

History 227
The History and Practice of Whiteness
Tuesday/Thursday 3:00-4:20
Fall 2017

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Office Hours:
Mondays, 1:30pm-3:30pm
Tuesdays, 10:00am-12:00pm
Wednesdays, 10:00am-12:00pm



“No one was white before he/she came to America.”
James Baldwin

This course examines the construction, practices, boundaries, and power of whiteness throughout American history. Moving chronologically, we will explore a range of questions about how racial categories and racial hierarchies have operated in America’s past and present. Who gets to be white in different historical eras and how has that line been determined? What does being white mean for those defined as such? How have the boundaries of whiteness been policed and how have those on the borders sought whiteness? How has whiteness been privileged in different historical eras and what role have the courts, the government, cultural representations, and personal actions played in establishing and promoting racial prerogatives? How has whiteness historically been understood, criticized and challenged? Since whiteness is an identity that is intersectional and relational, the class will particularly explore how policing sexuality has served to construct and maintain whiteness, as well as how class, gender, and ethnic background affect the experience of being “white.”

Over the course of the semester, we will examine these questions and explore ongoing scholarly debates through readings from a range of fields, including history, American Studies, critical legal studies, sociology, and literary studies. The course will also consider the invention, practice, and privileging of whiteness in a variety of primary sources, from memoirs to films to fiction to political tracts. History 227 is *not* a lecture class. Although I will sometimes offer short lectures and will always try to provide contextual information, the idea and workings of race in the United States is a topic that demands engagement and discussion. Much of our class time will be spent discussing and debating the readings; the quality of class will thus depend on each student coming to class prepared to talk thoughtfully about the assigned readings. This course also counts as an elective toward the majors in Comparative American Studies and GSFS.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Understand the construction and changing nature of racial categories in the United States; how social, cultural and political practices have contributed the policing and privileging of white racial identity in different eras; and the complicated intersections of whiteness with class and gender
- Hone the skill of reading secondary historical sources quickly and carefully for key arguments, frameworks, and their use of evidence
- Gain facility with analyzing primary sources—both textual and visual—in their historical context
- Make clear arguments based on evidence and communicate those arguments effectively in both oral and written form.
- Gain competency working in groups on a common project
- Contribute to the community of the classroom through discussions and presentations

REQUIRED TEXTS:

The following books are available at the bookstore and are on print reserve at Mudd Library. *Wages of Whiteness*, *Racial Fault Lines*, and *White By Law* are also available electronically through Mudd:

Linda Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness* (2015)

Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (2008 edition)

Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina* (2002)

Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (2008)

Ian Haney-Lopez, *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (2006 edition)

David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (2007 edition)

Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream* (1949)

All other course readings (those marked with an asterisk (*) on the syllabus) are available on the course blackboard site under the “Course Readings” heading. Besides the required readings, there are three required films for the course (*I Am Not Your Negro*, *Birth of a Nation*, and *Soul Man*).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Grading in History 227 will be based upon the following:

Participation:	20% final grade
Group Facilitation of Discussion Session:	5% of final grade
Blackboard Postings:	10% of final grade
Primary Source Paper (Due Oct. 12):	20% of final grade
Second Paper (Due Nov. 16):	20% of final grade
Final Research Project (Due Dec. 16):	25% of final grade

1) Attendance and Participation (20% of final grade)

The first and most important requirement of History 227 is that you attend and come prepared to fully engage in every class. We will always focus on the readings, so if you haven’t done them, you will not be able to participate. Please be warned that this is a reading-heavy class; if that’s not what you’re looking for, you should probably find a different class.

Participation can take many forms—a sustained comment, a question, a short interjection, a small group conversation with your classmates. If you have trouble speaking in class, please come see me during my office hours so we can develop strategies that will allow you to find ways to participate. You may also post questions, reflections, and connections to the “Coffeehouse” discussion forum on the blackboard site; postings there will count towards class participation. In addition, as part of your participation grade, you are required to turn in two short ungraded positionality reflections (one for our second class and one for our last class). Because attendance and participation are so critical to your learning and your success in History 227, if you miss more than **two** classes over the course of the semester, your final grade will be affected. For every absence beyond the second, **three points will be deducted from your final course grade**. Excused absences will not count towards this total; absences will only be excused in cases of serious illness, real personal/family emergencies, or unavoidable conflicts, and you must inform me of your absence **in advance** of class if you do not want it to count as unexcused

2) Group Facilitation of Discussion Session (5% of final grade)

Seven class sessions in History 227 have been set aside for the discussion of specific books and students and for each of those sessions, a group of students will coordinate and run a supplemental activity or presentation related to the readings. These presentations/activities should take up no more than forty minutes of class time. Students will be assigned to groups based upon their interests early in the semester. Groups *must* meet with me in advance of their presentation in order to discuss their plans.

