ES 399  
Critical Whiteness Studies  
Winter 2010  

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Office Hours: 11:30-12:30 MW; 4-5 T  

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will explore the social construction of race by investigating and historicizing “whiteness” as a racial category in the U.S. Topics include: how and why whiteness was invented; how this category excluded and then included various European immigrants; how whiteness (and white privilege) has been sustained through social, political, economic and legal practices; and how whiteness has been contested by whites and non-whites. Students will be expected to participate in discussions on each week’s readings Challenges the notion of "race" as a biological fact, presents race as a being socially-constructed and historically determined.  

COURSE OBJECTIVES: This course gives students an opportunity to produce an original research project on the histories and/or experiences of whites as a racial group, on the racialization of white ethnic groups and/or on the projection of whiteness by non-whites. This course provides graduate students with a more in-depth and critical discovery of the histories of whites and introduces undergraduate students to the foundational texts, methodologies and theories in the field of whiteness studies.  

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Students will write a research paper that explores a subject of their choosing relative to the history of whiteness. Students will write a 15-20 page paper. Research papers are due by Wednesday, March 17. The paper should utilize primary and secondary sources, and must be original. (No revising or resubmitting papers from previous courses.) The research paper is worth 40% of your final grade.  

A one-page research proposal is due January 20. The proposal must 1) provide a clear, topic description, 2) explain why your project is significant and/or how it is original, and 3) include a preliminary bibliography. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.  

Students will write a 3-5 page analysis of a primary document (due March 11) to be used in their research paper. Among the questions explored in this paper should be: 1) What is the document and when was it created? 2) Who is the author? (include background information, if possible); 3) Who was the author’s primary audience; 4) Why was the document written, that is, what was the author’s motivation? 5) What is the document’s historical significance, why is it important? 6) What does the document suggest about the historical period in which it was written.  

Discussions will be student-led, so attendance and preparation are essential. The class participation grade consists of weekly postings on Blackboard. Questions concerning the week’s readings should be posted on Blackboard by 5 p.m. the day before class. Issues raised by postings could include a discussion of a reading’s strengths and
weaknesses, and an analysis of the author’s approach, methods, and style.

Students will be required to lead one week’s discussion. Discussion groups should prepare a 5-minute introduction to their book as well as a set of questions about the reading(s). Blackboard postings should be used as a tool to help guide discussion.

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<th>Grading Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal</td>
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<td>Primary Source Analysis</td>
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<td>Research Paper</td>
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**Plagiarism will result in a failing grade and disciplinary action.**

Your enrollment in this course is a consent to the possibility that your papers may be submitted to an online service for detecting plagiarism. If you object to this policy, it is your responsibility to drop the class before the deadline.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

**Week 1:** Introduction to Whiteness Studies
Readings:

**Week 2:** A History of Whiteness and Labor
David Roediger, Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class

**Weeks 3:** Proposals Meeting

**Week 4:** A History of Whiteness and Labor (continued)
David Roediger, Wages of Whiteness

**Weeks 5/6:** Whiteness and Culture
Eric Lott, Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class

**Week 5/Primary Source Analysis Due**

**Weeks 7/8:** A History of Whiteness and Immigration
Matthew Frye Jacobsen, Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race

**Weeks 9/10:** Challenging the Black-White Binary
Neil Foley, The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture