

**History 227**  
**The History and Practice of Whiteness**  
**Tuesday/Thursday 11:00-12:20, King 127**  
**Spring 2014**

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Office Hours:  
Mondays, 10:00-12:00  
Thursdays, 1:30-3:30  
(and by appointment)



“No one was white before he/she came to America.”  
James Baldwin

This course examines the construction, practices, boundaries, and power of whiteness throughout American history. Moving chronologically through five different eras—the colonial period before 1790, the early Republic from 1790-1860, the age of immigration from 1860 to the 1924 immigration law, the period from 1924 through 1965, and the post-1965 era—we will explore a range of questions about how racial categories and racial hierarchies have operated in America’s past and present. Who gets to be white in different historical eras and how has that line been determined? What does being white mean for those defined as such? How have the boundaries of whiteness been policed and how have those on the borders sought whiteness? How has whiteness been privileged in different historical eras and what role have the courts, the government, cultural representations, and personal actions played in establishing and promoting racial prerogatives? How has whiteness historically been understood, criticized and challenged? Since whiteness is an identity that is intersectional and relational, the class will particularly explore how policing sexuality has served to construct and maintain whiteness, as well as how class, gender, and ethnic background shape the experience of being “white.”

Over the course of the semester, we will examine these questions and explore ongoing scholarly debates through readings from a range of fields, including history, American Studies, critical legal studies, sociology, and literary studies. The course will also consider the invention, practice, and privileging of whiteness in a variety of primary sources, from memoirs to films to fiction to political tracts. History 227 is *not* a lecture class. Although I will sometimes offer short lectures and will always try to provide contextual information, the idea and workings of race in the United States is a topic that demands engagement and discussion. Much of our class time will be spent discussing and debating the readings; the quality of class will thus depend on each

student coming to class prepared to talk thoughtfully about the assigned readings. This also counts as an elective toward the majors in Comparative American Studies and GSFS.

### **Required Texts:**

The following books are available at the bookstore and are on print reserve at Mudd Library:

Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina*  
David Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America*  
Ian Haney-Lopez, *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race*  
Matthew Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*  
David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*  
Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream*  
Gregory Williams, *Life On the Color Line: The True Story of a White Boy Who Discovered He Was Black*

All course readings not from the required books (marked with an asterisk (\*) on the syllabus) are available on the course blackboard site under the "Course Readings" heading. I highly recommend that you print out the online readings and bring them with you to class.

Besides the required readings, there are two required films for the course (*Birth of a Nation* and *Gentlemen's Agreement*). These films will be shown outside of our regular class session at a time and place to be determined as a group.

### **Course Requirements:**

The main requirements for History 227 are three papers (a 3-4 page primary source analysis and two 5-6 page readings papers), and a take-home final exam. In addition, grades will also be based on a group presentation, and attendance and participation (including three short ungraded written responses). All assignments must be handed in for students to receive credit for the class.

#### **Attendance, Participation, and 3 short ungraded responses (15% of total grade):**

Your active involvement with the class is extremely important. Attendance and participation are critical to your learning and your success in History 227. Therefore, if you miss more than **three** classes over the course of the semester, your final grade will be affected. For every absence beyond the third, **five points will be deducted from your final course grade**. Excused absences will not count towards this total; absences will only be excused in cases of serious illness, real personal/family emergencies, or unavoidable conflicts, and you must inform me of your absence **in advance** of class if you do not want it to count as unexcused.

Please come to every class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that day on the syllabus. Class will always focus on the readings; if you are not prepared, you will not be able to participate. If you have trouble speaking in class, please come see me during my office hours so we can develop strategies to help you become a more active participant in class discussion.

As part of your participation grade, you are required to turn in three short reflective papers (of 1-2 pages). These short writings will not be formally graded, but they will factor into your participation grade. The first response, which will ask you to reflect upon your own positionality in relation to the course topic and material, will be due at our second class meeting of February 6<sup>th</sup>. The other two will focus on the required films and will be due on the days that the films are being discussed.

**Primary Source Analysis Paper (15% of final grade)—Due in class, March 11th**

Each student will write a short paper (3-4 pages) analyzing an academic article about race published between 1880 and 1920. The paper will be due at the beginning of our class session on March 11. More details will be posted to the Assignments section of the Blackboard

**Reading Discussion Papers (2 papers, each 20% of final grade)**

Five of the class sessions have been set aside specifically for the discussion of specific books:

- February 18: Discussion of *Suspect Relations*
- March 4: Discussion of *The Wages of Whiteness*
- March 20: Discussion of *White By Law*
- April 17: Discussion of *Killers of the Dream*
- April 24: Discussion of *Life Along the Color Line*

Each student is required to write two short papers (4-6 pages) in response to the readings for two of the discussion sessions. Your first paper must focus on one of the first three discussion sessions for the class (scheduled for February 8<sup>th</sup>, March 4, or March 20<sup>th</sup>). Your second paper must focus on either of the last two discussion sessions, scheduled for April 17 or April 24. These papers should analyze the assigned book and put that reading in conversation with material the class has already covered. More specific guidelines will be posted at the Assignment section of the blackboard site.