The schedule for the seven discussion sessions is:

- 9/14: Discussion of *Suspect Relations*
- 9/26: Discussion of *The Wages of Whiteness*
- 10/3: Discussion of *Racial Fault Lines*
- 10/10: Discussion of *Killers of the Dream*
- 10/31: Discussion of *White By Law*
- 11/2: Discussion of *The Price of Whiteness*
- 12/5: Discussion of *The Future of Whiteness*

3) Blackboard Postings (10% of final grade)

Each student in class will be assigned to one of five “learning groups” and for every discussion session where you are *not* part of the group facilitating the class discussion, you will be expected to post a response to the readings to the discussion forum for your learning group on blackboard. Blackboard postings are due by **noon** on the day of the discussion session. They should be a robust one or two paragraphs and must include: 1) what you take to be the most important argument the book makes about whiteness; 2) an assessment of the methodology the author uses to study whiteness; and 3) a question about or critique of the reading. Please read the postings of other members of your group before coming to class.

4) Primary Source Analysis Paper (20% of final grade)—Due in class on October 12th

Each student will write a short paper of approximately 4 pages analyzing an academic article about race published between 1880 and 1920. The paper will be due at the beginning of our class session on October 12. More details are posted to the Assignments section of the Blackboard.

5) Second Paper (20% of final grade)—Due on November 16th

Each student will write a paper (of approximately 6 pages) that draws on course readings to assess a 1965 argument by black psychologist Kenneth Clark about “what motivates whites.” The paper will be due on November 16th by 5:00p.m. The assignment and Clark article are available on the blackboard site.

6) Final Research Project (25% of final grade)—Due on Dec. 16th at 7:00pm

For the final assignment in History 227, each student will research a topic of particular interest to them and present their research in a format that they find most interesting. Research projects, which must be based on both primary and secondary sources, and should explore and illuminate some aspect of whiteness and its history or contemporary manifestations. You may present your findings in a traditional paper (of approximately 8-10 pages), a podcast, a website, a short video, zine, or a PowerPoint. Students may seek permission to work in a group rather than individually, but group projects will be expected to be more substantive than individual ones. Project proposals will be due on Oct. 27, and the projects themselves will be due at the time of our regularly scheduled final exam. More details are available on the blackboard site.

COURSE POLICIES

Late and Incomplete Policy: All work (except for reading responses) will be graded on a 100-point scale. Papers will be marked down 3 points for every day handed in past the deadline. Requests for extensions must take place before the assignment is due. As a general rule, I will approve extensions in the case of illness or emergencies, but not because you have other work due at the same time, so please plan accordingly. Assignments will not be accepted more than five days past the original due date. All assignments must be completed in order for students to receive credit for the class.

Classroom Conduct: Please come to class on time. And once you are in class, please do not leave to go get a drink or use the restroom—it's distracting to me and disrespectful to your classmates when students walk out in the middle of class. Also, since I want everyone to be focused on the classroom conversation and engaged in discussion, no electronic devices will be allowed in the classroom except to reference readings.

Oberlin Honor Code: All work for this course must be done in compliance with the Oberlin Honor Code, which means that it must be your own. Any cases of plagiarism will be dealt with immediately according to the letter of college policy. You must acknowledge when you use the ideas of other people (whether that be other students or published materials from websites, books, the media, etc.). If you have questions about citations, academic honesty, or the acceptability of collaborations, please see me. You should include the honor code on all the written work you hand in for this class. The Honor Code reads: "I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code on this assignment."

Educational Access: I am committed to creating inclusive learning environments and to designing a course in which all students can learn and. If any aspects of the instruction or design of the course result in dis/ability-related barriers to your participation, please let me know. If you receive any specific accommodations, please provide documentation from the Disability Service Office.

Extra Help: My door is open if you need help or just want to discuss the reading or other topics of interest to you. Drop in to my office hours anytime or email to schedule a specific appointment. I am happy to provide feedback on drafts if get draft writings (partial or full) to me at least **four days** before the paper is due so that I have time to give you feedback.

