

American Studies 377
Prejudice and American Culture
Fall 2010
Tuesday & Thursday 10:00-11:15
UH 319
Code: 17933

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Thursday 11:30-12:45; 3:45-4:30
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And the poor white man's used
In the hands of them all like a tool
He's taught in his school
From the start by the rule
That the laws are with him
To protect his white skin
To keep up his hate
So he never thinks straight
'Bout the shape that he's in.

--Bob Dylan, "Only a Pawn in Their Game" (1963)

Required Reading

Rosemarie Garland-Thompson, *Staring: How We Look* (2009)

Mark M. Smith, *How Race is Made: Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses* (2006)

Paula S. Rothenberg, editor, *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study* (Seventh Edition, 2007)

Kenji Yoshino, *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights* (2006)

John Ibson, "Lessons Learned on Brokeback Mountain: Expanding the Possibilities of American Manhood" (2007) *Note*: You must also watch the film "Brokeback Mountain" at least once outside of class this semester.

The four books are available at the Little Professor Book Center, 725 N. Placentia Avenue, Fullerton, just east of campus. The article will be passed out in class.

Welcome to American Studies 377. Though I'll lecture from time to time, this class will be largely devoted to our discussions of the assigned reading. We will cover the material in the order given below, keeping as

close to the specified schedule as we can. It is essential that you do the reading as it is assigned and that you attend class regularly.

Written Work

There will be **one take-home midterm** in late September, as soon as we've completed the Smith book. It will consist of one or two essays totaling around 1,500 words (6 pages). It will be due two weeks after it is passed out.

Additionally, you are to keep a **journal** this semester which records in detail your thoughts and observations before, during, and after your visits to two different locations, places that you have never been before taking this class and that are frequented by people who are different than you are in some way that you (at least initially) consider to be quite significant. You should discuss your choice of places to visit with me and, if you choose, with each other. No later than **Thursday, September 23**, you must turn in to me a list of the two places you intend to visit. You must give me your journal at least once during the semester for my suggestions and other reactions. The completed journal is due at our last class meeting, **Thursday, December 9**.

The **final examination** will cover the entire course. It will consist of one, two, or three essays, totaling at least 2,250 words (9 pages). I will distribute this exam on or before November 30. Your work will then be due no later than **Tuesday, December 14, at 12 Noon**.

I'll give an extension for any assignment only in exceptional circumstances, for which I might require documentation.

Grading

The final will constitute 40% of your grade for written work, the midterm and the journal 30% each. In my determination of your grade in the course, good to excellent class participation will raise your grade for

written work up to a full letter, and poor participation (including poor attendance) will lower it up to a full letter. I do not use a grading curve. I use the university's plus/minus grading system.

My criteria for grading both the midterm and the final are: understanding (50%), originality (20%), evidence (10%), clarity (10%), organization (10%). I will discuss in class, and with you individually, my expectations for your journals.

In this class, an A will be given only for work that is genuinely superior, work that far surpasses my minimum expectations. A grade of B is for very good work that significantly exceeds the minimum expectations. A grade of C is for average work that meets, but neither surpasses nor falls below, the minimum expectations. A grade of D is for work that falls below minimum expectations but shows potential to have been better. An F is given to work that falls far below my minimum requirements.

Academic dishonesty is an extremely serious matter: either the presentation of assigned written work actually done by someone else as if it were one's own work, or else the preparation of assigned written work for a classmate. Penalty for such deceit will range, depending on my judgment of the severity of the offense, from a failing grade on a particular assignment to failure in the course. If I decide to report an offense to the university administration, there may be even more severe penalties.

In cooperation with the **Office of Disabled Student Services**, I will make every accommodation possible to meet the particular needs of disabled students.

COURSE OUTLINE

We are about to begin a study of intolerance, one of the least becoming and most widespread attitudes that humans exhibit. To note the wide extent of prejudice, however, is not to suggest that it is either inevitable or unchanging. As in all culture study, this course will examine the construction of beliefs and values, meanings of human experience peculiar to a certain moment and a certain locale. And since this course studies thoroughly regrettable behavior, we will also consider those social and cultural situations that appear to promote prejudice and those that at least promise to inhibit it, whether only slightly or quite substantially. Like all American Studies courses, this one is intended to enhance your understanding of the workings of American culture and your ability to think critically and express yourself clearly in writing and speech.

Tu 8/24 Introduction to the Course

I. OTHERING: THE CONSTRUCTION, LOGIC, AND DYNAMICS OF PREJUDICE

Th 8/26 1. The Useful Deviant: Prejudice, Stereotyping, and
Tu 8/31 Cultural Boundaries (lecture and discussion)

2. Making an Enemy: The Invention of Distinctions

Th 9/2 A. Constructing Difference: Race
Read: Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "Racial Formations," in Rothenberg, pp. 13-22; Karen Brodtkin, "How Jews Became White Folks," in Rothenberg, pp. 38-53.

Tu 9/7 B. Constructing Difference: Sexuality
Read: Ruth Hubbard, "The Social Construction of Sexuality," Jonathan Ned Katz, "The Invention of Heterosexuality," Michael S. Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia," in Rothenberg, pp. 65-92.

Th 9/9 C. Constructing Difference: The Able Body
Read: Douglas C. Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," in Rothenberg, pp. 92-102.

D. Constructing Difference: "Sensing" Race

Tu 9/14 **Read:**
Smith, *How Race is Made*, Introduction, "Making Sense of Race," Chapter 1, "Learning To Make Sense," Chapter 2, "Fooling Senses, Calming Crisis," pp.1-47.