Reading papers will be due by 5:00 pm on the day after the discussion has taken place (for example, if you choose to write a paper about the Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> readings, the paper is due by 5:00 pm on Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>).

**Group Presentation (5% of final grade)**

For each of the five discussion sessions, a group will be assigned to coordinate and run a supplemental activity or presentation related to that session's readings. These presentations/activities should take up no more than forty minutes of class time. Students will be assigned to groups based upon their interests early in the semester. Groups *must* meet with me in advance of their presentation in order to discuss their plans. You may choose to write a reading paper for the session where your group is presenting, but you are not required to do so.

**Take-Home Final Exam (25% of final grade)—Due by 4:00pm on May 14th**

There will be a take-home final exam that will be handed out on May 8th, the last day of class. The exam is due back by 4:00 p.m. May 14th. In the take-home final exam, students will be asked to bring together course readings and lectures to respond to a single question in an approximately 8-10 page essay.

**Grade Breakdown:**

Reading Paper #1:	20% of final grade
Reading Paper #2:	20% of final grade
Primary Source Paper:	15% of final grade
Group Presentation:	5% of final grade
Take Home Final Exam:	25% of final grade
Participation and 3 short responses:	15% of final grade

All work will be graded on a 100-point scale. Assignments will be marked down 3 points for every day they are overdue, unless I have given my approval for the assignment to be handed

in late *before* the due date. As a general rule, I will approve extensions in the case of illness or emergencies, but not because you have other work due at the same time, so please plan accordingly. Assignments will not be accepted more than five days past the original due date.

### Course Policies

Oberlin Honor Code: All work for this course must be done in compliance with the Oberlin Honor Code, which means that it must be your own. Any cases of plagiarism will be dealt with immediately according to the letter of college policy. You must acknowledge when you use the ideas of other people (whether that be other students or published materials from websites, books, the media, etc.).

General Courtesy: Please come to class on time, and once you're here, plan on staying for the full class session. I consider it disrespectful to me and rude to the rest of the class when a student walks out once class has started and walks back in a few minutes later. Also, be sure to **TURN OFF** your cell phone before class starts.

Students with Disabilities: If you receive any disability-related accommodations, please provide documentation and let me know early in the class so that any necessary accommodations can be arranged.

Extra Help: My door is open if you ever feel you need extra help or direction in any way, or if you would like to discuss the reading or other topics of interest to you. Besides my regularly scheduled office hours, I am available by appointment. The best way to reach me is email. I am also happy to provide feedback on drafts, whether complete drafts of papers or just a topic sentence. If you would me to review draft writings, please get them to me at least **four days** before the paper is due so I will have time to read it and get it back to you for revision.

9. What is Person 1's race? *Mark X one or more boxes.*

White  
 Black, African Am., or Negro  
 American Indian or Alaska Native — *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.* ↴

Asian Indian     Japanese     Native Hawaiian  
 Chinese     Korean     Guamanian or Chamorro  
 Filipino     Vietnamese     Samoan  
 Other Asian — *Print race, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on.* ↴     Other Pacific Islander — *Print race, for example, Fijian, Tongan, and so on.* ↴

Some other race — *Print race.* ↴

AMERICAN

## COURSE AND READING SCHEDULE

2/4: Introduction:

2/6: *Studying Whiteness/Studying Race (Positionality Reflection Due in Class)*

Matthew Jacobson, "Introduction: The Fabrication of Race" in *Whiteness of a Different Color*, pp. 1-14

Richard Dyer, "The Matter of Whiteness" in Rothenberg, ed., *White Privilege*, p. 9-12\*

Joe Feagin, "The White Racial Frame: Why a New Concept?" in *The White Racial Frame*, 1-21\*

James Baldwin, "On Being "White" ...and Other Lies" in *Essence*, April 1984\*

*For class: write a short (1-2 pages) reflection about how you view America's racial landscape and where you place yourself in it. What experiences have shaped your sense of your own racial identity? In what ways has your gender, sexual, or class identity shaped your perspective or experience of race? Please note, I will collect these but they will not be graded.*

### **Part I: Inventing Race in the Colonial Era (Book: *Suspect Relations*)**

2/11: *The Ideas They Brought With Them: Thinking about Difference in Colonial America*

Winthrop Jordan, "First Impressions: Initial English Confrontations with Africans," in *The White Man's Burden*, pp. 3-25\*

Dinesh D'Souza, "Ignoble Savages" from *The End of Racism*, pp. 55-64\*

David Hume, "Of National Characters" (1748) and James Beattie, "A Response to Hume" (1770)\*

