White Privilege & Social Justice
Sociology 354
A Certified Green Course
Fall 2009

Professor Celine-Marie Pascale
T: 5:30-8:00
RM: TBA

Email: pascale@american.edu
Phone: 202-885-2524
Office: Battelle-Tompkins Hall, Rm T14
Office Hours: T 2:00-5:00, W 2:30-5:30
& by appt.

Course Overview & Objectives

Historically, the discipline of Sociology has attempted to address issues of racial inequality by focusing on structural, cultural, and personal expressions of racism. More recently it has broadened its critique of racism to also include the various ways that some people and groups are systematically advantaged by race. Throughout the semester, we will examine the social and legal construction of whiteness in the United States and representations of whiteness in television and film. We will consider the meanings of whiteness and light-skin privilege in relation to U.S. racial groups as well as in relation to gender, class, and sexuality. In addition, we will closely examine white identity in relationship to antiracist activism, and conflict resolution. Together, we will develop a nuanced vocabulary for talking about issues of race and processes of racialization that will enable us to learn how to build effective cross-racial alliances.

In this course, students will be asked to consider their own life experiences in relationship to the course material. For example some of the questions we will address include: What does it mean to embrace equality for all people but to feel most comfortable in racially segregated communities? What does it mean to believe that all people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, yet fail to share any of a group’s concerns or interests? What does it mean to be a person who believes in racial equality and yet love someone who is bigoted?

We will all find our thinking about the world challenged at various points. Learning is not simply a process of acquiring more information but of being open to adjusting how we think about the world in the face of new information. In this sense, this class demands that students take emotional as well as intellectual risks; we will cultivate discussions based on honesty, respect, and kindness. You are asked to consider the participation and success of every person in this class as being as important as your own.
This course supports the Department of Sociology's emphasis on Race, Gender, and Social Justice.

Learning Goals
Students will develop multifaceted understandings of complex issues of identity and difference through reflective reading, analysis, discussion, and writing. If you learn the basic knowledge that this course has to offer, you will be able to:

- use social, legal, and historical constructions of race to analyze contemporary issues of race.
- use sociological research and theory to analyze power, privilege, and racism.
- engage friends and family in meaningful and respectful conversations about race.
- more confidently address bigotry and prejudice in personal interactions.
- develop realistic strategies for cross-racial alliances.
- write formal academic papers with proper citations.
- give oral presentations that link together complex ideas and concepts in ways that are easily understood by others.

If you have, or think you may have, disability-related needs please talk with me as soon as possible regarding accommodations to support your learning. In addition, AU provides a wide range of services for students, including:

Academic Support Center 243 Mary Graydon Center, 885-3360
www.american.edu/ocl/asc/index1.html

Computer Services/Technology
http://my.american.edu/gateway.cfm?group=tech

Counseling Center 214 Mary Graydon Center, 885-3500
www.american.edu/ocl/counseling/index1.html

Disability Support Services, 206 Mary Graydon Center, 885-3315,
www.american.edu/ocl/dss/index1.html

International Student Services 410 Butler Pavilion, 885-3350,
www.american.edu/ocl/iss/index1.html

Student Health Center, 101 Nebraska Hall, 885-3380
www.american.edu/ocl/healthcenter/index1.html

Writing Center, 228 Battelle-Tompkins Hall, 885-2392
www.american.edu/cas/lit/writing_center/

Writing Lab, 243 Mary Graydon Center, 885-2991

Emergency Preparedness
In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance
instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (www. prepared. american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean’s office for course and school/college-specific information.

Green Teaching
This is a Certified Green Course. This means, for example, that I will not hand out any printed materials, but I will use Blackboard extensively. To help make our class as green as possible, I encourage you to buy used books and when possible, read course readings online rather than printing copies. If you choose to print, please print double-sided, and recycle the paper after the end of the semester.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & ASSIGNMENTS

Fundamentally, your academic success depends as much on your ability to express ideas as on your ability to understand ideas. Assignments are designed to provide a variety of opportunities for you to demonstrate your command of the course material.

Over the course of the semester, we will work together to understand the nature and progress of your learning. All students will be given opportunities for detailed feedback on their progress through the course that is not graded. The graded assignments will build from the ungraded exercises and provide opportunities for you to demonstrate your command of the course material by applying it to specific situations.

Students are required to complete all written assignments by the due dates. All written work is due in the first 10 minutes of class. Late papers will be subject to a grade reduction. I do not accept papers outside of the class period in which they are due. Late assignments will not be accepted without formal documentation of a medical or family emergency.

Assignments
Students in this course are required to keep a weekly journal that will be submitted every other week. The journal entries should address your thinking regarding assigned readings, classroom discussion and blackboard posts. Please address these questions: What major conclusions are you drawing from the course? Why? How do these relate to your own life? What questions remain unanswered? My comments on your journals will be aimed at offering personal mentoring and clear feedback about your progress. This assignment will not be graded.
Student performance will be evaluated on the basis of effective classroom participation. This involves learning how to listen respectfully to all points of view, as well as learning how to present your own ideas. Keep in mind as you express your views, that everyone is required to substantiate their viewpoints using readings, course material or personal experience. Students will receive feedback on their participation along with their journal evaluations. It will not be graded.

