First-Year Research Seminar:
Identity and the Cultural Constructions of Race and Ethnicity
FIRST-UG 738-001
(17328)

Spring 2012
Day and Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00pm-3:15pm
Classroom: 1 Washington Place, room 501
Office Location: 1 Washington Place, room 416
Office Hours: Thursday 3:30pm-4:30pm and by appointment
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Description:
Identity: the ways in which we see ourselves; the ways in which others see us; the dynamic relationship between these two seemingly distinct and often irreconcilable poles is the underlying theme of this first-year research seminar. We will focus specifically on the ways in which we create, build, rebuild, and live our racial identities in constant dialogue with contemporary American societal constructions of race and ethnicity. Questions we will explore include: what is race? Is it immutable? How do we know it when we see it? How is it distinct from ethnicity? What is gained and/or lost by considering or not considering race today? In what ways do other facets of identity, for example gender, sexuality, and class inform, challenge, reconstruct, or deconstruct our racial identities? This seminar will explore the historical constructions of race and the ways in which the meaning of race has changed over time. We will employ a number of methodological frameworks, including historical, sociological, and cultural lenses.

Objectives:
Students will develop a basic working knowledge of the discourse around the construction of racial identity while simultaneously developing an awareness of the research and writing process. Students will also work on building an argument, using primary and secondary material effectively, honing their analytical skills, and mastering the mechanics of quoting, citing, and documenting evidence.

Requirements
Students are required to complete weekly reading and assignments and to be prepared to discuss them during class meetings. To facilitate discussion students will post 2 questions about the assignment on Blackboard by 8:00pm each Wednesday. These questions can address the themes, style, and/or technique and should provide a point of engagement with the material. Students will also present select texts to the class.

Students will write two 3-4-page analytical essays, a prospectus, and an annotated bibliography. These short written assignments will help students formulate, research, and respond to questions
about racial identity in a longer final research paper. Prior to submitting the final paper, students will present their research to the class.

**Plagiarism:**
Plagiarism will result in no credit for the assignment. The University's code of academic and personal conduct applies in all instances of plagiarism. You may find this code in your NYU Gallatin Bulletin. You can download the bulletin at:

**If you feel you would like additional help with your writing, please contact the Gallatin Writing Center at 1 Washington Place, room 423. See www.nyu.edu/gallatin/writingschedule for instructions on how to make an appointment.**

**Evaluation/Grading**
Attendance, class participation, and discussion questions 15%
First Essay 15%
Second Essay 15%
Annotated Bibliography 10%
Prospectus 10%
Presentation 10%
Presentation of Research 10%
Final Essay 15%

**Texts (available at the NYU Bookstore):**
Alvarez, Julia, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*
Ekere Tallie, Mariahadessa, *Karma’s Footsteps*
Erdrich, Heid E. and Laura Tohe, *Sister Nations: Native American Women Writers On Community*
Gaskins, Pearl Fuyo, ed., *What Are You?*
Hacker, Diana, *A Pocket Style Manual*
Hall, Stuart, “What is this Black in Black Popular Culture?” [Electronic Resource]
Murakami, Haruki, *The Elephant Vanishes*
Nottage, Lynn, “Fabulation or, The Re-Education of Undine”
Prasad, Chandra, *Mixed: An Anthology of Short Fiction on the Multiracial Experience* (selections) [ER]
Somerville, Siobahn, *Queering the Color Line* (selections) [ER]
Wise, Tim, *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*

**Syllabus**
Week 1: Tuesday, January 24th: Introduction

Thursday, January 26th: What is race? What is research?

Week 2: Tuesday January 31st: Beginning your research; choosing a topic – in-class writing: topic brainstorming
Thursday, February 2\textsuperscript{nd}: Presentation 1; discuss \textit{What Are You?}

Week 3: Tuesday, February 7\textsuperscript{th}: Workshop

\textbf{**First Draft of First Analytical Essay Due**}

Thursday, February 9\textsuperscript{th}: Workshop

Week 4: Tuesday, February 14\textsuperscript{th}: Formulating Research Questions – in-class writing; research questions

\textbf{**Revision of First Analytical Essay Due**}

Thursday, February 16\textsuperscript{th}: Presentation 2; discuss “What is this Black in Black Popular Culture?” [ER]

Week 5: Tuesday, February 21\textsuperscript{st}: Secondary Literature, Building a Bibliography & Analysis

Thursday, February 23\textsuperscript{rd}: Presentation 3; discuss \textit{Sister Nations}

Week 6: Tuesday, February 28\textsuperscript{th}: Workshop

\textbf{**First Draft of Second Analytical Essay Due**}

Thursday, March 1\textsuperscript{st}: Workshop

Week 7: Tuesday, March 6\textsuperscript{th}: Library Resources; Credit where credit is due… Citations

\textbf{**Revision of Second Analytical Essay Due**}

Thursday, March 8\textsuperscript{th}: Presentation 4; discuss \textit{Queering the Color Line} [ER]

Week 8: Tuesday, March 13\textsuperscript{th}: \textit{Spring Break!}

Thursday, March 15\textsuperscript{th}: \textit{Spring Break!}

Week 9: Tuesday, March 20\textsuperscript{th}: Constructing a Prospectus

\textbf{**Annotated Bibliography Due**}

Thursday, March 22\textsuperscript{nd}: Presentation 5; discuss \textit{White Like Me}

Week 10: Tuesday, March 27\textsuperscript{th}: Developing a Thesis & Building an Argument

\textbf{**Prospectus Due**}
Thursday, March 29th: Presentation 6: discuss *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*

Week 11: Tuesday, April 3rd: Evaluating and Utilizing Primary Sources

Thursday, April 5th: Presentation 7: discuss *The Elephant Vanishes*

Week 12: Tuesday, April 10th: Troubleshooting

**First Draft of Final Research Paper due**

Thursday, April 12: discuss “Fabulation or, The Re-Education of Undine”

Week 13: Tuesday, April 17th: Revisions

Thursday, April 19th: discuss *Karma’s Footsteps & Mixed [ER]*

Week 14: Tuesday, April 24th: *Presentation of Research*

Thursday, April 26th: *Presentation of Research*

Week 15: Tuesday, May 1st: *Presentation of Research*

Thursday, May 3rd: *Presentation of Research*

**Revision of Final Research Paper is due by 2:00pm on Tuesday, May 7th**