2/13: *Slavery and Servitude: Power, Labor, and Categories in Colonial America*

Jacqueline Jones, *A Dreadful Deceit*, pp. 1-7, 22-45\*  
(the entire chapter is copied, but you may skip/skim the middle section, p. 7-22, if you wish)

Edmund Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox," *The Journal of American History* (June 1972): 99-108\*

Robert Beverly, "Of the Servants and Slaves in Virginia (1705)\*

Virginia Slave Laws, 1660s\*

2/18: *Discussion Session 1: Constructing Race from the Ground Up*

Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations* (entire)

## Part II: Whiteness in the New Nation, 1790-1860 (Book: *Wages of Whiteness*)

2/20: *The State of Racial Thinking in the Early United States*

Matthew Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 13-38

Melissa Nobles, *Shades of Citizenship: Race and the Census in Modern Politics*, 25-48\*

Thomas Jefferson, excerpt from *Notes on the State of Virginia*\*

2/25: *The Practice of Whiteness in Antebellum America*

Ariella Gross, "Performing Whiteness" in *What Blood Don't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (2008), pp. 48-72\*

Bridget Heneghan, "White Goods and the Construction of Race"\* in *Whitewashing America*, pp. 3-43\*

2/27: *Cowboys and Indians: Westward Expansion and New Theories of Race*

Reginald Horsman, "Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism", pp. 139-144\*

Juan F. Perea, "Los Olivados: On the Making of Invisible People" in *Critical White Studies*, pp. 258-262\*

"Ethiop" (William J. Wilson), "What Shall We Do With the White People?" (1860)\*

3/4: *Discussion Session II: Making a White Working Class*

David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness* (entire)

## Part III: Whiteness in the Age of Emancipation and Immigration (Book: *White By Law*)

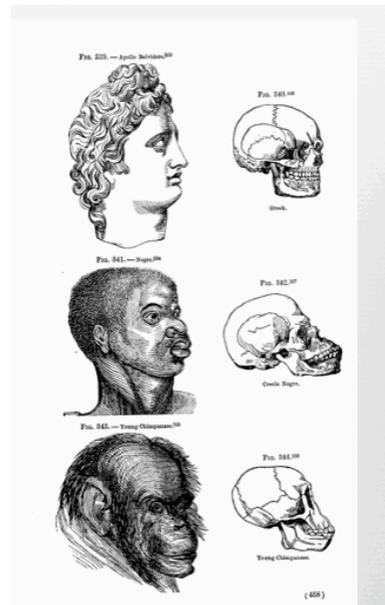
3/6: *Whiteness and Race After Emancipation (Film reflection due in class)*

Linda Faye Williams, "America's First Underserving and Deserving Poor," in *The Constraint of Race*, 25-68\*

Kirk Savage, "Common Soldier Monuments" in *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, 162-192, 207-208\*

*Birth of a Nation* (1915) (time and place of screening TBD)

3/11: *Theories of Race, 1880-1920 (Primary Source Paper Due at start of class)*



3/13: *Museum Visit—meet at the Allen Museum*

Martin Berger, "Genre Painting and the Foundation of Modern Race" in *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture*, 11-40\*

Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, pp. 8-17\*

3/18: *Immigrants and the Borders of Whiteness*

Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, Chapter 2, pp. 39-90

Thomas Guglielmo, "Rethinking Whiteness Historiography: The Case of Italians in Chicago, 1890-1945" in *White Out*, pp. 49-61\*

Speech by Senator Ellison DuRant Smith on Immigration Quotas, April 9, 1924\*

Speech by Congressman Robert Clancy on Immigration Quotas, April 8, 1924\*

3/20: *Discussion Session III: Legal Determinations of Race*

Ian Haney Lopez, *White By Law*, Chapters 1-5, pp. 1-108, Appendix A and B, pp. 163-182

Matt Jacobson, "Naturalization and the Courts" in *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 223-24

**Part IV: Expanding and Investing in Whiteness,  
1924-1965**

**(Books: *Killers of the Dream and Life on the Color Line*)**

4/1: *Expanding the State and Institutionalizing White Privilege*

David Freund, *Colored Property*, Chapters 1-5, pp. 1-240



Everyone is required to read chapter 1; the class will be split into four groups, each of which will be responsible for reading one of the other chapters and teaching it to the class

4/3: *White Consciousness in the North*

Freund, *Colored Property*, Chapters 6-8, pp. 243-381 (will need to skim sections)

4/8: *Whiteness and Masculinity: Guest scholar, Prof. Michael Kimmel (Sociology, Stony Brook Univ.)*

Michael Kimmel, "Introduction: America, the Angry," in *Angry White Men*, pp. 1-27\*

