No one, in the history of the world, has ever been born White. Or Black. Or Asian. Or Indian. No one has ‘Hispanic’ stamped into her DNA or encoded in her blood. We are not born a race. We become one (or many, or none at all) depending on our social environment. We are endowed with a race and a status relative to the power relations we find ourselves in upon exiting the womb.

In this course we will explore the historical invention and contemporary implications of many of the categories that divide us up and group us together: ‘African American’, ‘asian’, ‘middle-eastern’, ‘white’, ‘indian’, ‘latino’, etcetera etcetera ad nauseam. ‘American’, ‘immigrant’ and ‘illegal’. ‘Us’ and ‘them’. We’ll pay particular attention to how these categories are socially constructed – that is, how people in the past created them and how we continue to recreate them in our daily lives. We’ll engage in a detailed exploration of the ways these categories affect our lives and the lives of people around us. How do our races affect our identities and our opportunities? How does our race and ethnicity interact with our gender, our sexuality and our class?

Our course will explore issues that can be socially tense and politically explosive. It will be our difficult task to navigate these issues with compassion for one another and openness to new ideas and constructive disagreement. At its deepest level, this is a course about you, and about me. It is an intensely personal and political exploration of who we are individually and as a community; how we got here and where me might go now. For this reason, your open, honest and sensitive participation is absolutely crucial. It is my hope that this class will open a space for exploring new ideas and building previously closed opportunities to connect across the many fissures that divide our communities.

Texts:

Reading is required for this course. Not only will it improve your learning experience (and your grade), it will enable a richer class discussion and a more rewarding experience for all of us. Please complete ALL assigned readings by Monday of the week they are assigned. You will need the following three texts:

Rosenblum & Travis (2012) *The Meaning of Difference: American Constructions of Race, Sex and Gender, Social Class, Sexual Orientation, and Disability*. McGraw Hill. (There are many older editions to this text, but the older editions will not contain all of the assigned chapters.)

Toni Morrison (1987) *Beloved*. (You are welcome to purchase any edition. *Beloved* is a Nobel Prize winning novel, and a modern classic, so it will be available in cheap paper-back form at most bookstores in the country.)

Course Reader. Available to purchase at Smart Copy, 1915 SW 6th Ave, next to Hot Lips.

Grading:

*NOTE:* Late assignments will be deducted one full letter grade. No late assignments accepted after Monday, December 5, except with prior approval.

20% Attendance – Attendance is required. If you are forced to miss class, you may make up your attendance points for that day by watching a film (selected from the Recommended Films list below) and writing a one-page single-spaced essay reflecting on its significance to the assigned readings for the week of your absence. Please include, on the heading of your essay, the date that you are making up.
Quote of the Day – This exercise is intended as a fun way to share what we took from the weekly readings. (It’s also a small nudge to encourage us all to come to class having read the assigned materials!) Each class meeting, two randomly selected students will be asked to share their favorite quote from any of the week’s readings and to explain why they liked it. Student’s who are ready with a quote you will be given full credit. Students who do not have a quote will receive no credit. Our first “quote of the day” will be Wednesday of week 1 (9/28).

Student Led Discussion Questions (Due dates to be assigned: 10/12, 10/19, 10/26 or 11/23) – You will be assigned one class in which you will prepare three questions that will partly guide our in-class discussion of the assigned readings. The best questions will be open-ended and will engage the central arguments or theses of the relevant chapters or articles. Your questions must be typed and turned in on your assigned day.

Midterm Concept Exam (Week 6, Monday 10/31) – This exam is designed to help you firm up your comprehension of concepts in order to enable a richer engagement in the second half of the class. On the exam, you will be given a list of concepts and you will be asked to write a one or two sentence definition of each concept, and to use the concept in a sentence. You will be given a study guide before the exam.

Feeling My Skin Essay (Due dates to be assigned: 11/14, 11/16, 11/21, 11/23 or 11/28) – Toni Morrison’s novel Beloved is, among other things, a deep reflection on the intimacy of racial oppression, and the persistent ways that the past asserts itself in the present. This essay assignment is designed to help us understand our own experiences of race, and to deepen our empathy and understanding of other people’s experiences. In this one page, single spaced essay you will explore your own race and its meaning in your life. You must also reference at least two assigned readings from class. You might explore questions like: What does your race feel like? How does your race connect you to our (shared) past? Do you have to think about your race on a daily basis? What kinds of advantages and disadvantages do you experience as a result of your race? How does your race intersect with your gender, sexuality, class, religion, age or immigration/citizenship status?

