

AM 260J: DIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Fall 2007

Professor Joshua C. Woodfork

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Course Meeting:

Tuesday and Thursday 12:40 – 2:00 pm, Tisch Learning Center (TLC) 303

Office Hours:

TLC 305A

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30-3:30 pm, and by appointment. I am usually available before and after class. Since people frequently “drop by” during my office hours, I recommend scheduling an appointment with me in advance of your office visit.

Course Description:

An examination of the ways in which people in the United States try to reconcile the realities of cultural difference with preconceived notions of a unified America and American identity. Students will learn about the United States as a complex, heterogeneous society that has been profoundly shaped by both the connections and conflict implicit in its multicultural heritage. Students will also address interrelationships and tensions that characterize a culturally diverse democracy by examining how accepted cultural traditions intersect with contested themes such as race, the family, adoption, gender, sexuality, and education. (Fulfills social sciences requirement; designated as a Cultural Diversity course.)

Course Objectives:

- To introduce American Studies
- To foster knowledge about U.S. society and culture
- To understand the concepts of diversity, multiculturalism, race, ethnicity, racial identity, racism, intersectionality, and social justice
- To examine ways in which Americans have responded to dominant or mainstream social institutions and values
- To evaluate contemporary and historical U.S. notions of individual and group identity
- To develop skills in written and oral communication

Texts:

All of the texts are available for purchase at the Skidmore Shop and are placed in the Course Reserves in the Scriber Library.

- 1) Bell, Derrick. Ethical Ambition: Living a Life of Meaning and Worth. Bloomsbury, 2003. ISBN: 1-58234-303-9
- 2) Boylan, Jennifer Finney. She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders. Broadway, 2003. ISBN: 0-7679-1429-5
- 3) Conley, Dalton. Honky. New York: Vintage Books, 2000. ISBN: 0-375-72775-2
- 4) Kidder, Tracey. Mountains Beyond Mountains. Random House, 2004. ISBN: 0-8129-7301-1
- 5) Tatum, Beverly Daniel. "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": And Other Conversations About Race. Revised Edition. Basic Books, 2003. ISBN: 0-465-08361-7
- 6) Wolff, Jana. Secret Thoughts of an Adoptive Mother. Vista Communications, 2000/1997. ISBN: 0-9672143-1-9

Attendance:

Regular attendance is required. Students are responsible for work missed during absences. Three absences are permitted, but not encouraged. **Students missing more than three classes will have their final grade lowered.** 5 points will be deducted from the final grade for each day missed after three absences (so if you have an 80 in the class your grade will be lowered to a 75). According to the *Student Academic Handbook* and the *Faculty Advisor Handbook*, "any students who miss more than a third of the [class] sessions may expect to be barred from the final examination. In such cases, the course grade will be recorded as F."

Students are expected to arrive on time to class. Tardiness will not be permitted. **Two late arrivals** will count as one absence.

The Skidmore Honor Code and Statement:

Because the College functions as a tightly integrated community of curricular and co-curricular experiences, a strict allegiance to its standards of conduct is essential for every student's well-being and intellectual growth. Students should make certain they understand the high value we place on honesty, cooperation, and consideration and the penalties the College imposes for infractions in these areas. Skidmore not only promotes intellectual honesty vigorously but severely punishes such offenses as plagiarism and cheating on exams.

The Honor Code Commission requires students to write on their tests and exams the following statement:

"WHILE TAKING THIS EXAMINATION, I HAVE NOT WITNESSED ANY WRONGDOING, NOR HAVE I PERSONALLY VIOLATED ANY CONDITIONS OF THE SKIDMORE COLLEGE HONOR CODE."

Academic Integrity:

Any of the following acts, when committed by a student in any academic exercise, will not be tolerated and shall constitute academic dishonesty:

- *Plagiarism*: intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own, including direct quotation, paraphrase, or borrowed facts or information
- *Cheating*: intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids
- *Falsification*: intentional and unauthorized falsification or fabrication of any information or citation
- *Facilitating Academic Dishonesty*: intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of this Code.
- *Other Forms of Academic Dishonesty*: multiple submission, forgery, sabotage, or alteration will not be tolerated.

When completing your writing assignments, please consult the "Academic Integrity Checklist" and the *Skidmore Guide to Writing* (both available online). All questions regarding academic integrity should be directed to the instructor. Academic dishonesty has serious consequences and may result in failure of the assignment, failure of the course, referral to the Integrity Board, probation, suspension, or dismissal.

Disability Accommodations:

If you are a student with a disability, please bring me your semester memo of accommodations as soon as you obtain it. If you think that you need accommodations but do not yet have them, set up a meeting with the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in the Office of Student Academic Services, located in Starbuck Center. It is the student's responsibility to follow up with the instructor regarding all accommodations that require his participation. To ensure full use of testing accommodations the student is advised to speak with the instructor at least 7 days before any test or examination date listed on the syllabus.

