Seminar Description

This discussion-based seminar 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 draw upon the work of critical race scholars and theoretically and practically examine the distribution of privilege within American society, as well as consider how whiteness operates within the social constructs of class and gender.

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.

This seminar will encourage reflection and questioning of how and why we think in certain ways and the influence (intended or unintended) this can have on our interactions. 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. Be able to clearly define and differentiate the concepts of prejudice and racism. 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 critical racial justice advocate in your everyday life. Conduct a mini-sociological research project on how whiteness, privilege, and racism operates in everyday life. Describe and develop specific strategies designed to challenge racism on both the individual and institutional levels through an action project focused on racial justice.

Seminar 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 and come to each class session having completed the assigned readings and prepared to discuss the material. The quality of your participation as well as absences and lateness will be noted as this has an effect on group discussion. More than one unexcused absence* from class will result in points deducted from your class participation grade.

Four (4) Reflection Papers (10% of your grade)
You will be asked to submit a reflection paper to Prof. Piatelli 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. These papers should be a maximum of three (3), double-spaced pages and emailed to Prof. Piatelli no later than Friday at 11:59 p.m. for the week they are due. Dates are listed on the course schedule.

In these papers, 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 papers should NOT simply be a summary of a reading, film or class discussion, but rather demonstrate how you are relating 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.

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. I may draw on your reflections (anonymously) in the classroom to foster discussion. I also encourage you to share your reflections in the classroom.

Four (4) Thematic Papers (45% of your grade)
You will be asked to complete four, longer, essay-based papers on a particular theme discussed in class. These papers are more formal than the reflection papers and MUST draw on and cite the readings from the course syllabus in a more detailed manner. These guides, along with page requirements, can be found on Canvas.

- Thematic paper #1 Historical Memories of Race (10%)  
  Due: Friday, February 26
- Thematic paper #2 Racial Identity Awareness (10%)  
  Due: Friday, March 18
- Thematic paper #3 Observing and Analyzing Racetalk (15%)  
  Due: Friday, April 8
- Thematic paper #4 Institutional Racism (10%)  
  Due: Friday, May 6

Action Project and Presentation (20% of your grade)
This assignment involves working with a small group of your classmates (3-4 students) in analyzing and presenting a critical issue regarding race. As a group, you will develop and present your project to the class on one of the class presentation sessions (see course schedule). Presentations will be scheduled in 30-minute increments. As a part of your presentation, you should plan to leave at least 5 minutes for class discussion. (We may adjust timeframe depending on how many presentations we have scheduled for the semester.) More information on this assignment will be forthcoming during the semester and a copy can also be found on Canvas.
Required Texts (available in bookstore and on reserve)


Seminar Policies

*Grading scale and late work:* 95-100 (A); 90-94 (A-); 87-89 (B+); 84-86 (B); 80-83 (B-); 77-79 (C+); 74-76 (C); 70-73 (C-), etc. As the assignments build upon your knowledge throughout the course, it is important that you complete your assignments on time so that you are able to receive feedback to improve your learning and I can evaluate my effectiveness in the classroom.

*If you have extenuating circumstances that will prevent you from meeting the above requirements, you must make an appointment to discuss your situation with Prof. Piatelli. You may be required to provide a letter from your health services provider or Dean if you are seeking an excused absence from class or extra time for your assignments. **Otherwise, you will lose 5 points each day the assignment is late.**

**Students requiring accommodations**

If you have a learning disability and are requesting accommodations for this course, please register with Dr. Kathy Duggan (dugganka@bc.edu), Associate Director, Connors Family Learning Center. For other types of disabilities, register with Ms. Paulette Durrett (paulette.durrett@bc.edu), Assistant Dean for Students with Disabilities. Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for all accommodations.

