Sociology 450 Race, Gender, Sexuality and Identity
Oberlin College

Professor Pawan Dhingra
Department of Sociology
King 320-C
Pawan.dhingra@oberlin.edu

Fall 2003
Tuesday, 7-9 pm.
Room King 335

Course Description: This course challenges how we conceive of some major identities in our culture, namely racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation, as well as the intersections between these. What are the meanings of these identities and how are they created? How do people choose among identities? We will discuss identity in terms of cultural politics, nationalism, class, group competition, and socialization. The subject matter consists of the workplace, global music, individuals' attitudes, social movements, and everyday actions. We will read sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and history, and view film. The course will be mostly discussion, with students taking a leading role.

Required Readings:

Also, readings are on electronic reserve or distributed in class. The password is SOCI450.

Office hours: Tuesday, 1-2 pm; Thursday, 11 am-12 pm. Each student is encouraged to come by my office hours at least once during the semester. The point of office hours is to go over topics discussed in class, hear your thoughts/critiques of class, refer to assignments, and to give you an opportunity to discuss issues related to class generally. If you cannot make it to my office hours because of a class, work, or athletic requirement, we can set up another time. Email is also a convenient way to ask me questions.

Course Requirements:

Student responsibilities:
(Note: By enrolling and remaining in this class, you have agreed to these responsibilities.)

1) Regular attendance at each class. Random attendance checks will be taken throughout the semester. Students anticipating lengthy absences should contact me in advance.
2) You should arrive on time for class and remain for the entire period unless you make arrangements with me prior to class. You should not disrupt the class with conversations not related to the coursework. Finally, if you have a cell phone or pager, you must turn it off before class each day.

3) Completion of each week’s readings by the beginning of class. You will not be able to successfully complete this class without reading the assignments in a timely manner. Additionally, you will not be able to contribute to class discussion if you have not read the assignments.

4) Completion of all required assignments. All assignments must be completed by the beginning of class, not during or after class. If you anticipate that you may miss a due date because of illness or a personal emergency, I require a doctor’s note or some other documentation before the assignment is due. If you do not supply this documentation, your assignments will be penalized one third of a grade (for example, an A will slip to an A-, a B+ to a B, etc.) starting the day of the assignment and for every calendar date past the due date.

4) Required assignments beyond reading the materials will consist of participation in class discussions, leading a class discussion, writing a 5 page paper, a 10 page research paper, an annotated bibliography of the research paper, and peer-editing a colleague’s paper draft. Details are below.

Participation: While participation is often important in all classes, it is especially crucial in this class. As a seminar, the class is student run. You are expected to have done the readings and bring questions and critiques to class. Also, you are to post reading responses to Blackboard discussion board, about 1-2 pages long which summarize the author’s main argument and at least one aspect of your reaction to it. Those leading discussion need not post. All posts are due by Noon on Monday before class to give those who are leading class enough time to incorporate your posts. You are graded by how well you critique (positively and negatively) the readings and connect them to other readings and discussions. You should bring a copy of your own and others’ posts, ready to ask others questions on what they wrote. Using the posts is critical to a successful, engaged class. Blackboard responses and participation are worth 20% of your final grade.

Leading Class Discussion: The seminar is student-run. This means that in addition to participating in every class, you will lead (at least) the first half of a class period, in teams of two. You will come ready to lead the class in discussion of the text. This means you will have questions about the reading for the class to discuss, critiques of the reading, exercises for the class to perform if relevant, and ways of tying the text to other issues. Be innovative – bring in a video, a guest lecturer, a class exercise, a survey completed before class, etc. Think of classes and professors whose courses you have enjoyed as inspiration. My role will predominantly be equal to that of the other students – an active participant but not
immediately in charge of how we analyze the texts. You should meet with me before leading class. Leading class is worth 15% of your grade.

**Paper on Identity:** As preparation for your final paper, you will have the opportunity to analyze the notion of identity in a 5 page paper. This will not require the collection of primary data, which the research paper may entail, but outside research can be included. The goal of the paper is to have you examine various ways of making sense of and researching identity, to help you prepare for your final paper. The exact assignment will be distributed in class. The 5 page paper is worth 15% of your final grade.

