

**Critical Studies in Whiteness CES 204**  
**CUE 419 T/TH 12.00-1.15 Spring 2011**  
**Instructor: Joy Taylor**  
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**Office Hours: T/TH 11.00-12.00, or by appointment**

“The Eurocentric concept of race, and its corollaries of white racism and white supremacy, is not just a form of ethnocentrism that has existed in almost every society. It is more extreme than racial and cultural chauvinism because it has given rise to a more systematic, comprehensive, integrated set of ideological beliefs. All of the major European philosophies, social theories, and literary traditions of the modern age have been implicated in this process.” – G. Reginald Daniel in *Race and Multiraciality in Brazil and the United States*.

“To be white at that school, as in most schools, was to have a whole world of extracurricular opportunity opened to oneself—a world where if you were a mediocre student (as I definitely was), you could still find a niche, an outlet for your talents, passions, and interests in the form of theatre. To be black or brown at that same school was to ensure that no matter how good an actor or actress you were, or were capable of becoming, you were unlikely to be in a position to avail yourself of this same outlet for your creativity. Unless the drama teacher is prepared to violate the aesthetic sensibilities of the audience, which is rare, and cast a person of color in a role that is traditionally played by a white person (like Romeo or Juliet, or Hamlet, or Snoopy even), black, Latino, and Asian kids are out of luck” – Tim Wise in *White Like Me*.

“In terms of cinema, a dominant cultural institution, the meaning of race and the representation of identity impact our historical lives and future because, like race, cinematic representations, styles and stories are ubiquitous. Cinema is everywhere a fact in our lives, saturating our leisure time, our conversations, and our perceptions of each other and of self. Because of this, race in cinema is neither fictional or illusion. It is real because it is meaningful and consequential. We learn about other people, other cultures, ourselves by watching Hollywood films over and over again—all too often without questioning what we see. Hence, we do not escape reality when watching cinema uncritically; we perpetuate real ideologies when we think of cinema as ‘only the movies.’ To question cinema – the central goal of this book and its contributors – is to resist ideology.” – Daniel Bernardi in *The Persistence of Whiteness*

“To travel is to possess the world” – travel lecturer Elias Burton Holmes, in his autobiography, *The World is Mine*.

**In this reading intensive class we will address the following, in turn:**

- (1) Racial formation in the Americas, with emphasis on the United States;
- (2) Racialized performances in everyday life;
- (3) The search for American identity and the rediscovery of America in Hollywood films;
- (4) Whiteness as the norm in Hollywood films;
- (5) The trajectory of representations of the racial Other;
- (6) Neo-orientalism and the political-economy of collaboration;
- (7) The construction of whiteness and other-whiteness;
- (8) Reading popular culture texts as ideological artifacts.

**Requirements**

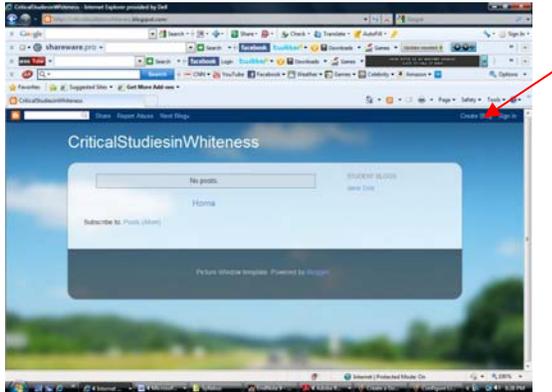
**\* Participation:** Students will participate in class discussions. There are three ways to enhance your participation grade and contribution to class: You can e-mail me comments or questions prior to class; You can ask questions during class; You can also enhance your participation grade by reading the daily newspapers in print or online and bringing the class's attention to relevant articles/developments. Note that your contribution must be based on the reading assigned for that day, and cannot simply reflect your opinion. Here are some guidelines for class participation:

- (1) Be conversant about the interconnections of race, class, gender, nationality, and sexual orientation. Demonstrate how race is socially constructed.
- (2) Recognize that your social location exists as part of a larger socio-historical context.
- (3) Avoid discussing a problem in egocentric terms by identifying multiple perspectives. Discuss the differences between and among alternative views.
- (4) Demonstrate how cultural norms and values are shaped by a socio-historical context.
- (5) Consider how dominant filmic narratives might be unsettled, reframed, and/or challenged.
- (6) Think of your involvement in the classroom as a matter of social justice.
- (7) Above all: BE ENGAGED. BE CONSIDERATE. LISTEN CAREFULLY. SPEAK THOUGHTFULLY.

**\* Online journaling on your own blog site:** The blog assignments are intended for you to think critically about class material – lecture, readings, class discussion, etc. I will periodically assign prompts to which students will respond by journaling online. Think of your blog as a virtual journal. Your writing will be evaluated according to the following criteria: (a) depth and complexity of insights and ideas; (b) choices and uses of evidence; (c) logic of organization; (d) address of target audience; (e) grammar and mechanics.