Use of Electronic Devices:

Please turn-off all cellular telephones, pagers, and other electronic devices during class meetings. If you must have your device turned on, please switch it to vibrate or silent. Text messaging during class is unacceptable. If you are using your laptop computer to take notes or for class discussion, please do not engage in other computer related activities, such as websurfing, instant messaging, or email.

Assignments and Grading:

Class Participation – Students are expected to participate in class, reflecting their completion of assigned readings. Both quantity and quality of class participation will be considered in grading. As a class we will devise guidelines for classroom discussion. Class participation will be calculated based upon: a) attendance; b) your write-up of an

external lecture or activity that relates to course themes; c) participation in class discussion; and, if necessary, d) reading quizzes.

Film Review – Students will select and review a film with a “multicultural” focus. The multicultural focus should be evaluated. In the body of the **four-page** review, students should critique the presentation of the material, strengths, weaknesses, purpose, scope, and content. (September)

Midterm Examination (October)

Adding to the Syllabus – Students will research and compose a proposal for adding another text to our course. This proposal should take the form of a **five-page** essay where students explain why this text should be included and how its inclusion could extend and/or challenge course themes, arguments, and assumptions. (November)

Using Life History – Students will be paired up to work on a mini-life history project. They will be grouped with someone who is as “different” from themselves as possible with regard to such “markers” as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, class, nationality, class year standing, and age. Students will interview their partners inside and outside of the classroom and develop a life history of their informant, focusing on their partner’s educational and familial experiences. Students will use their interview notes to write an **eight-page** life history of their partner. (December)

Final Examination (December)

Papers are due at the beginning of class on the assigned day. PLEASE NOTE that late papers will not be accepted and a grade of zero will be recorded.

Class Participation	20%	
Film Review	10%	September 27 th
Midterm Examination	20%	October 25 th
Adding to the Syllabus	10%	November 15 th
Using Life History	20%	December 4 th
Final Examination	20%	December 18 th

Course Readings: (subject to change)

Readings are due on the date listed. *=Assignment Due.

Sept. 6 Class Introduction and Syllabus Discussion

Sept. 11 Elsa Barkley Brown, “African-American Women’s Quilting: A Framework for Conceptualizing and Teaching African-American Women’s History,”

Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 14.4 (Summer 1989): 921-929. (Library Electronic Reserve)

Toni Morrison, "Recitatif" in Ancestral House: The Black Short Story in the Americas and Europe, ed. Charles H. Rowell. Westview Press, 1995: 422-436. (Library Electronic Reserve)

- Sept. 13 Joel Spring, Chapter 1: "Deculturalization and the Claim of Racial and Cultural Superiority by Anglo-Americans" and Chapter 6: "The Great Civil Rights Movement and the New Culture Wars," Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States. 5th Edition. McGraw-Hill, 2006: 1-19; 111-142. (Handout)
- Sept. 18 Jonathan Kozol, Chapter 5: "The Equality of Innocence: Washington, D.C." in Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools. HarperPerrenial, 1991: 175-205. (Library Electronic Reserve)
- Dinesh D'Souza, "Introduction to the Vintage Edition," and Chapter 8: "Illiberal Education," in Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus. Vintage Books, 1992: xi-xx; 229-257. (Library Electronic Reserve)
- Clarence Page, "We, the Indigestibles: The Campus Culture Wars," Showing My Color: Impolite Essays on Race and Identity. HarperCollins, 1996: 257-282. (Library Electronic Reserve)
- Sept. 20 Beverly Daniel Tatum, Chapter 4: "In Search of Wisdom: Higher Education for a Changing Democracy," in Can We Talk about Race?: And Other Conversations in an Era of School Resegregation. Beacon Press, 2007: 105-126. (Library Electronic Reserve)
- Sept. 25 Beverly Daniel Tatum, "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": ix-90.
- Sept. 27 ***Film Review Due**
Tatum, "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": 93-128.
- Sept. 28 **Potential External Lecture Event/Activity:** Dr. Mary Helen Washington (University of Maryland): "African American Writers and the Cold War" @ 5:15 pm in Gannett Auditorium
- Oct. 2 Tatum, "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": 131-242.

