

Interdisciplinary Studies 213
The Politics of Identity
Fall 2008

Instructor: Prof. Donna Troka
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Required Texts:

The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man by James Weldon Johnson

The Spiral Cage by Al Davison

** readings on electronic reserve at Woodruff Library **

Course Description:

Personal identities are constructed and altered through complex historical, cultural, sociological, and psychological processes and experiences. They are also imbued with power in very different ways. Using a discussion of Identity Politics as a theoretical framework along with an interdisciplinary approach, this course juxtaposes texts that address specific identities such as race, class, disability, gender, and sexuality with texts that address the intersectionality of identities as a way to begin an investigation into the politics of identity.

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have acquired introductory level:

1. Practice in critical thinking and writing, oral presentation, and group discussion.
2. Understanding of a variety of cultural traditions and social histories inside and outside of the United States.
3. Practice in critical investigation and analysis of the multiplicity and intersectionality of identity categories, and the power attached to them.

Course Requirements:

Class participation	15 points
Thinkpieces	10 points
Project 1	10 points
Project 2	10 points
Project 3	10 Points
Project 4	10 Points
Project 5	10 Points
Final Paper	25 Points

TOTAL	100 Points
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Class participation (15 points)

This class is based on the educational premise that knowledge is constructed through an (inter) active process rather than absorbed passively. Therefore, the format for the course will be a combination of lecture and discussion, with an emphasis on dialogue and sharing of perspectives. Attendance is crucial to your academic performance; you are expected to be an active and informed participant in all class discussions. In order to do this you must have assigned readings completed by the date on which they first appear on the syllabus. **If you miss class, you are responsible for getting notes from a classmate**, including any altered assignments, project topics, or announcements that were made. So it may be prudent to make a new friend early on. You can miss **three** classes without penalty, after that you will lose participation points. If you are more than ten minutes late, you will be marked absent.

Thinkpieces (10 points)

Five times during the semester you will be asked to respond in writing to some sort of stimuli (like a poem, song, picture, movie clip). This will be an exercise in what is called “low stakes” writing. That is, I will not grade for grammar or spelling, but instead this will be an opportunity for you to do some extemporaneous writing and practice developing an argument. These exercises are aimed at getting you to think and write critically and to begin to engage the material for that week. **No make-ups or late papers will be accepted.**

Projects 1-5 (10 points each; total of 50 points)

At the end of each module you will write a **4-6 page paper** on either an assigned topic distributed later in the semester or on a topic designed by you and approved by me prior to the due date. **No late papers will be accepted.**

Final Paper (25 points)

For your final paper you will do an “edutainment project.” This project will focus on some form of Popular Culture that is educational, entertaining, and relates to the course themes and readings. This paper must be **10-12 pages in length**. Topics must be approved by me and must, in some way, connect to one or more of the topics we have discussed in class. **Final papers are due by Monday, December 15th in my mailbox. No late papers will be accepted.**

All papers and assignments should be typed, double-spaced, **stapled** and have one-inch margins with a standard font size and style (i.e. 10 or 12-point font). All papers must adhere to the standard MLA research paper format. Papers should have a definite argumentative thesis presented in or near the first paragraph. This thesis will present your argument, which you will support with quotations and other specific details from the text. Your papers should be written in response to course readings and may also refer to textual issues raised in class discussions. **Three important cautions:** 1) papers should not simply regurgitate class discussion; 2) papers should not be plot summaries or descriptions of the texts, but instead should analyze and synthesize the texts while using critical theoretical techniques; 3) papers should focus primarily on the texts we read in class. This means you cannot write a paper on the history of disability in the United

States, but instead you could write a paper about the different representations of disability in Eli Clare's "Exile and Pride" and the movie "Murderball." **Always print two copies of your papers and keep one for yourself.**

Please note that assignments are due on the dates designated in the syllabus. If an emergency arises and you make arrangements with me ahead of time, I may agree to accept a late assignment. If I do not agree or if you have not made prior arrangements with me, you will receive a lower grade. Be aware that my definition of "emergency" includes such things as "major cardiac surgery" and "being in labor" and not "I am hung over" or "I have another paper to write."

Writing skills are emphasized in this class and are a major factor in determining your grade, so there will be some class time devoted to writing instruction, but you may also want to use the writing center for more extensive instruction. For more in this area, please call the Writing Center at 404.727.0886 or visit them at Room 205 A Callaway Center North.

If you are a student with a disability, you may receive extra assistance from the Office of Disability Student Services located at 110 Administration Building, their phone number is 404.727.1065. Also, please contact me if you have any type of disability and we can discuss how it may or may not affect your participation in this class.

Please read and abide by the Emory University honor code. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please discuss them with me **BEFORE** handing in your work. For more on this go to:
www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/students/honor.html

Please make sure all cellular phones and pagers are turned off throughout our entire class session. If it becomes an annoyance, you will lose participation points.

Please also be certain to always bring the book and/or hard copy of the articles we are reading to class every day that we discuss it.

I reserve the right to make changes in this schedule if the need arises. Necessary changes will be announced in class.