Th 9/16 Smith, Chapter 3, "Senses Reconstructed, Nonsense Redeemed," Chapter 4, "Finding Homer Plessy, Fixing Race," pp. 48-95.

Tu 9/21 Chapter 5, "The Black Mind of the South," pp. 96-114.

*Th 9/23 Chapter 6, "The *Brown* Concertina," pp. 115-139.

***List of Places to be Visited for Journal Due**

Take-Home Midterm Examination Distributed: Due Back in Two Weeks

II. SEEING THE OTHER: PREJUDICE AND VISUALITY

Tu 9/28 **Read:** Garland-Thompson, *Staring*, Part I, "About Staring," Part II, "What Is Staring?" pp. 3-59.

Th 9/30 **Read:** Part III, "Don't Stare," pp. 63-76.

Tu 10/5 **Read:** Part IV, Starers and Starees," Part V, "Scenes of Staring," pp. 79-182.

*Th 10/7 **Read:** Part VI, "A Last Look," pp. 185-196.

***Take-Home Midterm Essay Due**

Tu 10/12 Columbus day: No Class Meeting

III. THE ALLURE, PRICE, AND PROSPECTS OF PREJUDICE

- Th 10/14 1. Untying the Knot of Bigotry: Deconstructing the Categories of Prejudice
Read: Genaro C. Armas, "Census Bureau Predicts Diverse U.S. Future," in Rothenberg, pp. 203-205; Evelyn Alsultany, "Los Intersticios: Recasting Moving Selves," Mireya Navarro, "Going beyond Black and White: Hispanics in Census Pick 'Other,'" Sonya Tafoya, "Shades of Belonging: Latinos and Racial Identity," Sonia Shah, "Asian American?" pp. 212-223.
- Tu 10/19 2. Bigotry's Building Blocks: Stereotypes
Read: Mark Snyder, "Self-Fulfilling Stereotypes," Richard D. Mohr, "Anti-Gay Stereotypes," Maurice Berger, "White Lies," Sharlene Hesse-Biber, "Am I Thin Enough Yet?," Sut Jhally, "Advertising at the Edge of the Apocalypse," Michael Parenti, "The Plutocratic Culture," in Rothenberg, pp. 597-635.
- Th 10/21 **Read:** Gregory Mantsios, "Media Magic," Jonathan Kozol, "Still Separate, Still Unequal," William Chafe, "Sex and Race," Andrea Smith, "Sexual Violence as a Tool of Genocide," Angela Davis, "Masked Racism," William Ryan, "Blaming the Victim," in Rothenberg, pp. 636-698.
- Tu 10/26 3. Everybody Pays: The Cultural Cost of Prejudice
Read: Mary Brave Bird (Crow Dog) with Richard Erdoes, "Civilize Them with a Stick," Yuri Kochiyama, "The Came the War," Frank Wu, "Yellow," Judith Ortiz Cofer, "The Myth of the Latin Woman," Mona Fayad, "The Arab Woman and I," Janice Mirikitani, "Suicide Note," Francisco Jiminez, "The Circuit," Oscar Casares, "Crossing the Border without Losing Your Past," Jewelle Gomez, "The Event of Becoming," Ziba Kashef, "This Person Doesn't Sound White," Joseph Berger, "Family Ties and the Entanglements of Caste," Joe Wood, "What I Learned about Jews," Don Sabo, "Pigskin, Patriarchy, and Pain," Dave Zirin, "The Slave Side of Sunday," in Rothenberg, pp. 403-457.

Th 10/28 **Read:** Mary Beckman, "How to Sell Humvees to Men" Tommy Avicollo, He defies You Still: The Memoirs of a Sissy," Ntozake Shange, "With No Immediate Cause," June Jordan, "Requiem for the Champ," Kelly Mayhew, "The Politics of Parenting," Stephanie Coontz, "Myth of the Opt-Out Mom," Libby Copeland, "Out of the Closet but Not Out of Middle school," Ann Gerhart, "More and More Young Women Choose Surgical 'Perfection,'" Olivia Chung, "Finding My Eye-Dentity," Alex Williams, "Before School Break, the Anorexic Challenge," Alana Allen, "My First Time," Joan Griscom, The Case of Sharon Kowalski and Karen Thompson," Joyce Avies, "Lame," Studs Terkel, "C. P. Ellis," in Rothenberg, pp. 457-516.

IV. ONESELF AS "THE OTHER": INTERNALIZING PREJUDICE

Tu 11/2 **Read:** Yoshino, *Covering*, Preface, pp. ix-xii; "An Uncovered Self," Gay Conversion," pp. 3-49.

Th 11/4 **Read:** "Gay Passing," "Gay Covering," pp. 5-107.

Tu 11/9 **Read:** "Racial Covering," "Sex-Based Covering," pp. 111-164.

Th 11/11 Veteran's Day: No Class Meeting

Tu 11/16 **Read:** "The End of Civil Rights," "The New Civil Rights," and "Epilogue," pp. 167-201.

Th 11/18 Journal Completion Day: No Scheduled Class Meeting

Fall Recess

IV. BREAKING AWAY: THE REDUCTION OF PREJUDICE ?

Tu 11/30 1. Toward a More Tolerant Society? Assessing the *Brokeback*
Phenomenon
Th 12/2 **outside class film assignment:** "Brokeback Mountain"
Tu 12/7 **Read:** Ibson, "Lessons Learned on Brokeback Mountain"

Th 12/9* Course Evaluations and Review for the Final
***Journals Due**

Tu 12/14 **Take-Home Final Examination Due at 12 Noon.**