

WRA125-007
Race & Ethnicity in America
Fall 2012
Tues. & Thurs. 12:40pm-2:30pm
203 IM West

Office: Library Café by Sparty's
Office hours: Thurs. 2:30-4:30pm
& by appointment

Overview

This course will explore how you understand race in America. Every assignment will ask you to critically question America's understanding of this race as well as your own understanding of race. This mode of inquiry will be based around the concept of stories. We have all been told different and ranging stories about race – from our family, popular culture to academic and professional disciplines. These different stories have then impacted our approach and attitudes about race in America. This class will then attempt to uncover those stories and critically question how the rhetorical act of telling a story can impact larger American values and perceptions of race. Additionally, you will be asked to critically inquire about the individual stories you have been told and evaluate how they have influenced your understanding of race.

Further, while this course asks you to critically think and write, it also asks that you develop a broader understanding of what it means to write. Often times, race is a taboo or silent operator in American society. This course attempts to challenge such silence and give voice to the “invisible” or subconscious stories that are told about race. As such, our class will be posting critical thoughts, reflections, and assignments to our Weebly blog, <http://wra125raceinamerica.weebly.com/index.html>. Specifically, by posting your writing to a blog, your writing becomes visible to a global online world. As such, your thoughts and writing have the opportunity to reach an audience well beyond our class. Therefore, this course attempts to create not only better writers for the classroom but better writers for the world.

Please note, this course is not intended for you to think about race and ethnicity as I think about it. Instead, this course is a place, for you to critically question your experiences with race and ethnicity and come to your own well-developed conclusions about how it operates and is defined in America. Therefore, I am not looking for any particular “correct” answer or approach to race and ethnicity. What I am looking for is substantial effort on your part into questioning race and ethnicity from your own experiences.

Goals

As a tier-one writing course, all of our goals will align with MSU's tier-one writing goals. Additionally, we will strive as a class to achieve the following goals:

- To develop, individually and as a class, how race gets told through stories
- To critically think and question about the stories you have been told about race

- To write for a purpose beyond the classroom by using rhetorical skills to convey your thoughts with a global audience
- To develop a broader understanding of what writing does and can do

Required Materials

- *The Little, Brown Handbook*, MSU 7th Edition (Aaron)
- *The Curious Researcher* (Ballenger)
- Additional course materials (e.g. handouts, articles, assignment sheets, additional reading materials) *may* also be assigned throughout the semester. These materials will be readily made available to you.
- A subscription to Eli, please see <http://www.elireview.com/>

Major Assignments

There are five major projects in this course: four essays and one alternative form of presentation. The attached schedule outlines the due dates for these major projects.

- Project #1: Racial Memoir - **10% (100 points)**
 - *What stories/experiences has your family (this can be understood broadly) told you about race?*
- Project #2: Race in Popular Culture Analysis - **15% (150 points)**
 - *How has race been told as a story in American popular culture?*
- Project #3: Race in Academia/Professional World - **25% (250 points)**
 - *What stories does the academic and/or professional world tell about race?*
- Project #4: Generational Remix - **20% (200 points)**
 - *What is your generation's story about race in America?*
- Project #5: Open Editorial - **20% (200 points)**
 - *What story do you want to write about race? Write that story in an open editorial.*
- Participation: Blog Entries, Peer Review, Misc. Activities - **10% (100 points)**

Grading Scale

There are 1000 points possible. Grade distribution occurs follows this breakdown:

Grading Scale:

93-100	(930-1000 points) = 4.0
87-92	(870-929 points) = 3.5
82-86	(820-869 points) = 3.0
77-81	(770-819 points) = 2.5
72-76	(720-769 points) = 2.0
67-71	(670-719 points) = 1.5
63-66	(630-669 points) = 1.0
<62	(<629 points) = 0.0

*For each project, evaluation guidelines will be handed out. If at any time you have a question about your grade, please email me about it.

Policies

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory in that all courses in the Tier I Writing Program are interactive and require high levels of student participation. Attendance at all class sessions is expected. During the first 5 minutes of class, I will pass around a “sign-in sheet” to record attendance. You may miss one week of class (i.e. two classes) without affecting your grade. You should reserve these absences to address the observance of religious holidays not acknowledged by the University calendar, family events, serious illness, etc. If you miss more than one week of class, your final grade for the course will be lowered .3 for each additional individual absence. Coming to class late (more than 5 minutes after we begin) 3 times will equal one absence. Sleeping in class or engaging in activities not related to class will also be counted as absences.

With this said, if there are personal issues, severe illnesses or other serious issues impacting your attendance for this class, please feel free to notify me. I am willing to make arrangements if serious factors outside of your control are impacting your course attendance.

