

Cultural and Ethnic Studies 102

Intro to American Culture: Whiteness in the US--Its Causes and Effects

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Office Hours: M-Th 8:30-11:20

Required Text: Paula Rothenberg, *White Privilege, 4th edition*

Barbara Trepagnier, *Silent Racism, 2nd edition*

(both available from the BC Bookstore)

Objectives of the course:

- * To examine the sources of our own beliefs and ideas about white American culture.
- * To give and receive feedback via computer.
- * To synthesize into essays some personal experiences and ideas presented in the readings.
- * To create a supportive online learning community.

Class policies:

1. To encourage the open exchange of ideas, all participants must be free to express themselves without fear of being verbally attacked. Because the class is discussing a sensitive matter that raises many strong emotions, students need to respect and respond civilly to the opinions of others in class. As a general rule, if you are offended or upset by any message posted in the discussions, DO

NOT RESPOND. Instead, tell the instructor about it. Offensive or inappropriate postings will be deleted and the poster warned about classroom conduct.

2. As a 2-credit course, this class will not demand the time or effort of a standard 5-credit class, but it will take considerable effort anyway if you are to get something out of it. The discussion part of the class is the primary work and source of your grade; the papers are secondary. Discussion will be evaluated by number and substance of postings, but not by agreement or disagreement with the instructor, the text, or other students. Maintaining the required number of postings each week (and completing and posting the papers) will assure an A grade. The grading for the two papers in this course will be based on a simple 10 point scale. Papers will be awarded points for overall content and clarity. That is, they should say something meaningful and be understandable to readers. A grade of F will result if you cease contributing to class for more than one week and do not withdraw.

3. Most of your course work will be done in discussions, so your participation is essential to others in the class, whose participation grade depends on your contributions. Participation in discussions determines the bulk of your grade, and is evaluated on the basis described above. For discussion to take place in an asynchronous environment, it is important to post your messages early and throughout the week.

4. Because this class is online, you will have to put forth more effort than you would for an in-person class. This is because the technology must be mastered along with the subject matter. In a live class, you don't have to learn how to get there and how to listen or read, but logging in and getting assignments online could be a new process for some of you. Plan to spend a few hours a week working on this class.

5. This class is set up with me as manager or facilitator and you as active participants in the educational process. This arrangement will reward those who take their commitment seriously and who keep up with the assignments and plan their work. Unlike some other online classes, this class will not resemble an in-person class in that I will not deliver lectures about the subject matter. The material you are asked to read will provide the grist for your thought mill, and the interaction in the bulletin board discussion will help you to narrow your focus somewhat and try out your ideas. Intrusion by the instructor will be minimal.

6. Your comments will need to be timely, your postings early enough to affect the discussion. Discussion boards and writing assignment threads will be

locked once the class has gone on to another assignment. You will not get credit for comments you make if the intended reader will not be reading them.

7. I invite any students with special needs or circumstances to discuss them with me. I am willing to make any necessary accommodations to facilitate your success as long as I know in advance.

Writing Assignments

The two informal papers are to be no more than 750 words (a limit of roughly 3 pages if typed in 12 point font, double-spaced). They might be considerably shorter, but more than 250 words.

Your papers will be read by classmates and then revised by you if you want to clarify something. You may revise your papers prior to the final due date until you think they are ready to turn in.

NOTE: All of the discussion, writing and reading assignments will be clarified and explained in greater detail as they are assigned--on the appropriate discussion board and on the calendar.

CES 102 Class Schedule

Each week's schedule is detailed on the calendar. Assignments are weekly rather than daily but should not be put off until the end of the week. Be sure to look ahead so that deadlines will not surprise you. Refer to the class calendar on the home page for specific deadlines and assignments.

Week One, Assignment One--Read introductory material (this syllabus). Introduce yourself to the class through the Introductions bulletin board. Then read all of the other students' introductions and respond (reply) to at least three of them.

Week One, Assignment Two--Assignment for Paper #1: Write a short essay in which you describe your *earliest* memory of encountering something that made you aware of *your own race*. This may involve meeting someone, seeing some artwork, reading something, hearing some talk in your family or anything else. Describe the situation, the events, and the subsequent image that you developed of your race and its place in US society or in the society you were living in as a child. This is not primarily a paper about witnessing evidence of racism or prejudice, although that may be involved; it is about your awareness of your own race, and when that first began. Unless you grew up in solitary

confinement, this will involve a childhood experience (child development specialists tell us that racial awareness begins in the first years of life), perhaps an experience that you have not thought about for many years and that you did not even think of as a racial experience at the time. To post your paper, you need to put it in a message (not as an attachment) on the Paper #1 bulletin board. I'll open that bulletin board during the first week. In the meantime, check over your paper to make sure it follows the assignment: It should have a narrative section describing an experience you remember (the earlier in life, the better). It should not contain information about race that you later learned in school, but something or someone you encountered in daily life (in or out of school). This paper is due (should be posted for the first time) during the first week (by July 3 at the latest), ideally early in the first week.

Week Two, Assignment One--Read and comment on the papers of at least three classmates. Consider carefully how your comments will help the writer. I may post some comments as well.

Week Two, Assignment Two--Read the first part (called Part One) of the White Privilege textbook, through page 25.

Weeks Three through Six (summer)--Read and comment on the assigned part of Rothenberg (one part per week) and on Trepagnier and the articles collected in the Posted Articles module once we have finished the other book. In each separate discussion, you are required to post four original postings and four replies per week. I will post guidelines for these comments and discussions on the discussion of readings bulletin boards. **This is the most important part of the course and will determine the bulk of your grade.**

Week Seven--Paper #2 (The assignment will be given closer to this point in the quarter)

Week Seven, Assignment Two--Read and comment on the papers of at least three classmates.

All papers must be submitted by midnight on the last class day of the quarter. Of course you may turn them in before that day. Grades will be available online through MyBC the week after the quarter ends.

Good Luck in CES 102 this quarter! We will all be learning together. Let's make it fun and productive. Always remember that I want you to succeed but that you are responsible for your own success.

