

Department: SOCI

Course No.: 236

Credits: 3

Title: White Racism

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Content Area: CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

Diversity: CA4 Non-International

Catalog Copy: 236. White Racism. Either semester. Three credits.

The origin, nature, and consequences of white racism as a central and enduring social principle around which the United States and other modern societies are structured and evolve.

Course Information:

1a. White Racism explores systemic white racism as a central and enduring social structure through which the United States and other modern societies are organized and evolve. Its main learning goal is to enable students to analyze the origin, nature and consequences of white racism. The course's key action objective is to provide students with the knowledge necessary to challenge systematic white racism.

1b. Students have the option of choosing one of three learning and evaluation tracks. To qualify for the **Scholars Track** they must earn a grade of at least C+ (i.e., 75) on the Mid-Term Examination. The Scholars Track is comprised of three major evaluations, each of which counts for one-third of the student's final grade. The first evaluation is a multiple choice *Mid-Term Examination*. The second evaluation is an *Experiencing White Racism Project* which is intended to help residents of a town called "See-No-Racism" experience systemic white racism. The third major evaluation for the Scholars Track is a *Presentation* on a white-racism related topic chosen by the student. The final examination for students who give presentations is based on those presentations and is for bonus credit. The **Enhanced Track** entails the *Experiencing White Racism Project* in addition to the *Mid-Term* and *Final Examinations*. Students on the **Basic Track** will take two multiple-choice exams; the *Mid-Term Examination* and the *Final Examination*. Each counts for 50% of the student's final grade. The reading assignments are chapters from the six books and one journal article assigned that are appropriate for specific class lectures as outlined in item c.

1c. Topics explored include: the sociological perspective as a way of understanding how white racism is organized and maintained; the meaning of "race" and "whiteness" as social facts and ideological constructions; the historical legacies of white racism; white racism in key social institutions of society; everyday white racism; white supremacist social thought and organizations; and anti-racist movements opposed to white racial hegemony.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed.:

1. Become articulate. The course provides students with a sociological perspective and a set of integrated theories and concepts that they can use to express themselves clearly and intelligently about one of the major problems facing most societies today, systemic white racism. With this knowledge they can move beyond the tendencies for this topic not to be addressed at all, or for the focus of its discourse to be limited to the bigoted attitudes and behaviors of a relatively few socially isolated individuals, or for the topic to be hopelessly encumbered by knee-jerk like emotional reactions.
2. Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility. What is stated above for item # 1 also applies here. Many of the conceptualizations of white racism in the lectures are new and cutting edge (e.g., in terms of the integration of the emerging fields of “whiteness” studies and racism studies).
3. Acquire critical judgement. The course challenges the popular notion of “race” and common understandings of racism. It encourages students to imagine a world without either.
4. Acquire moral sensitivity. By focusing on the pervasiveness, persistence and consequences of systemic white racism the course motivates students to recognize the problem, to conclude that something must and can be done about it, and to engage in anti-racist activity. It makes clear that since not challenging systemic white racism reinforces its power, doing nothing is not an ethical option.
5. Acquire awareness of their era and society. Because of its focus on social structure and use of the historical sociological method the course provide students with a greater awareness of the organization and persistence of highly racialized societies like the United States. Indeed, one of its basic assumptions is that it is impossible to understand the structure and evolution of highly racialized societies without understanding the integral role of systemic white racism. It is not surprising that when there are incidents involving white racism on college campuses it is often courses like this one that students demand. During the ten years that this course has been taught as an elective here at UConn it has made our students more aware of the problem and more open to frank discussions about it.
6. Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience. The course offers knowledge that can help students to place “diversity issues” within the historical sociological context necessary for them to understand the role of systemic white racism in shaping the often very different life experiences and worldviews of those groups that endure racial oppression and those who have benefited from it. By doing so it provides an in-depth understanding of “diversity issues” that is typically absent in discourse on the topic.
7. Acquire a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge. The course makes clear that racial designations, identities and ideologies serve as filters for the knowledge about social processes that different racialized ethnic groups possess. It envisions a world in which those racial lens have been removed.

CA4 Criteria:

1. Emphasize that there are varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values, and/or modes of creativity. As mentioned earlier, the course provides the knowledge students need to examine

“diversity issues” within their historical sociological context such that they can better appreciate the role of systemic white racism in shaping the often very different life experiences and worldviews of those groups that endure racial oppression and those who benefit from it. By doing so it helps students to understand why when it comes to important issues and controversies it often appears that people from different racialized groups are divided by a wall, or to quote the great African- American sociologist, intellectual, and civil rights activist, WEB DuBois, a “color line,” that segregates them into different experiential worlds.

2. Emphasize that interpretive systems and/or social structures are cultural creations. The course treats the concept of “race” as not only a social, but more specifically, an ideological construction. That is, it analyzes “race” as a social invention that justifies the exploitation of groups of people who are assumed to be not only biologically different but inferior. It examines human history before “race” and explores emerging scientific and demographic trends that are challenging the concept's validity.

3. Consider the similarities that may exist among diverse groups. White Racism is a course that examines the similarities and differences in the historical legacies and contemporary experiences of different racially oppressed groups. It also explores how white racist ideas help socially stratify even so-called “white” people.

4. Develop an understanding of and sensitivity to issues involving human rights and migration. White Racism makes it clear that in the U.S. and other highly racialized societies neither the denial of human rights (e.g., racial profiling) or immigration attitudes, policies and practices (e.g., as contained within recent federal welfare reform) are “colorblind.” For this and other reasons the course is currently listed as an elective for the human rights minor for undergraduates.

5. Develop an awareness of the dynamics of social, political, and/or economic power in the context of any of the above four items. As a course on racial oppression, the workings of power (whether its source is social, political or economic) is central to its content. Those power dynamics are addressed as indicated in the above items.