

WGS 150: 80 RACISM AND SEXISM IN CONTEMPORARY U.S. WINTER 2010

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Course Description

This course examines how race and gender are socially constructed and systematically maintained, and how they intersect and affect every member of society. Racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism are the major issues addressed. In studying the systems of oppression, we will use texts, news stories, films, self reflective writing, and most of all engage in dialogue with each other as a community of learners.

Required Text

Rothenberg, Paula S., ed. 2010. *Race, Class and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study*, Eighth Edition. New York: Worth Publishers

Course Objectives

Clarify and analyze the nature of historical and contemporary racist, sexist, heterosexist, and classist practices and attitudes in the U.S.

- Critically consider a variety of theoretical explanations for institutional racism, sexism, and heterosexism, and explore the differences between individual differences and institutionalized systems of oppression.
- Explore the connections among all forms of oppressions.
- Investigate several options to significantly reduce racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and other “isms” that undermine the vitality and collective power of a multicultural society
- Engage in written and oral presentations which demonstrate critical thinking
- Encourage cooperative work in small and large groups

Student learning outcomes

At the close of the semester, students will be able to:

- Show knowledge of past and present racist, sexist, heterosexist, and classist practices and attitudes in the U.S. in their writing
- Explain several theoretical explanations for racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism and explain the difference between individual prejudices and systems of oppression in an essay or exam

- Discuss some of the legal and social realities that have determined the status of women and minorities in an essay or exam
- Articulate the connection between the systems of oppression in an essay or exam
- Demonstrate some solutions for ending the social problems caused by systems of oppression in a classroom presentation
- Work cooperatively with others in small class discussion groups and on a collaborative project

Course Requirements and Grading Policy

Your final grade will be based on the following assignments and percentages:

Reading Summaries (40% of overall grade)

Every four days you must submit a summary of the assigned reading. This summary should be between 300 and 400 words, and must include a question for further inquiry into the topic. Please pose a question that can possibly be answered, not a rhetorical question or one that would require several books to answer such as “How can we stop racism?” Formulating this question will help you think critically about issues of race, gender, sexuality and class as they affect U.S. society today.

There will be four of these responses, which must be submitted through Blackboard no later than 11PM on the following days: December 31st, January 4, January 8 and January 12. When submitting these responses, please label your document with your first initial and last name, and paper number. Example: E Sabogal Summary 1.

Please note that if the assignment is not submitted on time, this section of Blackboard will close and you will not be able to submit your assignment. I WILL NOT ACCEPT LATE PAPERS OR PAPERS SENT TO ME VIA EMAIL. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Forum/Discussion Boards (40% of overall grade)

There will be two discussion board assignments:

1) Online Discussion Board (20%)

You are required to post an answer to the discussion question that I will post by 6PM on the following days: December 30, January 3, January 7 and January 11. The questions will come from the readings due the next day.

After you have posted a response to my original question, you must then respond thoughtfully to at least one of the answers posted by a fellow student. You must post your first and second responses no later than January 1 (Discussion Board 1), January 5 (Discussion Board 2), January 9 (Discussion Board 3), and January 13 (Discussion Board 4) by 11PM.

Responses must be well thought out. Don't submit work that is rushed or in an “instant message” or “chat room” format. For more information, see the instruction sheet of online discussion assignment in the Syllabus folder of the Blackboard site.

2) Responses to links and videos posted about the four main topics discussed in this class: Racism, Sexism, Heterosexism, and Classism (20%)

Please make sure that your computer has streaming capabilities. In order to watch a streaming video you must have Windows Media Player. You are also required to watch videos, go to websites and/or take quizzes.

These materials are posted in the “Course Documents” section of Blackboard. You will need to post your reactions’ to four assignments by 11PM on the following days: January 2 (Racism response), January 6 (Sexism response), January 10 (Heterosexism response), and January 14 (Classism response).

Please note that you must keep up with the stipulated deadlines. Your responses to the online discussions must be submitted on time. No exceptions.

Reviews of Films (20% of overall grade)

As part of the course you will also be required to watch two movies and write a short review of each. These movies are available through the WPU library, and through most public libraries. They are also available through Netflix.

The instructions and format for viewing and responding to the films will be posted on Blackboard. The first film review will be due on January 7 and the second film review will be due on January 15 by 11PM.

Plagiarism and cheating in any form will not be tolerated.

Grading Scale and Criteria:

A = 94 – 100	A- = 90 – 93	B+ = 87 – 89
B = 84 – 86	B- = 80 – 83	C+ = 77 – 79
C = 74 – 76	C- = 70 – 73	D+ = 65 – 69
D = 60 – 64	F = below 60	

A: Unusually outstanding performance in all areas of the class

B: Exceeds description of assignments

C: Satisfactorily meets assignments and overall class performance

D: Work submitted and class performance fall below class description and expectations

F: Incomplete or unacceptable work and class performance.

Student Responsibilities

I expect that every member of the class will respect the views, opinions and beliefs of the other members. We may not always agree, but we must always respect the right of others to differ in their thoughts. It is possible, that in a class of this nature, the discussion may at times go to areas where people would want their privacy of disclosed information respected. I would hope that this is something that we can all adhere to and keep issues of a confidential manner between ourselves as a class.

WPUNJ Student Email:

The class will communicate through the university email account. All students are to check this account daily.

Turning in Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be accepted. No exceptions.

Student Conduct & Plagiarism

Violations of the Academic Integrity Policy will include, but not be limited to the following examples:

Plagiarism is the copying from a book, article, notebook, video or other source, material whether published or unpublished, without proper credit through the use of quotation marks, footnotes and other customary means of identifying sources, or passing off as one's own, the ideas, words, writings, programs and experiments of another, whether or not such actions are intentional or unintentional. Plagiarism also includes submitting, without the consent of the professor, an assignment already tendered for academic credit in another course.