**Academic integrity**

All students are expected to understand the university’s policy about academic integrity. It can be found at [www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/integrity.html](http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/integrity.html). Any violations of this policy will result in penalties prescribed by the university. A list of writing resources to assist you in citing sources is available from the library and can be found at [http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/citation/formatting.html](http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/citation/formatting.html).
Seminar Schedule

I: THEORIZING AND DEFINING WHITENESS

Monday, January 25
Dialoging about whiteness

**Required Readings:**
* Tatum, Chapter 2 (The complexity of identity)
* Tatum, Chapter 10 (Embracing a cross-racial dialogue)
* Rothenberg, Chapter 3 in Part Four (How white people can serve as allies to people of color in the struggle to end racism)

**Recommended Reading:**

Monday, February 1
Social construction of whiteness

**Required Readings:**
* Rothenberg, Introduction; Chapter 3 in Part One (The invisible whiteness of being)

**Recommended Reading:**
Monday, February 8

**Historical construction of whiteness**

**Film in class:** Race: The power of an illusion, Episode 2: The story we tell

**Required Reading:**
* Horsman, Reginald. (1997). Race and manifest destiny: The origins of American racial Anglo-Saxonism. In Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Eds.), *Critical white studies: Looking behind the mirror* (pp. 139-144). COURSE RESERVES
* Rothenberg, Chapter 7 in Part Two (Global white supremacy)

**Recommended Reading:**

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Monday, February 15

**Fluidity of whiteness**

**Required Readings:**
* Rothenberg, Chapter 6 in Part Three (Are Iranians people of color?)

**Recommended Reading:**
* Rothenberg, Chapters in Part 2

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Monday, February 22

**Defining whiteness**

**Film in class:** White privilege: Racism, white denial & the costs of inequality

**Required Readings:**
* Rothenberg, Chapter 3 in Part Three (White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack)
* Tatum, Chapter 1 (Defining racism)
* Trepagnier, Chapter 1 (Rethinking racism) and Chapter 4 (The production of institutional racism)

**Recommended Reading:**
II. WHITENESS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Monday, February 29
Racial identity and awareness

Required 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

Recommended Readings:
* 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). COURSE RESERVES
* 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). COURSE RESERVES
* 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). COURSE RESERVES
* Ozaki, C. Casey and Kristen A. Renn. (2014). Engaging multiracial college students. In Stephen John Quaye, et.al. (Eds.), Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations (pp. 91-104). COURSE RESERVES

SPRING BREAK

Monday, March 14
Thematic Paper #2 Due Friday
White talk

Required Readings:
* Kivel, Paul. (2011). It’s not just a joke. In Uprooting racism: How white people can work for racial justice (pp. 130-133). COURSE RESERVES
* Trepagnier, Chapter 2 (Silent racism)

Recommended Readings:
* Tatum, Beverly Daniel. (2007). What kind of friendship is that? The search for authenticity, mutuality, and social transformation in cross-racial relationships. In Can We Talk About Race? (pp. 83-104) COURSE RESERVES
* Trepagnier, Chapter 6 (Antiracist practice)
III. INSTITUTIONAL WHITENESS

Monday, March 21
Whiteness on the college campus

Readings:
* Chesler, Mark, et.al. (2005). Students of color in the university. In Challenging racism in higher education (pp. 79-98 and 99-120). COURSE RESERVES
* Chesler, Mark, et.al. (2005). White students in the university. In Challenging racism in higher education (pp. 79-98). COURSE RESERVES

Recommended Readings:

EASTER MONDAY

Monday, April 4
Whiteness and the workplace

Readings:
* Tatum, Part III (White identity and affirmative action, Chapter 7)

Recommended Readings
* Sander, Richard J. and Stuart Taylor, Jr. (2012). The idea of mismatch and why it matters. and Why academics avoid honest debate about affirmative action. In Mismatch: How affirmative action hurts students it’s intended to help, and why universities won’t admit it (pp. 3-14 and 175-184). COURSE RESERVES
Monday, April 11
Whiteness and the criminal justice system

**Required Readings:**
* Rothenberg, Chapter 5 in Part One (Dead black man, just walking) and Chapter 8 in Part Three (I taught my black kids that their elite upbringing would protect them from discrimination. I was wrong) and Chapter 9 in Part Three (Where do we go after Ferguson?)

**Recommended Readings:**

MARATHON MONDAY

Monday, April 25
Presentations

Monday, May 2  Thematic Paper #4 Due Friday
Presentations