

Ethnic and Cultural Studies 102: Introduction to White Culture in the United States of America

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class meets from 9.30-10.20 Daily in L126

The contest over whiteness—its definition, its internal hierarchies, its proper boundaries, and its rightful claimants—has been critical to American culture throughout the nations history, and it has been a fairly untidy affair.

-Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*

Required Texts:

- Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*
- Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness*
- Articles to be found online

Course Description

This course will examine the History, culture, religion, institutions, politics, economic, arts, and psychology of peoples of European descent as developed from experience in both the old and new worlds. We will take multidisciplinary analysis of social life looking at white culture in America as a social construct and the consequences of this construct.

Requirements

Attendance is mandatory, unless previously excused. Each student will be expected to keep pace with the required reading assignments and to partake rigorously in all class room discussion. Reading assignments should be completed and students prepared for classroom discussion on the day that the reading assignment is due.

Each student will also write a racial autobiography as a course long project, with portions of this assignment due throughout the quarter. This autobiography will consist of 3 separate essays that form a single whole. Details about the specific requirements for each assignment will be given at a later date.

In addition, each student will be required to submit one page, typed double spaced, self assessment at the end of class each Friday which addresses what you have learned from the class and what you have contributed to the class that week. There will be a total of seven (7) self assessments for the quarter. These will be worth 20% of the final grade.

Grading

Essay 1	20%
Essay 2	20%
Essay 3	20%
Weekly Self-assessments	20%
Final Self-assessment	10%
Class Participation	10%

Course Outcomes

At the end of this course successful students should be able to:

1. Read critically, actively and reflectively.
2. Support their own conclusions about the validity of the assumptions and ideas they have encountered in the assigned readings.
3. Form analytical questions about a text.
4. Demonstrate analysis through rhetorical techniques.
5. Shape and re-shape contemporary concepts of U.S. society, through the socio-historical, socio-political contexts in which race and ethnicity are used, and how power has been vested in definitions of whiteness.

General Information

If you have a documented disability that will require some type of accommodation, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can make whatever arrangements necessary.

My office hours are for your use. Come and see me any time you have a question of a problem with the course or your work.

I am looking forward to this quarter, and hope that we can do good things together.

Disclaimer:

This is a heavily dialogue-based class and you will be graded upon your participation. There will be few if any lectures and you will not be required to memorize things as much as to analyze the many aspects of the issues discussed. Many of these issues will be controversial and do not have one correct answer. Often class dialogues will begin with open-ended questions meant to get at a deeper understanding of the content being discussed. Don't be discouraged if a classmate or even the professor raises another question or theory that may point out the flaws of your own argument, this is all part of the process. The more we question ourselves the more we can understand. In order to be successful in this class you must complete all assigned readings and be willing to participate respectfully. If you cannot come to class regularly, or are simply looking to "coast" this is not the class for you.

Dialogue vs. Discussion/Debate

Dialogues require the use of logical arguments and concrete facts instead of personal opinions or experiences. Valid arguments are based on premises (much like the scientific "if-then" method of reasoning). For Example: If the secession of the southern states in 1860 was intended to protect those states from the economic oppression of

the northern states, then it follows that the issue of slavery during the American civil war was not one of morals but one of economics. And if the economic backbone of the southern states was the system of slavery and, in many the southern states were the economic backbone of the country as a whole, it makes sense to say that our nations earliest economic system was based on the oppression of people based on the color of their skin.

During class dialogues you will be expected to:

- Be prepared. This is not a bull session. If you aren't prepared, please don't participate.
- Articulate the concepts and principles of the issue(s) in question
- Refer to the text when needed during the dialogue
- Reframe from relying on personal anecdotes
- Ask for clarification when confused
- Stick to the point under discussion. You can make notes about ideas you want to bring up later.
- Speak clearly and loud enough for everyone to hear
- Listen carefully and respectfully
- Engage your classmates in the dialogue, not just the teacher

Remember, class dialogues are not a test of memory and you are not simply "learning a subject." Here your goal should be to broaden your understanding of social issues we all face.

Want to check on your success in this class? Here's a cheat-sheet of things to consider during class dialogues

Did I...

- Come to class?
- Prepare?
- Speak clearly and loudly?
- Cite reasons and evidence for my statements?
- Listen respectfully?
- Stay on point?
- Talk to my classmates and not just the professor?
- Paraphrase accurately?
- Ask questions to clear up confusion?
- Support my classmates?
- Avoid hostile exchanges?
- Raise questions in a civil manner?

One last thing:

There are going to be times in this class when you feel uncomfortable. That's okay; a certain amount of discomfort can be conducive to learning. However, if you ever feel unsafe or threatened please let me know so we can try to work it out. The classroom should be a safe place for everybody.

Useful Websites:

Library Media Center: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/>

Research Help: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/research.html>

Reading/Writing Lab: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/writinglab/>

Counseling Center: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/hdc/>

Academic Tutoring: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/tutoring/>

Disabilities Resource Center (DRC) is in B123 : <http://bellevuecollege.edu/drc>

The following link will connect you to the Student Handbook, which will give you vital information about being a student at BCC:

http://bellevuecollege.edu/stupro/handbook_cd2008/default.html