Office Hours & Conferences: I will be available to meet for two hours Thursday’s following class (2:30pm-4:30pm). At this time, I will be at Sparty’s Cyber Café at the main Library. Please use this time to seek me out with any questions you may have about the course, your grades, or your papers. If I cannot make these office hours, I will notify you in advance. Additionally, if you cannot make these office hours, please email me. I am happy to set up outside conferences.

Email & Facebook: I anticipate that email will be readily used to ask specific questions. However, I encourage general questions (i.e. when is this assignment due?) to be posted on our Facebook page. Often times your peers can answer these questions. As such, please feel free to use our Facebook page for any clarification that may be necessary. I will be taking your participation and use of Facebook into account when determining your overall participation grade. In addition, your comments and replies on Facebook are great ways to show your engagement and participation in the class. With that said, I do not want to overall discourage emails. However, please be wise about your use of email. If you have a specific and/or personal question (i.e. what grade did I receive on the previous paper OR can we schedule a conference next week Tuesday?) please feel free to email me.

Eli Review: You need to purchase a subscription to Eli Review. The link to Eli follows: <http://www.elireview.com/>. I have purposely not assigned several books and will provide pdf copies of articles for you to read in order to compensate for you needing to purchase a \$25 subscription to this service. We will frequently use this software for our peer review sessions.

MSU Writing Center: As a writing center employee, I strongly recommend its use to my students. The Writing Center can help you with any stage of your writing and is devoted to every student's academic success. You can schedule an appointment to work with the Writing Center on their website, <http://writing.msu.edu/>. Please note, as your instructor and Writing Center employee, I prefer that you do not schedule a time to meet with me at the Writing Center. To discuss your paper, please make arrangements with me to do so during my office hours. I elected to put in place this policy in order to maintain an instructor-student relationship both within and outside of class. However, with your completion of my class, I am more than happy to work with you at the Writing Center.

Late Assignments: Late major assignments will be lowered one full letter grade for each day past the due date (the first reduction occurs at the start of the class in which the assignment is due). All assignments not posted to the Angel dropbox and to the blog by 11:59pm of the due date will be considered late. Further, all assignments posted to the blog must be posted by the date listed. If they are late, points will be deducted.

Completion of Assignments: The First-Year Writing Program requires that students produce a significant amount of writing to fulfill their requirement. **Additionally, you must complete all major assignments to fulfill this requirement and receive a passing grade in WRA 125.**

Academic Honesty

I take academic honesty very seriously. Plagiarism, of any sort, will not be accepted and/or tolerated in this class. If plagiarism is evident and/or suspected, I will pursue it in accordance with the WRAC Department Guidelines and University Policy. Michigan State University has adopted the following statement about academic policy:

GENERAL STUDENT REGULATIONS

- **1.00 PROTECTION OF SCHOLARSHIP AND GRADES**
- The principles of truth and honesty are fundamental to the educational process and the academic integrity of the University; therefore, no student shall:
 - **1.01** claim or submit the academic work of another as one's own.
 - **1.02** procure, provide, accept or use any materials containing questions or answers to any examination or assignment without proper authorization.
 - **1.03** complete or attempt to complete any assignment or examination for another individual without proper authorization.
 - **1.04** allow any examination or assignment to be completed for oneself, in part or in total, by another without proper authorization.
 - **1.05** alter, tamper with, appropriate, destroy or otherwise interfere with the research, resources, or other academic work of another person.
 - **1.06** fabricate or falsify data or results.

Procedures for responding to cases of academic honesty and possible repercussions are outlined in Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide. They can also be found on the web at: <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/honestylinks.html>. Note the new procedures require that instances of academic dishonesty be reported through the

registrar's office and forwarded to the Dean of the College in which the student's major resides.

Class Participation:

To facilitate critical thinking, reading, and writing, I encourage dialogue and argument; thus, all **thoughtful** comments will be entertained. We all come from different cultures, geographical locations, and demographics. This class will be discussing different cultures and backgrounds in regards to race and ethnicity in America. It is important that all members of the class show each other respect as we discuss these issues in class. Further, let me remind you that this is an online class where anyone can see your thoughts and comments. As such, I will not tolerate any bigotry in my class and will take the necessary action(s) to eliminate any such attitudes. The rule here is simple: **show respect towards others and their thoughts/beliefs.**

Please note, while I tried to be comprehensive in this syllabus, it is subject to change and I reserve the right to change it based on the needs of this class. Please feel free to talk to me about any questions or concerns you may have over the course of the semester.