work in both its individual and institutional forms. As race and racism is often discounted in favor of a social class-based analysis of inequality, we will also discuss the relationship between white privilege, social class, and inequality. In order to develop one’s ability to facilitate productive discussions across difference, students will engage in discussions and role playing utilizing case studies and research from the literature on white attitudes and behaviors regarding topics such as affirmative action, racial profiling, stereotyping, cross-racial relationships, etc. Additional readings will be recommended depending on which topics students wish to discuss. Students will also be provided with an extensive resource list containing films and readings.

**Required Readings:**


Thursday, February 20

(continued)

**Required Readings:**


**SPRING BREAK- NO CLASS FEBRUARY 27 AND MARCH 6**

Thursday, March 13

(continued)

Thursday, March 20

How was racism challenged through your action project? What do you think needs to happen to eliminate racism from our society and what role do you see yourself playing in that effort?

These three class sessions will reflect back on the semester and offer each student the time to present their work for the semester and most importantly discuss their role in working for racial justice in the many aspects of their lives. The class will dialogue on specific strategies we can engage in to challenge racism on individual and institutional levels.

Reflection #4 Due Friday
Thursday, March 27
(continued)

Thursday, April 3
(continued)