COURSE AND READING SCHEDULE

8/29: Introduction

8/31: Personal Location, Positionality and Constructing Knowledge (1st positionality reflection due)

David Takacs, "Positionality, Epistemology, and Social Justice in the Classroom," *Social Justice* 29:4 (2002): 168-181*

For class: write a short reflection (500-750 words) about how you view America's racial landscape and where you place yourself in it. What experiences have shaped your sense of your own racial identity? In what ways has your gender, sexual, or class identity shaped your perspective or experience of race? Please note, we will discuss these in class and I will collect them, but they will not be graded.

9/5: Studying Race, Understanding Whiteness: Frames and Vocabularies

Richard Dyer, "The Matter of Whiteness" in Paula Rothenberg, ed., *White Privilege**

Linda Alcoff, Chapter 1, "The Analytic of Whiteness" in *The Future of Whiteness*, 39-90*

Anne Bonds and Joshua Inwood "Beyond white privilege: Geographies of white supremacy and settler colonialism," *Progress in Human Geography* 40:6 (2016): 715-733*

James Baldwin, "On Being 'White'...and Other Lies" in *Essence*, April 1984*

Film: I Am Not Your Negro (screening time and place TBD)

Part I: Inventing Race in the Colonial Era

9/7: The Ideas They Brought With Them: Thinking about Difference in Colonial America

Winthrop Jordan, "Initial English Confrontations with Africans," in *The White Man's Burden*, 3-25*

Audrey Smedley, "Growth of the English Ideology of Race In America," in *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*, 72-91*

Nancy Isenberg, Chapter 1 in *White Trash*, 17-42*

David Hume, "Of National Characters" (1748) and James Beattie, "A Response to Hume" (1770)*

9/12: Slavery and Servitude: Power, Labor, and Categories in Colonial America

Barbara Fields, "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America," *New Left Review* 181 (May/June 1990): 95-118*

Edmund Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox," *The Journal of American History* (June 1972): 99-108*

*Virginia Slave Laws, 1660s**

9/14: DISCUSSION SESSION #1

Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations* (entire)

Part II: Whiteness in the New Nation, 1790-1860

9/19: The State of Racial Thinking in the Early United States

Matthew Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 13-38*

Nancy Isenberg, "Thomas Jefferson's Rubbish" in *White Trash*, 85-104*

Thomas Jefferson, excerpt from *Notes on the State of Virginia**

9/21: The Practice of Whiteness in Antebellum America

Ariella Gross, "Performing Whiteness" in *What Blood Don't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (2008), 48-72*

9/26: DISCUSSION SESSION #2

David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness* (entire)

Dana Frank, "White Working-Class Women and the Race Question," in *International Labor and Working-Class History* 54 (Fall 1998): 80-102*

Part III: Conquest, Expansion, and Whiteness

9/28: Cowboys and Indians: Westward Expansion and New Theories of Race

Reginald Horsman, "Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism," 139-144*

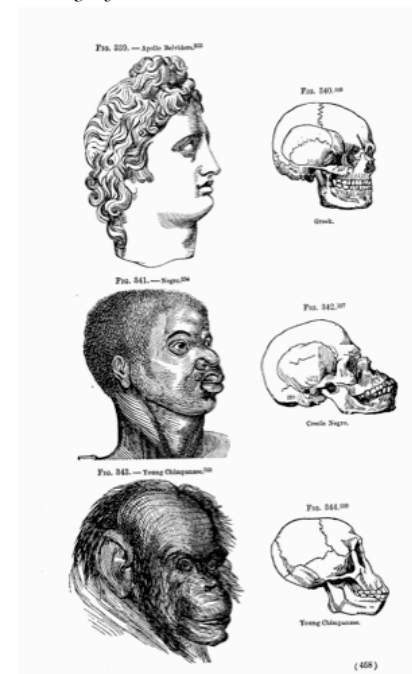
Nancy Isenberg, "Andrew Jackson's Cracker Country" in *White Trash*, 105-132*

Andrew Jackson's Case for Removal of the Indians (1829)*

"Ethiop" (William J. Wilson), "What Shall We Do With the White People?" (1860)*

10/3: DISCUSSION SESSION #3

Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines* (entire)



Part IV: Southern Whiteness

10/05: Whiteness and Race After Emancipation

Linda Faye Williams, "America's First Undeserving and Deserving Poor," in *The Constraint of Race*, 25-68*

Birth of a Nation (1915) [screening time and place TBD]

10/10: DISCUSSION SESSION #4

Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream* (entire)

James Baldwin, "Going to Meet the Man" (1965), 229-249*

10/12: Ideologies of Race, 1880-1920 (Primary Source Paper Due)