Academic Support Services:

Students can receive free tutoring in most general education subjects and participate in study skills workshops through the Academic Support Center (973-720-3324) located in Hunziker Wing 218.

Students can also receive help in analytical writing, preparing research papers, and developing work processing skills by contacting the Writing Center (973-720-2633) located in the Atrium.

Important: Please remember: if you are having difficulties, talking with me is the best way to resolve them. I can't help you if I don't know what is going on.

COURSE SCHEDULE

DECEMBER 27:

Read syllabus and instructions; process course expectations and requirements. **Please note that late assignments will not be accepted, no exceptions.** Contact your instructor with any questions you may have.

Write a minimum of one complete paragraph introducing yourself to everyone. One complete paragraph is a minimum of four-eight sentences. Due in "Discussion Board: Introductions" by December 29.

RACISM

READ:

Part I: The Social Construction of Difference: Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality, pp. 7-12.

“Indian Tribes” pp. 499-503

“The Black Codes” pp. 528-536

“An Act Prohibiting the Teaching of Slaves to Read” p. 510

“Racial Formations” Pp. 13-22

“The Ethics of Living Jim Crow” pp. 23-32

“How Jews Became White Folks” Pp. 38-53

“Domination and Subordination” pp. 108-115

“Defining Racism: ‘Can We Talk?’” pp. 123-130

“Smells Like Racism” pp. 141-149

SUMMARY 1 is due December 31th by 11PM.

ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARD 1: I will post the first question on December 30th by 6PM. In your initial response, you should clearly show that you understand the material assigned. In addition, you must respond to at least two other students’ responses. Please note that this board will close at 11PM on January 1st.

GO to the “Course Documents” section of Blackboard. Click on “Race: The Power of an Illusion.” Click again on “learn more” and go through the six presentations starting with “What is Race?”

GO to website: <http://projectimplicit.net> and take the Race quiz

WATCH: White Privilege

Post your reactions to the project and videos on the discussion board labeled RACISM. Due on January 2 by 11PM

SEXISM

READ:

“The Antisuffragists” pp. 515-519

“Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender” Pp. 54-65.

“Patriarchy” pp. 153-162

“Women Losing Ground” pp. 342-344

“The Education of Jessica Rivera” pp. 354-356

“Am I Thin Enough Yet?” pp. 587-594

“Refusal to Fire Unattractive Saleswoman Led to Dismissal Suit Contends” pp. 258-260

“The Myth of the Latin Woman” pp. 392-396

“The Arab Woman and I” pp. 397-398

SUMMARY 2 is due on January 4 by 11PM.

ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARD # 2. The second question will be posted on January 3 by 6PM. The board will close at 11PM, January 5. Make sure you have provided an initial response to the readings assigned and responded to at least two of your classmates.

WATCH videos: “Sexism Sells” and “Sexism, Strength and Dominance: Masculinity in Disney Films” and streaming video: “Killing Me Softly 4.” Post your comments on the discussion board labeled SEXISM by January 6 at 11PM.

REVIEW FILM ESSAY #1

View film (choose between “Crash,” “Monster’s Ball,” or “American History X.”) and write review essay. Instructions are posted on “Syllabus” section of Blackboard. <u>Essay is due January 7 at 11PM.</u>
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HETEROSEXISM

READ:

“From Criminals to Psychopaths to the Family Next Door” pp. 558-564

“The Social Construction of Sexuality” pp. 65-68

“The Invention of Heterosexuality” pp. 68-80

“Masculinity as Homophobia” pp. 80-92

“The Case of Sharon Kowalski and Karen Thompson” pp. 468-476

“Out of the Closet But Not Out of Middle School” pp. 451-455

“Anti-Gay Stereotypes” pp. 577-583

SUMMARY 3 is due January 8 by 11PM

ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARD #3. The third question will be posted on January 7 by 6PM. The discussion board will close at 11PM, January 9. Make sure you have provided an initial response to the readings assigned and responded to at least two of your classmates.

WATCH: Streaming video: “Codes of Gender,” video “Science & Homosexuality: Nature vs. Nurture” and READ: “Myth and Reality” posted on the “Course Documents” section of Blackboard. Post your reaction on the discussion board labeled HETEROSEXISM by January 10 at 11PM.

CLASSISM

READ:

“Class in America—2009” p177-192

“Closing Doors on Americans’ Housing Choices” pp. 281-282

“Wealthy Often Win the Race for Merit-Based College Aid” pp. 288-290

“Imagine a Country—2009” pp. 307-316

“Income Gap is Widening Data Shows” pp. 317-319

“Billionaires R Us” pp. 321-322

“Forty Acres and a Gap in Wealth” pp. 328-330

“Cause of Death: Inequality” pp. 360-365

“Advertising at the End of the Apocalypse” pp. 595-603

SUMMARY 4 is due January 12 by 11PM.

ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARD # 4. The last question will be posted on January 11 by 6PM. The board will close at 11PM, January 13. Make sure you have provided an initial response to the readings assigned and responded to at least two of your classmates.

WATCH Video: The Ten Chairs of Inequality

Watch: The Story of Stuff.

Do The Ecological Footprint Quiz

Post your reactions to all on the discussion board labeled CLASSISM.

Due on January 14 by 11PM

REVIEW FILM ESSAY #2
View film (choose between “Thelma and Louise,” “Real Women Have Curves,” or “Transamerica.”) and write review essay 2. Instructions are posted on “Syllabus” section of Blackboard. <u>Essay is due January 15</u>