To set up your account:

(1) Go to “Create Blog” at the top right corner of the screen: <http://criticalstudiesinwhiteness.blogspot.com/>



(2) Create a username by using the first letter of your first name + your entire last name + the year that you are graduating from WSU. Example: Jane Doe → jdoe2012. You do not need to have a Google account to sign up; use any Email address.



(3) You will need to Email me (1) your url (2) your site name – your First and Last Name – so that I can add it to the course blog.

**Example:** <http://jdoe2012.blogspot.com/> Jane Doe

\* **Cultural Artifacts Folder** (12 artifacts): Think of this as a museum exhibit and you are the main curator responsible for putting together what you think best represents American culture. Each student will purchase a folder with metal clasps to store 12 artifacts dealing with the key concepts used in this class. For example, if you happen to find a bumper sticker that stereotypes a certain class of people, stick it on an 8.5X11 white sheet of paper. If you find a children’s book at the Neill library, you may photocopy a page out of the book and include that as your artifact. You can also include songs, but you will need to type out the lyrics. Under each artifact, you must write a small blurb – typed and 5-7 sentences in length. Your blurb must cite 1 source (any format is fine) from the assigned readings, and you may use a source only once for the Folder. Keep it to one artifact/blurb per page, and give a title to your blurb. For example, “**Bumper Sticker**” or “**Children’s Book Producing Dominant Gender Roles,**” etc. The goal of the assignment is to examine mundane sources that you would come across in your everyday life. You may select up to 7 artifacts from the Internet.

For the last page of the Folder assignment, type out a double-spaced, 1-page summary about how the cultural artifacts come together to produce racial meaning in American society. Please: No three ring binders.

\* **Index Cards:** Periodically, I will ask you to respond to the assigned readings by, for example, asking you to generate 2 discussion questions from the reading. The cards are designed to promote your engagement with the material and to facilitate class discussion. Note that you will need to turn in your card at the beginning of class. I will not accept any late cards, no exceptions. Please purchase a pack of index cards from the bookstore at your earliest convenience.

\* **Film Handouts/quizzes:** These will be distributed to students to help them critically read a film. In place of a handout, a pop quiz based on the assigned reading for that day may be administered.

\* **Your “Final”: 20-25 MINUTE GROUP PRESENTATION:** Each group will discuss their analysis of a recent Hollywood film outlined in *The Persistence of Whiteness*. For their presentation, students will select one chapter from the book, and all students will be held responsible for the selected readings. More information as the semester progresses.

### **BOOKS AND MATERIALS:**

*Course Reader.* Available at Cougar Copies in the CUB.

*The Persistence of Whiteness: Race and Contemporary Hollywood Cinema* by Daniel Bernardi. 2008.

*Race and Multiraciality in Brazil and the United States: Converging Paths?* by G. Reginald Daniel. 2006.

### **Other Materials**

- ✓ Provide your own office supplies: index cards, paper, clips, pens, pencils, glue (to paste your blurb for Cultural Artifacts folder) etc.

**CLASS IS COMPOSED OF:** Lecture & PowerPoint, Discussion, Cultural Artifacts Folder, and a Group Final Presentation. We use our on-campus meetings to reinforce course topics. Missed activities cannot be made up, and you are responsible for receiving the handouts & viewing the films on the assigned dates. Students will have read the material before coming to class.

**Attendance:** PLEASE NOTE: IF YOU ARRIVE LATE OR LEAVE CLASS EARLY, OR SIMPLY DECIDE TO TAKE A BREAK DURING CLASS, YOU MAY BE GIVEN A PARTIAL ABSENCE. In total you will be allowed 4 absences, no questions asked. After this, **WHETHER excused and unexcused**, each missed class will lead to a 5% deduction (per day) from your overall grade. Attendance usually will be taken at the beginning of class, so lateness will potentially lead to an absence for that day. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements made while you were away.

**Office Hours:** Do come see me if you have questions or comments about the class, the readings, and so forth. I check my Email once a day, so this mode of communication usually yields the quickest response.

**Grading Procedures:** If you have a concern about a grade or a question about your standing in the class, this type of conversation is best suited for office hours.

5 Blog Posts X 50 Points each = **250 Points Total**

1 Cultural Artifacts Folder: [12 Artifacts/Blurb X 10 Points each] + [1 Summary X 30 Points each] = **150 Points Total**

20 Index Cards X 10 Points each = **200 Points Total**

10 Film Handouts/quizzes X 10 Points each = **100 Points Total**

**Cultural Artifacts Journal: 150 Points**

**Blogs: 250 Points**

+ **Class Participation: 100 Points**

**Index Cards: 200 Points**

**10 Film Handouts/quizzes: 100 Points**

**Final Presentation: 200 Points**

**1000 Points Estimated Total**

## **CLASS POLICIES**

**Late Policies:** You must complete all assignments in order to pass the class.

**Being Late:** I expect everyone to be on time and ready to begin class at the scheduled time. Habitually or excessively late students may be asked to leave/not enter on a given day. Administrative action may be taken in extreme cases.

DO NOT count on me to drop you if you are no longer planning on taking the course.

**Behavior:** Of course, I expect cordial, polite, respectful adult behavior from all students all the time. Anyone being disruptive or offensive will be dismissed from class and reported to the administration for further action. No non-enrolled students or other people are allowed in the classroom during class.

**Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism or cheating of any kind will not be tolerated. To avoid a grade of "F" for the assignment in question, or a grade of "F" for the entire course, always cite your sources and do not claim someone else's work as your own. Should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty, we will discuss the situation with you before the penalties are enforced. Consult the WSU Student Handbook for details on plagiarism and cheating.

**Student Accommodation:** Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC). All accommodations MUST be approved through the DRC (Washington Building, Room 217). Please stop by or call 509-335-3417 to make an appointment with a disability specialist.

**Campus Safety Plan/Emergency Information:** In the interest of campus safety and emergency procedures, please become familiar with the information available on the WSU-provided websites. <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu> Campus Safety Plan; <http://oem.wsu.edu/emergencies> Emergency management web site; <http://alert.wsu.edu> WSU Alert site.

**\*\* Last Word:** *The Instructor reserves the right to alter any of the above information as she sees fit to meet the instructional objectives and/or overall outcomes of the course.\*\**

**One more Final Word – Extra Credit as the opportunity arises.**

Grading Scale

**A grade of “A”:** Suggests that a student’s work is outstanding to excellent; it reflects the content and focus of the course and shows thoughtful engagement with, and critical insight into, the complexities of the material. Assignments are well written and articulated.

**A grade of “B”:** Suggests that a student’s work is very good to good; it reflects a very strong and solid understanding of the material. There is some engagement with the materials, but occasionally does not go the extra step in critical analysis. Well written and articulated.

**A grade of “C”:** Suggests the student’s work is adequate; it reflects a fair grasp of, but often a weak engagement with, the material. Doesn’t go very far in analysis or reflects a lack of comprehension of the issues represented in the material. Some writing limitations.

**A grade of “D”:** Suggests the student’s work shows some but little effort, or engagement and does not comprehend the material, or reveals a lack of reading, attention, or attendance. Poorly written.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:** Ideal flow only. Note that the instructor reserves the right to alter any of the above information as she sees fit to meet the instructional objectives and/or overall outcomes of the course.

**Week 1**

**T Jan 11:** Syllabus.

**TH Jan 13:** Class introduction.

**Week 2**

**T Jan 18:** Chapter 1 in Daniel book

**TH Jan 20:** Chapter 2 in Daniel book

**Week 3**

**T Jan 25:** Chapter 3 in Daniel book

**TH Jan 27:** Chapter 4 in Daniel book

**Week 4**

**T Feb 1:** Chapter 8 in Daniel book

**TH Feb 3:** Contemporary Racial Events (Reader)

**Week 5**

**T Feb 8:** Going Indian (Reader). Watch and discuss *Dances with Wolves*.

**TH Feb 10:** Introduction in Bernardi's book (*The Persistence of Whiteness*).

**Week 6**

**T Feb 15:** Winnebagos, Cherokees, Apaches, and Dakotas: The Persistence of Stereotyping of American Indians in American Advertising Brands (Reader)

**TH Feb 17:** Tourism and American Identity: Kodak's Conspicuous Consumers Abroad (Reader)

**Week 7**

**T Feb 22:** Mindful Violence: <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc47.2005/KillBill/> Watch and discuss *The Last Samurai*.

**TH Feb 24:** Have You Eaten? (Reader)

**Week 8**

**T Mar 1:** The Chinese of the American Imagination: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Trade Card Images (Reader)

**TH Mar 3:** and The Orientalist Perspective:

[www.gameology.org/essays/the\\_orientalist\\_perspective\\_culturalimperialism\\_in\\_gaming](http://www.gameology.org/essays/the_orientalist_perspective_culturalimperialism_in_gaming)

### **Week 9**

**T Mar 8:** What is 'White Trash'? Stereotypes and Economic Conditions of Poor Whites in the United States (Reader). Watch and discuss *Joe Dirt*.

**TH Mar 10:** Being Born in the U.S. to White Parents is Almost Boring: Whiteness as a Meaningless Identity (Reader)

### **Spring Break: No Class (Mar 14-18)**

### **Week 10**

**T Mar 22:** Dance, Culture, and Popular Film: Considering Representations in *Save the Last Dance* (Reader). Watch and discuss *Save the Last Dance*.

**TH Mar 24:** Situated Meanings of 'White' as a Cultural Identity (Reader)

### **Week 11**

**T Mar 29:** Women, Sexuality, and the Black Breast (Reader)

**TH Mar 31:** Toward a Framework for Reading Magazine Covers (Reader)

### **Week 12**

**T Apr 5:** Prepare for Final Presentation

**TH Apr 7:** Prepare for Final Presentation

### **Week 13**

**T Apr 12:** Final Presentations.

**TH Apr 14:** Final Presentations.

### **Week 14**

**T Apr 19:** Final Presentations.

**TH Apr 21:** Final Presentations.

### **Week 15**

**T Apr 26:** Final Presentations.

**TH Apr 28:** Final Presentations.

**Week 16: Turn in Cultural Artifacts Folder to the Comparative Ethnic Studies office, Wilson 111, on Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup> by 4.00 P.M.**