- Oct. 4 Dalton Conley, Honky: Prologue, Chapters 1-4: xiii-52.
- Oct. 9 Conley, Honky: Chapters 5-17, Epilogue, and Author's Note: 53-207.
- Oct. 11 Career Services Guest Speaker, Penny Loretto, Office of Career Services
- Oct. 16 Jan Arminio, "Waking Up White," About Campus (March/ April 2000): 29-30. (Library Electronic Reserve)
 Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," Peace and Freedom (July/ August 1989): 10-12. (Handout)
 Marcella Fleischman Pixley and Laura Schneider VanDerPloeg, "Learning to See White," English Education 32.4 (July 2000): 278-289. (Library Electronic Reserve)
 Noel Ignatiev, "One Summer Evening," in When Race Becomes Real: Black and White Writers Confront Their Personal Histories, ed. Bernestine Singley. Chicago Review Press, 2002: 291-301. (Library Electronic Reserve)
- Oct. 17 **Potential External Lecture Event/Activity:** Dr. Sarah Willie (Swarthmore College) "Acting Black: College, Identity, and the Performance of Race" @ 7:30 pm in Gannett Auditorium
- Oct. 18 Class Visit: Dr. Sarah Willie, Associate Provost and Associate Professor of Sociology, Swarthmore College
 Sarah Willie, "Playing the Devil's Advocate: Defending a Multiracial Identity in Fractured Community," in Names We Call Home: Autobiography on Racial Identity, ed. Becky Thompson and Sangeeta Tyagi. Routledge, 1996: 275-281. (Library Electronic Reserve)
 Beverly Daniel Tatum, "Choosing to Be Black: The Ultimate White Privilege?" in When Race Becomes Real: Black and White Writers Confront Their Personal Histories, ed. Bernestine Singley. Chicago Review Press, 2002: 215-224. (Library Electronic Reserve)
- Oct. 23 Barbara Ehrenreich, "Nickel-and-Dimed On (Not) Getting By in America," Harper's Magazine (January 1999): 37-52. (Library Electronic Reserve)
- Oct. 24 **Potential External Lecture Event/Activity:** Dr. Vivyan Adair (Hamilton College): "The Missing Story of Ourselves: Poverty and the Promise of Higher Education" @ 8:00 pm in Gannett Auditorium
- Oct. 25 ***Midterm Examination**
- Oct. 30 Tracey Kidder. Parts I & II, Mountains Beyond Mountains: 1-121.

- Nov. 1 Kidder, Part III, Mountains Beyond Mountains: 125-177.
- Nov. 6 Kidder, Parts IV, V & Afterword, Mountains Beyond Mountains: 181-301.
Review the First Year Experience's 2007 Summer Reading Program website: <http://www.skidmore.edu/fye/srp/mbm/home.htm>
- Nov. 8 Jana Wolff, Secret Thoughts of an Adoptive Mother: Prologue, Chapters 1-5: 17-50.
- Nov. 13 Wolff, Secret Thoughts of an Adoptive Mother: Chapters 6-26, Epilogue: 51-163.
Henry L. Tischler, ed. "Is Transracial Adoption Cultural Genocide?" in Debating Points: Race and Ethnic Relations. Upper Saddle, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000: 62-64.
Leora Neal, "The Case against Transracial Adoption": 65-69.
Randall Kennedy, "Orphans of Separatism: The Painful Politics of Transracial Adoption": 70-76. (Handout)
- Nov. 15 ***Adding to the Syllabus Assignment Due**
Jennifer Finney Boylan, Part 1, She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders: 2-83.
- Nov. 20 Boylan, She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders. Parts 2 & 3: 87-218.
- Nov. 22 **NO CLASS** – Thanksgiving
- Nov. 27 James W. Loewen, "The Truth about the First Thanksgiving," Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong. Touchstone Press, 1995: 75-97. (Library Electronic Reserve)
Boylan, Part 4 & Afterword, She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders: 221-300.
- Nov. 29 Lynn Weber and Heather Dillaway, ed., excerpts from Understanding Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality: Case Studies. McGraw-Hill, 2002. (Handout)
Rhonda M. Williams, "Living at the Crossroads: Explorations in Race, Nationality, Sexuality, and Gender" in The House That Race Built, ed. Wahneema Lubiano. Vintage Books, 1997: 136-157. (Handout)
- Dec. 4 ***Using Life History Paper Due**
Derrick Bell, Ethical Ambition: Living a Life of Meaning and Worth: Introduction, Chapters 1-4: 1-125.

- Dec. 6 Bell, Ethical Ambition: Chapters 5-6, Conclusion: 127-178.
 Rebecca Walker, "Bellingham," Black, White, and Jewish: Autobiography of a Shifting Self. Riverhead Books, 2001: 283-287.
 (Handout)
- Dec. 11 Course Wrap-Up
 Lynn Weber, Chapter 10: "Envisioning Social Justice,"
 Understanding Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality: A Conceptual Framework. McGraw-Hill, 2001: 175-182. (Handout)
 Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "Postscript: What Is to Be Done (For Real),"
 Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States. 2nd Edition. Rowman & Littlefield, 2006: 229-241. (Handout)
- Dec. 18 ***Final Examination**, 6:00-9:00pm