CLASS SCHEDULE

F- 08/29	Introduction
M-09/01	NO CLASS- Labor Day

What are Identity Politics?

W-09/03	<i>Reserve</i> : Alcoff, Linda. "Reconsidering Identity Politics: An Introduction."
F- 09/05	<i>Reserve</i> : Kenny, Michael. "The Character and Origins of The Politics of Identity."

Focus on Race

M-09/08	<i>Reserve</i> : Winant, Howard. "Race and Race Theory"
W- 09/10	<i>Reserve</i> : Lipsitz, George. "Possessive Investment in Whiteness."
F-09/12	<i>Reserve</i> : Gallagher, Charles. "Color-Blind Privilege: The Social and Political Functions of Erasing the Color Line in Post Race America."
M-09/15	Weldon Johnson, James. <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> (pgs 1-74).
W-09/17	Weldon Johnson, James. <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> (pgs 75-154).
F-09/19	<i>Reserve</i> : Kibria, Nazli. "Not Asian, Black, or White? Reflections on South Asian American Racial Identity." & Alsultany, Evelyn. "Los Intersticios: Recasting Moving Selves."

Project #1 Due

Focus on Class

M-09/22	<i>Reserve</i> : Brewer, Mark D. "Inequality and Opportunity in America: Growing Differences."
W-09/24	<i>Reserve</i> : Scott, Janny "Shadowy Lines That Still Divide" & "Life at the Top in America Isn't Just Better, It's Longer."
F-09/29	<i>Reserve</i> : hooks, bell. Excerpts from "Where We Stand: Class Matters."

M-09/29	<i>Reserve</i> : Allison, Dorothy. "Steal Away." Myles, Eileen. "The Sound of Poverty." Fakhrid-Deen, Tina. "Ghetto Fabulous." & Brooks, Siobhan. "The Prison We Called Home."
W-10/01	Begin watching "People Like Us" in class
F-10/03	Finish watching "People Like Us" in class Project #2 Due

Focus on Disability

M-10/06	<i>Reserve</i> : Garland Thomson, Rosemarie. "Disability, Identity, and Representation: An Introduction." & Davison, Al. <i>The Spiral Cage</i> .
W-10/08	<i>Reserve</i> : Lane, Harland. "Construction of Deafness."
F-10/10	<i>Reserve</i> : Grandin, Temple. "Thinking in Pictures: Autism and Visual Thought."
M-10/13	NO CLASS- Fall Break
W-10/15	NO CLASS- Prof. Troka at conference
F-10/17	NO CLASS- Prof. Troka at conference
M-10/20	<i>Reserve</i> : Shakespeare, Tom. "Identity and Imagery."
W- 10/22	<i>Reserve</i> : Clare, Eli. "The Mountain." Begin watching "Murderball" in class
F-10/24	Finish watching "Murderball" in class Project #3 Due

Focus on Gender

M-10/27	<i>Reserve</i> : Bornstein, Kate. "Welcome to Your Gender Workbook."
W-10/29	<i>Reserve</i> : Alsop, Rachel "Gender and the Politics of Identity."
F-10/31	<i>Reserve</i> : Byrd, Rudolph. "Prologue- The Tradition of John: A mode of Black Masculinity."
M-11/03	<i>Reserve</i> : Munoz, Jose. "' The White to Be Angry': Vaginal Crème Davis's Terrorist Drag"

W-11/05 Start watching “Boy I Am”

F-11/07 Finish watching “Boy I Am”
Project #4 Due

Focus on Sexuality

M-11/10 *Reserve*: Richardson, Diane. Excerpts from *Theorizing Heterosexuality: Telling it Straight*.

W-11/12 *Reserve*: Angelides, Steven. “Introducing Bisexuality.”

F-11/14 *Reserve*: Jagose, Annamarie. Excerpts from *Queer Theory: An Introduction*.

M-11/17 *Reserve*: Howard, John. “Introduction” & “Ones and Twos.”

W-11/19 *Reserve*: Kennedy, Elizabeth. “‘To Cover Up the Truth Would Be a Waste of Time’: Introduction.”

F-11/21 *Reserve*: Johnson, E. Patrick. Excerpts from *Sweet Tea: Black Gay men of the South*.
Project #5 Due

Focus on Intersectionality

M-11/24 *Reserve*: Lugones, Maria. “Purity, Impurity, and Separation.”

W-11/26 **NO CLASS- Thanksgiving Recess**

F- 11/28 **NO CLASS- Thanksgiving Recess**

M-12/01 *Reserve*: Anzaldua, “Movimientos De Rebeldia y Las Culturas Que Traicionan.”

W-12/03 *Reserve*: Crenshaw, Kimberle. Excerpts from *Critical Race Theory*.

F-12/05 *Reserve*: Sandoval, Chela. “Afterbridge: Technologies of Crossing.”

M-12/08 **Course Conclusion**
**FINAL PAPER DUE (to my mailbox in S415 Callaway)
BY MONDAY, DECEMBER 15TH BY NOON**