10/17 and 10/19: FALL BREAK

Part V: Whiteness in the Progressive Era

10/24: Empire, Whiteness, and Civilization

Louise Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States*, 3-21*

Gail Bederman, "Theodore Roosevelt: Manhood, Nation, and 'Civilization,'" in *Manliness and Civilization*, 170-215*

Albert Beveridge, "The March of the Flag," Address to an Indiana Republican Meeting, Sept. 16, 1898*

10/26: Immigrants and the Borders of Whiteness

Matthew Jacobson, "Anglo Saxons and Others, 1840-1924" in *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 39-90*

Thomas Guglielmo, "Rethinking Whiteness Historiography: The Case of Italians in Chicago, 1890-1945" in *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism*, 49-61*

Madison Grant on New Immigrants as the Survival of the Unfit (1918)*

Speech by Senator Ellison DuRant Smith on Immigration Quotas, April 9, 1924*

Speech by Congressman Robert Clancy on Immigration Quotas, April 8, 1924*

Excerpt from Israel Zangwill, "The Melting Pot" (1908)*

10/31: DISCUSSION SESSION #5

Ian Haney Lopez, *White By Law* (entire)

Part VI: Expanding and Investing in Whiteness, 1924-1965

11/2: Becoming Caucasian: Consolidating Whiteness after 1924

Matthew Jacobson, "Becoming Caucasian, 1924-1965," in *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 91-135*

David Roediger, "Finding Homes in an Era of Restriction," in *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White*, 157-198*

Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940*, 114-129, 217-230*

11/7: Institutionalizing White Privilege: The New Deal, WWII, and Suburbanization

David Roediger, "A New Deal, an Industrial Union, and a White House: What the New Immigrant Got Into," in *Working Toward Whiteness*, 199-234*

Ira Katznelson, "White Veterans Only," in *When Affirmative Action was White*, 113-141*

"The Suburbs" (20 minute film from *Redbook*)*

11/9: DISCUSSION SESSION #6

Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness* (entire)

11/14: Visit to the Art Museum—Meet at Allen Art Museum

Martin Berger, "Genre Painting and the Foundation of Modern Race" in *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture*, 11-40*

Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, 8-17*

Nina Simon, "On White Privilege and Museums," museumtwo.blogspot.com, March 6, 2013*

11/16: NO CLASS MEETING—Second Paper Due

Part VII: Whiteness in the Post Civil Rights Era

11/21: Privileging and Policing Whiteness in the Age of Civil Rights

George Lipsitz, "Civil Rights Laws and White Privilege" in *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 24-46*

Charles Gallagher, "Color-Blind Egalitarianism as the New Racial Norm," in Murji and Solomos, ed., *Theories of Race and Ethnicity*, 40-56*

11/23: THANKSGIVING BREAK

11/28: Identity and Whiteness in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s

Matt Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America*, 1-71*

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and David G. Embrick, "Every Place has a Ghetto...": The Significance of Whites' Social and Residential Segregation,' *Symbolic Interaction* 30:3 (Summer 2007): 323-345*

Martin Mull, "The History of White People in America" (1985 mockumentary), 25-min. video online*

Soul Man (1986) (screening time and place to TBD)

11/30: White Politics and Identity in the Post-Obama Era

Michael Kimmel, "Introduction: America, the Angry," in *Angry White Men*, 1-27*

Carol Anderson, "How to Unelect a Black President," in *White Rage*, pp. 138-160*

Robert Kuttner, "Hidden Injuries of Class, Race, and Culture: The Decline of the White Working Class and the Rise of the Tea Party and Donald Trump," *American Prospect*, October 3, 2016*

Amanda Taub, "Behind 2016's Turmoil: A Crisis of White Identity," *New York Times*, November 1, 2016*

Toni Morrison, "Making America White Again," *New Yorker*, November 21, 2016*

12/5: DISCUSSION SESSION #7

Linda Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness* (except chapter 1)

12/7: Conclusion and Personal Reflections (Second Positionality Reflection Due)

Brenda Juárez, "Learning to Take the Bullet and More: Anti-Racism Requirements For White Allies and Other Friends of the Race, So-Called and Otherwise," in *Unhooking from Whiteness*, 31-51*

For class, please reread your original positionality essay and reflect on whether how taking this class has or has not changed your perspective or understanding of your own position on the American racial landscape. Like before, these reflections should be approximately 500 words. They will be collected, but not graded.

12/16: Group Project Due

**Please note that full citation information for each reading is available on the blackboard site*



Quiz from *Ebony* magazine, April 1952