**Annotated Bibliography of Research Paper:** This will have your working thesis and general outline, about two paragraphs long. You will also include at least 10 references for the paper, with an explanation of the argument of each reference and how it contributes to your paper. You will be graded by how well-thought out the argument is and how comprehensive your list of references seems to be. The annotated bibliography is worth 15% of your final grade.

**Research Paper and Presenting Research Paper:** The ultimate goal of the course is to provide you with the tools to help you in your own research. You will write a 10 page research paper on a topic of your choice. As a research paper, you are required to choose a topic regarding race, ethnic, gender, and/or sexuality and identity, and do research to make an argument regarding this topic. The paper can be a historical analysis of representations of a group, such as why was a group depicted in a particular way, how did it resist this depiction, and what the consequences of that depiction were. It can be a paper on a social movement by a group in its attempts to challenge how it was treated and its use of identity. It can be an analysis of how socialization into various identities takes place. It can also be a cultural studies analysis of various media images and social texts. You have multiple options. You should talk to me about your paper ideas. Since the paper is the ultimate goal of the course, you will have opportunities to talk about in class. You should tie your research to the class readings during discussion. You will have an opportunity to share your final paper with the rest of the class through in-class presentations. The final paper and presentation are worth 35% of your final grade.

**Instructor responsibilities:**

1) To present discussion material in clearly understandable language and presentation.

2) To assist students in thinking critically about concepts and ideas.

3) To respect student opinion and value each student’s contributions equally.

4) To give feedback on student progress; to be accessible during office hours and after class, and to return all course materials, graded, in a timely fashion.
1) You are assumed to follow the Honors Code. This pertains to how you write papers, read materials, talk with other students in and outside of the class, and other modes of behavior. Please consult your student handbook or see me for details.

2) If you have a learning disability or other disability you are entitled to assistance and accommodations through the university. Please register with the Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities, in Room G 27 Peters Hall, ext. 5-8467, for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs. Please do this at the beginning of the semester. Please notify me as well.

3) If you would like extra assistance in writing the paper, I strongly suggest contacting the writing center. I am also available to discuss writing and paper assignments during my office hours.

Tentative Course Schedule:

Sept. 2: Introduction to course and to each other.

Part I. Understanding Race, Gender, Sexuality and Identity

Sept. 9: What are Race, Gender and Sexuality?

- Cornell and Hartmann, ch. 2, 4.
- “Doing Difference,” C. West and S. Fenstemaker.

Sept. 16: What is Identity?

- Cornell and Hartmann, ch. 5, 6, 7.
- “Tale of Two Theories,” M. Hogg, D. Terry, and K. White.

Part II. Representing Identities and Meaning.

Sept. 23. Gender in Public and Private.

- “Tinkerbells and Pintips: The construction and reconstruction of gender boundaries at work,” C. Epstein.
Sept. 30. Women of Color, Women and Color
  • “Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images,” P. H. Collins.
  • “Sex and Conquest,” J. Nagel.

NOTE: 5 PAGE PAPER DUE.

Part III. Creating Group Identities

Oct. 7th. Creating a Race/Bringing People Together
  • Espiritu, Asian American Pan-Ethnicity, ch. 1, 2, 4, 6.

Oct. 14th. Historical Analysis of Racial Constructions
  • Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White, ch. 1, 2, 4, 5.

Oct. 21st. Fall Break

Oct. 28th. Joining a Social Movement
  • Stein, Sex and Sensibility, ch. Intro, 1, 3, 4, 6.

Part IV. Choosing and Developing Identities

Nov. 4th. Choosing a Heritage
  • Waters, Ethnic Options

Nov. 11th. Identity Through Film
Film TBA.

NOTE: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE.

Part V. Managing Multiple Identities

Nov. 18th. Hybrid Identity Constructions
  • “New Cultural Forms and Transnational South Asian Women,” P. Bhachu
Nov. 25: Fragmenting Identities
- "The Bicultural Life experience of career-oriented black women," E. Bell.

NOTE: DRAFT OF PAPER DUE.

- "Backlash, the matrix of domination, and Log Cabin Republicans," M. Rogers and P. Lott.

Test your course schedule:
- Oct 31st: Final Paper
- Nov 28th: Presentations of Final Paper
- RESEARCH PAPERS DUE.

Dec. 9th: Presentations of Final Paper.