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


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 Cultural Boundaries (lecture and discussion)

Tu 8/31

2. Making an Enemy: The Invention of Distinctions

A. Constructing Difference: Race


B. Constructing Difference: Sexuality

C. Constructing Difference: The Able Body


D. Constructing Difference: “Sensing” Race

Tu 9/14  Read:


*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


*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

Tu 10/19  2. Bigotry’s Building Blocks: Stereotypes


Tu 10/26  3. Everybody Pays: The Cultural Cost of Prejudice

IV. ONESELF AS “THE OTHER”: INTERNALIZING PREJUDICE


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


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

Fall Recess
IV. BREAKING AWAY: THE REDUCTION OF PREJUDICE?

1. Toward a More Tolerant Society? Assessing the Brokeback

Tu 11/30 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.