

History 227: The History and Practice of Whiteness
Tuesday/Thursday 1:30-2:50
Fall 2019

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Office Hours:
Mondays, 10:00am-12:00pm
Wednesdays, 1:30pm-3:30pm
and by appointment



“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.
- Further develop skills of comparing and synthesizing scholarly works.
- 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*, *White By Law*, *Mothers of Massive Resistance* and *White Identity Politics* are also available electronically through Mudd:

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)

Ashley Jardina, *White Identity Politics* (2019)

Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy* (2018)

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

All other course readings are available on the course blackboard site under the “Course Readings” heading. Full citation information is available on the blackboard site. 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. 15):	20% of final grade
Reading Connection Paper (Due Nov. 24)	20% of final grade
Final Research Project (Due Dec. 26):	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 (really more like a seminar than a 200-level course); 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 documents to the “Whiteness in the News” section of 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 near the end of the term). 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, **two 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. 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:

- 9/19: Discussion of *Suspect Relations*
- 10/1: Discussion of *The Wages of Whiteness*
- 10/8: Discussion of *Racial Fault Lines*
- 10/29: Discussion of *Mothers of Massive Resistance*
- 11/7: Discussion of *White By Law*
- 11/19: Discussion of *The Price of Whiteness*
- 12/10: Discussion of *White Identity Politics*

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 several 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 15th

Each student will write a short paper of approximately 4 pages or 1200 words 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 15. More details are posted to the Assignments section of the Blackboard.

5) Reading Connection Paper (20% of final grade)—Due on Sunday, Nov. 24 by 10pm

In a paper of approximately 5-pages or 1500 words, choose a theme or issue to connect and explore in relation to at least three of the books that we have already read for class. More specific guidelines will be posted at the Assignment section of the blackboard site.

6) Final Research Project (25% of final grade)—Due on December 17 by 11:00am

For the final assignment in History 227, each student will individually or as part of a group 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, 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-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 November 1, 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: You should come prepared to participate in discussion by speaking, listening attentively to others, encouraging others to comment, arguing respectfully, and asking questions. Participation means not only showing up but really being present in the classroom. That means arriving on time and once you arrive, not walking in and out of the classroom while class is going on unless you are having a real crisis (in other words, bring your drink with you and use the restroom before you arrive!) 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 except with specific permission.

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

9/3: Introduction

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

9/5: 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 your racial experience? Please note, we will discuss these in class and I will collect them, but they will not be graded.

9/10: Studying Race, Theorizing Whiteness

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

Robin DiAngelo, "White Fragility: Why It's So Hard to Talk to White People About Racism," *the Good Men Project*, April 9, 2015, <https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/white-fragility-why-its-so-hard-to-talk-to-white-people-about-racism-twlm/>

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

Film: I Am Not Your Negro (screen on Kanopy)

9/12: 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

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

9/17: 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

9/19: DISCUSSION SESSION #1

Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations* (entire)

9/24: 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* (1785)

9/26: The Practice of Whiteness in Antebellum America

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

Bridget Heneghan, "The Pot Calling the Kettle: White Goods and the Construction of Race in Antebellum America," *Nineteenth Century Studies* 17 (2003): 107-132

10/1: DISCUSSION SESSION #2

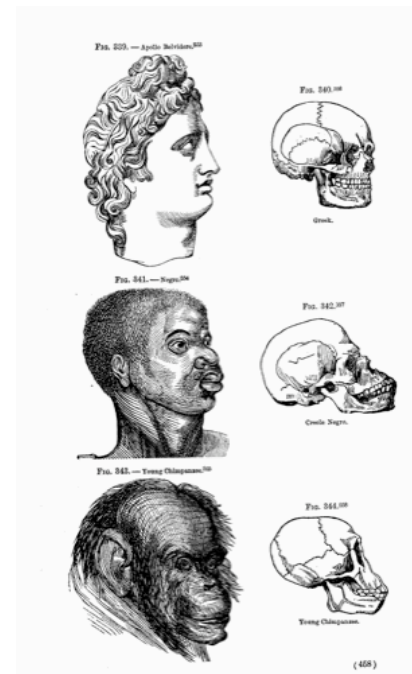
David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness* (entire)

10/3: 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

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

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



10/8: DISCUSSION SESSION #3

Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines*, can skip Chapters 3 and 7 (pp. 1-74, 107-182; 205-214)

10/10: 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), excerpts online

10/15: Primary Source Paper Due in Class

10/17: Cultures of Segregation

Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream* (1949), Foreword, "When I Was a Child," and "Three Lessons," pp. 11-40; 83-98

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

Selection of Jim Crow Laws

10/22 and 10/24: FALL BREAK

10/29: DISCUSSION SESSION #4

Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance* (entire)

10/31: Empire, Whiteness, and Civilization

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

Carl Zimring, "How Do You Make Them So Clean and White" in *Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism*, 79-106

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

11/5: 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)

Speeches by Senators Ellison DuRant Smith and Robert Clancy on Immigration Quotas (1924)

11/7: DISCUSSION SESSION #5

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

11/12: 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

Carl Zimring, "Out of Waste Into Whiteness" in *Clean and White*, 169-191

11/14: 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

“In The Suburbs” (20 minute film from *Redbook*)

11/19: DISCUSSION SESSION #6

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

11/21: 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

11/24: Second Paper Due By 10:00pm on Sunday, November 24

11/26: No Class Meeting

11/28: THANKSGIVING BREAK

11/28: 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

12/3: Identity and Whiteness in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s

Matt Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America*, 1-31

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)

12/5: 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

Jonathan M. Metzler, "Introduction" in *Dying of Whiteness*, pp. 1-20

12/10: DISCUSSION SESSION #7

Ashley Jardina, *White Identity Politics* (entire)

12/12: 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

Kelafa Sennah, "The Fight to Redefine Racism," *The New Yorker*, August 12, 2019

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.

12/17: Final Project due by 11:00am



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