Praise sessions: Each student will read their essay aloud to a small group of their peers. The reading will be followed by brief free write and a “praise session.” Remember, these are very personal and sensitive topics, so please support one another in this process! There are strict guidelines for the praise sessions, designed to make discussions mutually enriching and safe for all participants. In your responses, you may ONLY offer praise, pose questions and/or share personal experiences. You may NOT critique your classmates’ work or respond negatively in any way. It is my hope that this process will help us become increasingly empathetic and mutually understanding.

Observation Journal (Due Wednesday 11/30) – Sociology helps many people who study it to see the world around them in startlingly new ways. Keep a log of your observations during the week, highlighting the themes and theories discussed in our readings during that week. For example, if we are reading about ‘white privilege,’ pay close attention to the ways ‘white privilege’ plays out in your own life, whether at work, home, school, or in your social life. Does the system of white privilege benefit or disadvantage you? Has your perception of race and power changed as a result of what you’ve read? If so, how? If not, discuss that. The structure and content of your observation journal is entirely up to you, however it must be clear to me that you understand the assigned readings. You must reference each of the weekly assigned readings (including Beloved) at least once. Your journal should contain one entry for every week of class. Entries may be in any format you choose, however, each entry must reflect the effort of at least one single-spaced written page and should be performed weekly.

Extra Credit – You will have the option to complete up to 5 extra credit assignments, each worth 2% of your overall grade. Therefore, if you complete all 5, you will raise your mark in the course a full letter grade. Extra credit assignments are negotiable, usually involving attending a free public event and writing a one-page single-spaced reflection essay. They can be turned in any time until (but not after) Monday 12/5.
Week 2: 10/3 – 10/5 Defining Race
Readings: R&T: Smedley “Race and the Construction of Human Identity”: 46-56
Morrison: Pages 50-105

Week 3: 10/10 – 10/12 Naming the Invisible: Whiteness
Student Led Discussion 10/12
Readings: R&T: Frankenberg, “Whiteness as an “Unmarked” Cultural Category” 88-94
CR: Roediger “Whiteness and Ethnicity in the History of the ‘White Ethnic’ in the United States”
Morrison: Pages 106-153

Week 4: 10/17 – 10/19 Controlling Images
Student Led Discussion 10/19
CR: Collins “The Past is Ever-Present”
Morrison: 154-199

Week 5: 10/24 – 10/26 Orientalism
Student Led Discussion 10/26
Readings: CR: Said “Introduction to Orientalism”
CR: Yegenoglu “Veiled Fantasies’: Cultural and Sexual Difference in the Discourse of Orientalism”
Morrison: 200-235

Week 6: 10/31 – 11/2 Identity
Midterm Concept Exam 10/31
Readings: R&T: Espiritu, “Asian American Panethnicity: Contemporary National and Transnational Possibilities” 75-88
CR: Hall “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities”
Morrison: 236-275

Week 7: 11/7 – 11/9 Indigeneity
Readings: R&T: Garroutte, “Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America” 66-75
CR: Garroutte “If you’re Indian and you know it (but others don’t)”

Week 8: 11/14 – 11-16 Intersectionality
Feeling My Skin Essay Discussions 11/14 & 11/16
Readings: R&T: Collins “It’s all in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race and Nation” 245-254
CR: Collins “Prisons for our Bodies, Closets for our Minds: Racism, Heterosexism and Black Sexuality”
CR: Brooks-Higginbotham “African American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race”
CR: Jordan “Report from the Bahamas”

Week 9: 11/21 – 11/23 Resistance
Student Led Discussion 11/23
R&T: Sengupta, “I/ME/MINE – Intersectional Identities as Negotiated Minefields” 517-520

Week 10: 11/28 – 11/30 Bridging Differences
Feeling My Skin Essay Discussions 11/28
Observation Journal Due 11/30
Readings: R&T: “Framework Essay: Bridging Differences” 480-489
R&T: Johnson: “What Can We Do? Becoming Part of the Solution” 502-507

Final Meeting: Monday 12/5 at 5:30pm
Recommended Films:

These films are NOT required. However, you can earn two points of extra credit for watching a film from this list and writing a 1-page response essay to it. You can complete up to five extra credit assignments, for a total of ten points. Feel free to ask for more recommendations! And please share your own suggestions!

Race:
- Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible (available on youtube)
- Eyes on the Prize
- Crips & Bloods: Made in America
- Incident at Oglala
- We Shall Remain (Parts 1-4)
- When The Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Parts
- Bamboozled
- Amandla

Gender:
- Blossoms of Fire
- Killing Us Softly 4
- Tough Guise

Sexuality:
- The Celluloid Closet
- For The Bible Tells Me So