Michael Kimmel and Abby Ferber, "Reading Right: The Western Tradition in White Supremacist Discourse," *Sociological Focus*, 33:2 (May 2000): 193-213\*

4/10: NO CLASS MEETING (start reading Smith, *Killers of the Dream*)

4/15: *Becoming Caucasian: The Case of Jews* (Film reflection due in class)

Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, Chapters 3&5, 91-135, 171-199

Karen Brodtkin Sacks, "How Jews Became White Folks" in *Race*, pp. 78-102\*

Chad Heap, *Slumming*, 114-129, 217-230\*

*Gentlemen's Agreement* (Screening Time TBD)

4/17: Discussion Session IV: *The Psychology of Segregation or Southern White Consciousness*

Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream* (entire)

James Baldwin, "Going to Meet the Man" (1965), pp. 229-249\*

4/22: *Women's Experience of Whiteness in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*

Dana Frank, "White Working-Class Women and the Race Question," in *International Labor and Working-Class History* 54 (Fall 1998): 80-102\*

Rickie Solinger, "Race and 'Value': Black and White Illegitimate Babies in the United States, 1945-1965," from *Gender and History* 4:3 (Autumn 1992): 343-363\*

Renee Romano, "'Immoral Conduct': White Women, Racial Transgressions and Custody Disputes," in *"Bad" Mothers: The Politics of Blame in 20th-century America*, pp. 230-251\*

4/24: Discussion Session V: *Living Whiteness and Blackness*

Gregory Williams, *Life on the Color Line* (entire)

4/29: *Racial Privilege in a "Post-Racial" Age*

George Lipsitz, "Civil Rights Laws and White Privilege" in *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 24-46\*

Charles Gallagher, "Color-Blind Privilege: The Social and Political Functions of Erasing the Color Line in Post Race America," *Race, Gender, and Class* 10:4 (2003): 1-17\*



Quiz from *Ebony* magazine, April 1952

Ian Haney Lopez, *White By Law*, Chapter 7, pp. 139-142

"Why It Costs More To Adopt a White Baby," *ABCNEWS*, March 12, 2002\*

5/1: *The Borders of Whiteness in the Post-Civil Rights Era*

Ian Haney Lopez, *White By Law*, Chapter 8, pp. 143-162

John Hartigan, Jr., "Who Are These White People?: 'Rednecks,' 'Hillbillies,' And 'White Trash' as Marked Racial Subjects" in *White Out*, pp. 95-111\*

Lise Funderburg, "The Changing Face of America," (article and photo gallery), *National Geographic*, October 2013\*

5/6: *Representing and Redeeming Whiteness After Civil Rights*

Justin Gomer, "Let the Dead Bury the Living": Hollywood Imagines America's Colorblind Past"\*

Hua Hsu, "The End of White America," *The Atlantic*, January 1, 2009\*

In class: Watch Martin Mull's, "The History of White People in America: Part I" (1985)

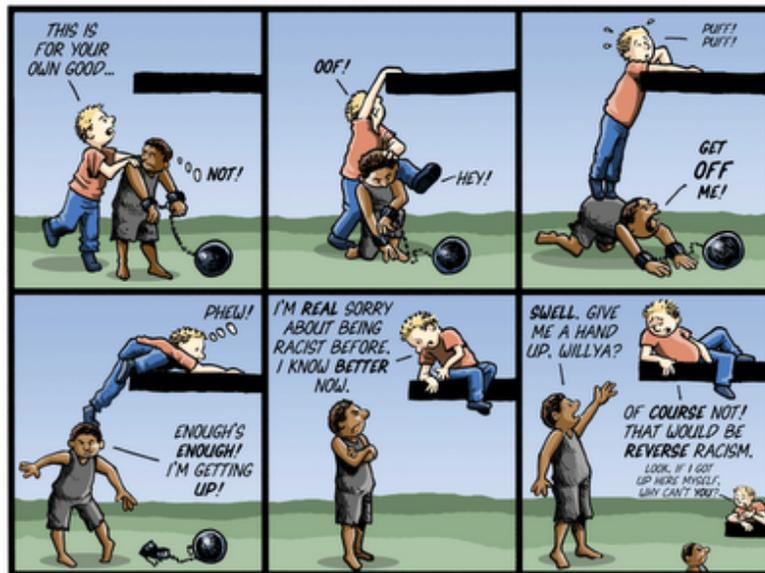
5/8: *Dismantling Whiteness?*

Joe Feagin, "Toward a Truly Multiracial Democracy" in *The White Racial Frame*, 192-229\*

Ian Haney Lopez, *White By Law*, Chapter 6, 109-138

Andrea Smith, "The Problem with Privilege"\*

5/14: *Take-Home Final Exam Due by 4:00 p.m.*



**A CONCISE HISTORY OF BLACK-WHITE RELATIONS IN THE U.S.A.**