“To better understand contemporary racial dynamics, we must examine the connections among the histories of white supremacy, slavery, and other forms of chronic violence to which black people have been subjected. The ways in which the past informs the present can become obscured by the mythical face of narratives about racial progress.”

--Paula Rothenberg

“The aim of the contemporary cultural studies investigator is not to generate another good theory, but to give a better theorized account of concrete historical reality.”

--Stuart Hall

“Dysconscious racism’ is a form or racism that tacitly accepts dominant white norms and privileges. It is not the absence of consciousness but an impaired consciousness or distorted way of thinking about race as compared to, for example, critical consciousness. Uncritical ways of thinking about racial equity accept certain culturally sanctioned assumptions, myths, and beliefs that justify the social and economic advantages white people have as a result of subordinating others.

--Joyce E. King

Course Description:

The central concern of this course is to investigate how race and racism have shaped black and white people’s experiences living in the United States. We will examine how race and racism have been (re)presented in American culture—film, politics, literature, and other cultural media—exploring the various ways that cultural producers and critics have engaged with these ubiquitous phenomena. Our readings and discussions of primary and secondary texts will consider the production and mutation of race and racism across historical epochs—from slavery to the post-civil rights era. The course rejects the notion of post-racialism and considers how this discourse re-entrenches racism. Moreover, we will consider, how, if at all, conversations surrounding race might move forward, and whether racism is so intractable that efforts to eradicate it might prove futile. That is, while exploring structural, individual, representational, and material aspects race and racism, we will keep our eyes focused on developing solutions to these problems. Of course, our energetic examinations of race and racism will take into consideration how other identities (class and gender, for example) nuance our understandings of race and racism.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, each student will be able to discuss several aspects of race and racism including, but not confined to, the following:

- At least a dozen writers, critics, artists, and texts that have shaped the study of race and racism in the United States.
- The history of race and racism in the United States, including how historical eras and movements (the transatlantic slave trade, slavery, emancipation, Reconstruction, World War I, World War II, the Civil Rights movement, the Black Power movement, the Black Feminist movement, and the “post” civil rights era) have shaped those ideas and their manifestations.
The central ideas that emerge in the study of race and racism, including: racialization, whiteness, blackness, privilege, advantage, disadvantage, intersectionality, essentialism, social construction, structural racism, and institutional racism.

The ways that different forms of identity (gender, sexuality, class, religion) intersect with race to produce advantages and disadvantages.

Moreover, students will also be able to:

- Articulate verbally and in writing personal interpretations based upon careful documentation and close reading of texts.
- Examine African American literary and other cultural texts as cultural and social historiography.
- Read, research, consider, and reconsider the assigned texts and their various contexts.

**Required Texts:**

Nella Larsen, *Passing*
Paula Rothenberg, *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism*
Wes Moore, *The Other Wes Moore*

Online Reserves (designated as “BB” on your syllabus are available through the blackboard e-reserves system)

**COURSE POLICIES**

Class participation and punctual attendance are essential; you cannot expect to be successful if you are not present or participating in class. Regular attendance and a firm commitment to succeed are requisite! Simply sitting in class is not enough. This classroom will be a forum to share ideas and to learn from each other. As such, you are expected to be in class on time, and to remain in class until the session ends. Please take care of all lavatory and water needs prior to entering the classroom, or wait until the session is done. You will be marked late if you arrive after 9:40am. Two tardies equal one missed classed period. If you are absent more than two (2) class periods, your final grade will suffer as follows: on the 3rd absence, your grade will be lowered five (5) points—½ of a letter grade. For each additional absence, you will lose an additional 5 points. **If you are absent more than five (5) times, you will fail this course. BE IN CLASS.**

Cellular Phones, Food, and Laptops: Please do not bring food to class, and please remember to turn off cell phones, ipods, and/or beepers. Please do not surf the web or email/instant message while using your laptop in class.

Assignments will be submitted at the start of class, (9:30AM), on the day that the assignment is due, or by the designated time when assignments are due outside of our normal meeting period. Make every effort to submit your work on time as late work will be severely penalized. Grades will be lowered one letter grade (10 points) for each day it is late beyond the original due date and cannot be submitted more than 2 days late.

