

American Studies 102

Scott Bessho

Office: R230-Y

Phone: 425-564-2425

E-mail: sbessho@bellevuecollege.edu

Campus Mail:R230

Office Hours:7:30-9:20 and 1:30-3:30 Daily in R230-Y

Required Text: Paula Rothenberg, White Privilege, 3rd edition Barbara Trepagnier, Silent Racism (both available from the BC Bookstore by the end of week one)

Objectives of the course:

- * To examine the sources of our own beliefs and ideas about white American culture.
- * To sustain an academic discussion on a difficult topic.
- * 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. Yes, it is possible to disrupt an online class, and any pattern of disruption will be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. That said, reasoned dissent is accepted and encouraged in order to advance the discussion. Civility is the general watchword.
2. As a 2-credit class, 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. The grading for the two papers in this course will be based on a simple binary scale (acceptable/unacceptable). Papers will be awarded credit 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.

The overall grading for this course is based mostly on timely participation. Each weekly discussion is open for only one week. Discussion postings cannot be made up. You can tell how you are doing in class simply by noting the number of your postings: four original (new thread) postings and four reply postings are required per week in the discussions. NOTE: Each weekly has a posting requirement. Missed discussions cannot be made up by doubling postings in another week.

3. Most of your course work will be 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 some of your messages early and to continue contributing 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 is 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.

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 papers are to be no more than 750 words (a limit of roughly 3 pages if typed in 12 point font, double-spaced).

Your papers will be reviewed 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.

AMST 102 Class Schedule

This class has a mid-week system of counting weeks, so that every Wednesday (after the first week) a new week begins. This is to ensure that those who are able to make their entries only on Saturday and Sunday are not cramming their work in at the "end" of the school week. The last day to complete each week's work is always a Tuesday. Be sure to look ahead so that deadlines will not surprise you. Refer to the class calendar on the left-hand navigation bar for specific deadlines and assignments.

Week 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 Two--Assignment for Paper #1: Write an 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 in the second 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 second week, ideally early in the second week.

Week Two, second assignment--Read ALL of the papers posted 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. Read Part one of White Privilege (through page 25) to prepare for the first discussion.

Weeks Three through Nine--Read and discuss the assigned part of the White Privilege textbook (one part per week); read and discuss the Silent Racism book (on its own discussion board) and on the materials posted on the Posted Articles page (following the discussion of the textbooks) 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 Ten--Paper #2 (The assignment will be given closer to this point in the quarter)

Week Ten, Assignment Two--Read ALL of the papers posted 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 the week after the quarter ends.

Good Luck in AMST 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.