Graded assignments will be described in detail and include: a 7-10-page autoethnography (30%), a 7-10-page analytical paper (35%) and a final paper/presentation (35%). The requirements for each of these assignments will be discussed in class.

**Grading Standards**

Student performance in this course will be guided by the following criteria:

A  Excellent. Fulfilled course requirement thoughtfully. Demonstrated strong analytical skills, an excellent command of course readings and key concepts, and the ability to generate fresh insights by applying course materials to new situations.

B  Very Good. Fulfilled course requirements with care. Demonstrated very good analytical skills, a very good command of course readings and key concepts, and an ability to apply course materials to new situations.

C  Satisfactory. Fulfilled basic course requirements. Completed assignments at the minimum level required.

D  Unsatisfactory or incomplete work. A substantial amount of assigned work was not completed as stipulated in the course requirements and deadlines.

F  Failure to meet the most minimum course requirements.

In this course, an incomplete grade is possible only in cases of documented family emergencies or health crises.

**Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all classes as active participants. Attendance, and participation that reflects timely mastery of the readings, will be taken into account in determining borderline grades. If a problem arises making it impossible for you to attend a class, I appreciate being informed, in advance if possible. Missing class, leaving early and arriving late can result in a grade reduction. More than three (3) absences can lower your grade unless you have a documented medical problem or family emergency.

**Technology**

**Email**

All students are expected to have an email account to check it regularly, as it is the best means for me to contact you. If you have difficulties receiving email, it is your responsibility to remedy the situation. Often students experience difficulties because their mailboxes fill-up, they do not check their AU account regularly, or have not provided a current address. If you are having problems with email, please let me know.
Blackboard
Assignments, readings, announcements and other class materials will be posted on Blackboard. A General Discussion Board will be open at all times for students to discuss insights and questions regarding course projects. Be sure to make checking Blackboard a regular part of your course preparation. Also, I want to encourage you to post feedback regarding the course discussions and assignments on the designated bulletin board on Blackboard—these postings can be completely anonymous.

Office Hours
Office hours are intended to support student success and I encourage everyone to meet with me, and with our teaching assistant at least once during the semester—if only to say hello! I am available six hours each week for meeting outside of class. (See the times on the first page.) Please schedule an appointment with me if a regular schedule conflict prevents you from meeting during my drop-in office hours, or if you have a special need that might require an extended meeting (beyond 15 or 20 minutes). Appointments must be scheduled in advance and cannot be made during “drop-in” office hours. During the course of the semester I may adjust my office hours as needed to better support the needs of students.

Academic Integrity
I strongly encourage co-operative learning and have designed group projects for the class. Please keep in mind, however, that all papers must be original, individual work. I take plagiarism and academic dishonesty very seriously. Presenting someone else’s words—or ideas—as your own is plagiarism. This applies to the ideas and words of best friends as well as those found in formal library resources! Citations are a common feature of academic work and will enhance, rather than diminish, the quality of your paper. All papers should be typed, double-spaced, with appropriate references, and reflect the care and time you put into them. You are responsible for knowing and following American University’s policy on academic integrity, which can be found at:

http://www.american.edu/american/registrar/AcademicReg/New/reg80.html

The Academic Integrity Code describes the standards for academic conduct, rights and responsibilities of members of the academic community, and procedures for handling allegations of academic dishonesty. Your continued registration in this course means you acknowledge awareness of the Code and agree to abide by it. I am required to report violations of academic integrity to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences for academic hearing and discipline. When in doubt, cite the source!

I am dedicated to facilitating the highest quality of student achievement and will stay in touch with student progress over the semester. I reserve the option to revise readings, assignments, and deadlines as needed to best support your success in this class.
**Required Reading**

On average, you will be required to read 50-100 pages per week. The reading in this course is not especially difficult but may challenge what you have come to believe about yourself and others. Please give yourself enough time to complete all of the readings and to carefully consider them before coming to class. On the syllabus, all dates are the days by which the readings must be completed. Everyone is expected to have completed all of the assigned readings before class. I understand that on occasion things may come up that prevent you from completing all of the assigned reading. If you have not been able to keep this responsibility to the class, you are required to let us know at the start of the class period.

The textbooks for this course are available at American University Bookstore and online through a variety of booksellers.


Also we will use required readings that are available to you electronically:

- Required readings that are available online are designated with a computer symbol in the course outline. These are available through Blackboard as well as through Bender Library Electronic Reserves.

**Course Outline**

**Defining Contemporary Issues**

**Week One**  
**August 25th**

Lecture: Introduction to the course

**Week Two**  
**September 1st**


Week Three  September 8th

Week Four  September 15th

Week Five  September 22nd

First Paper Due

Constructing Whiteness: Social, Legal & Economic Histories

Week Six  September 29th
Week Seven  October 6th


Week Eight  October 13th


Solutions: Structural and Personal

Week Nine  October 20th


Week Ten  October 27th


Film: In Whose Honor?
Week Eleven  November 3rd


Second Paper Due

Week Twelve  November 10th


Beck, Martha. 2001. Fighting For Intimacy. Pp. 73-75 in Oprah Magazine (Oct. 01)


Week Thirteen  November 17th


Taking Action: Making A Difference

Week Fourteen  November 24th

Presentations

Week Fifteen  December 1st

Presentations

Final Exam Day December 8th
Presentations