We will adhere to the University Honor Policy. In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together. Remember that academic integrity is essential to your development and success as a student. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with this document, as well as for citing ideas, questions, and texts that you obtain from outside sources. Neither implicit nor explicit plagiarism is acceptable. Any student suspected of plagiarism, or demonstrating other conduct, i.e. “receiving information from a fellow student or another unauthorized source,” that violates the University’s Honor Policy will be adjudicated according to the procedures that the Honor Policy outlines. Regarding multiple submissions, please note that in this course you are
not permitted to submit papers/assignments that you have already or will be submitting for another course, nor is group work acceptable for individual papers and examinations. Honor policy violation sanctions may range from a student failing the specific assignment to the student failing the entire course. In more severe cases an already conferred degree may be revoked, or a student may be expelled from the program.

**Intellectual discussions of the sorts of material** we will be engaging can sometimes be passionate, even heated. Indeed, I hope that our seminar will be characterized by spirited exchanges about the material and related concerns. Please feel free to share your ideas with the class as energetically as you would like. In my experience, the most productive classroom exchanges take place when the students support their assertions with textual or other evidence, recognize the rights of others to engage and even disagree vehemently, and remain open to the possibility that they may, on occasion, need to think more expansively about the issues.

**Student Disability Resource Center**

Georgetown University complies with the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and offers accommodations to students with disabilities. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (Leavey Center, Suite 335; 202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm) before the start of classes to allow their office time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS and EVALUATION CRITERIA (Subject to Revision):**

**Reading Assessments and Other Assignments (15%):** You will have reading assessments to ensure that you have read and understood the assigned materials. Assessments will vary in format, but generally will ask straightforward questions. Occasionally, I will ask you to explicate a passage or write a 1-2 paragraph response to a question. To do well on the assessments you should read and engage the materials carefully. Additionally, in-class assignments, which may include group work and mini-presentations, will be counted in this portion of your grade. Missed quizzes cannot be made up.

**Short Papers (20%):** In this course, you will two (700-800 word) thesis driven papers in which you will make an argument about an issue pertaining to race and racism (based on a specific reading or set of readings). Using one of the “key questions” to shape your topic for the response, you should create a thesis statement and develop it effectively in 2 pages. Your (one sentence) thesis statement should be in **bold** format, while your topic sentences (one sentence per paragraph which serves as the main idea of your paragraph and which develops your thesis statement) should be in *italics* format.

**Examinations (40%):** In this course, you will take two examinations. Although the second exam will not be cumulative, as appropriate, it will build upon concepts that we have studied throughout the entire semester. To be most successful on the examinations, you must take copious notes, read carefully and critically, and think energetically about the works. Examinations, following the pattern of our readings, lectures, and discussions, will consist of questions about the individual texts' arguments and significance as well as the interrelationships between the texts.

**Race and Racism Reader (15%):** For this assignment, you are to create a “Race and Racism in American Culture Reader” regarding some contemporary issue in American society (possible topics will be distributed after the first examination). You are to write a 1000 word introduction that explains the significance of your reader. You are to explain why you have chosen the particular theme(s) you are including and why those themes are important to the study of race and racism in American culture. Finally, you should explain what you "hope" one would gain from your "reader." Look at the "introduction" to White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism as an example.
Next, your project should have at least 15 entries; (people/themes/historical events); you should explain what the entry is and the significance of the entry. Each entry should be about a paragraph in length (4-5 sentences). Finally, include a “Suggested Reading List,” a bibliography of at least 10 texts, not read in class, that are “essential to the study of race and racism in general and your topic in particular.”

**Format:** although you may submit it as a paper, you may also submit it as a binder, newspaper, or booklet. Be Creative! Creativity; you should include pictures, for example, of people/locations, etc as appropriate.

**Daily Class Participation and Contribution (10%):** Class participation is essential in this course!! All students are expected to make daily contributions to the discussion/lecture. Accordingly, your assessment for class participation and contribution will be based on the intellectual rigor of your comments, including your thoughtfulness, synthesis, and analysis. Remember what I stated in the course policies; simply sitting in class in not enough! You must push yourself to take intellectual risks as well as to think energetically about the materials we are reading/discussing/viewing/(even listening to). It is your responsibility to contribute consistently and thoughtfully. Absences negatively impact your class participation grade.

**General Comments about paper grades:**

An "A" (9-10) indicates an excellent essay. The writer takes intellectual risks and has articulated exceptionally well-conceived ideas in lucid prose. The essay exhibits a thesis rich enough to lend itself to interesting development and support, understands in detail both the text and problem posed by the topic, shows command of organizational and technical skills such as sentence-and paragraph composition, and uses footnotes and bibliography where appropriate.

A "B" (8-8.99) indicates a good essay that addresses a particularly interesting and challenging problem and explores it in a well-organized, technically competent manner. It uses intelligent argument and judicious reference in support of a clear, sufficiently complex thesis. There may also be some technical problems in terms of organization and/or style. It may be well-organized and well-written, but offer fewer insights than an "A" essay.

A "C" (7-7.99) indicates a satisfactory essay with a thesis demonstrating a student's understanding of the text and question. It is an acceptable although not particularly exciting essay. Its argument develops some aspects of the problem posed by the topic, but the topic may be understood in terms that are too broad or insufficiently complex. The essay may contain technical problems in organization or expression.

A "D" (6-6.99) indicates a weak essay. It may lack an interesting thesis, contain misreadings of texts and plot summaries without adequate analysis, or considerable structural, organizational, or grammatical problems.

An "F" (0-5.99) indicates and unacceptable essay that simply does not address the assignment, is unacceptably late, or is unacceptably shorter than the assigned length. It contains no thesis worth arguing and is poorly constructed.

**General Comments about Class Participation, Contribution, and Preparation:**

A Students make significant contributions to class discussion and group work (as applicable). They are always engaged in class, whether actively taking notes, listening to peers or the instructor, speaking in class, or participating in group work. These students exemplify maturity and collegiality.

B Students generally contribute to class discussion and group work, take notes, and listen to peers and the instructor. Contribute less frequently than “A” students, and/or may offer less insight during discussion.

C Students sometimes take notes and participate in group work, but are not consistently active participants in class discussion and often are otherwise distracted or unfocused. Make tangential comments or fail to offer textually grounded and/or supported claims.
Students sit in class, generally without a book, without taking notes, and without making contributions to discussion and/or group work.

Student does not show up to class consistently.

Some behaviors that will adversely affect this component of your grade:

- Being unprepared (i.e. not having a book or notebook and, of course, not reading)
- Making tangential comments
- Not listening to peers who speak in class
- Not taking notes or otherwise appearing engaged
- Text messaging/checking e-mail, etc. in class

Grading Scale:  
A(93-100); A-(90-92); B+(87-89); B(83-86); B-(80-82); C+(77-79); C(73-76); C-(70-72); D+(67-69); D(63-66); D-(60-62); F(0-59)

Schedule of Assignments (Subject to Revision)

May

21 (M)  First Day of Class: What is Race? What is Racism? How does race relate to other forms of identity”

22 (T)  Watch the Video “Ethnic Notions” on library’s website  
Complete “Handout”  
Read Dyer, “The Matter of Whiteness” (RC)  
Dalton, “Failing to See” (RC)  
Sue, “The Invisible Whiteness of Being” (RC)

23 (W)  hooks, “Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination” (RC)  
Wander, Martin, et al “The Roots of Racial Classification” (RC)  
Barrett and Roediger, “How White People Became White” (RC)  
Winthrop Jordan, “First Impressions” (BB)

24 (R)  Hart, “Dead Black Man, Just Walking” (RC)  
US DOJ’s “Investigation of the Baltimore City Police Department” (1-46) (BB)

25 (F)  US DOJ’s “Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department” (15-41; 79-101) (BB)

28 (M)  Class Canceled; Memorial Day Holiday

29 (T)  **Short Paper 1 due electronically by 5pm** (View 13th during class)

30 (W)  Lee, “The Chinese Exclusion Example” (RC)  
Brodkin, “How Jews Became White Folks” (RC)  
Foley, “Becoming Hispanic: Mexican Americans and Whiteness (RC)

31 (R)  Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness” (RC)

June
1 (F)  
Larsen, *Passing* (part 1)  
Mills, “Global White Supremacy” (RC)  
Williams, “Life on the Color Line” (BB)

**EXAMINATION ONE**

04 (M)  

05 (T)  
Larsen, *Passing* (part 2)  
Wildman and David, “Making Systems of Privilege Visible” (RC)  
Johnson, “Privilege as Paradox” (RC)

06 (W)  
McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” (RC)  
Jensen, “White Privilege/White Supremacy” (RC)  
Wise, “Membership Has Its Privileges” (RC)

07 (R)  
DiAngelo, “My Class Didn’t Trump My Race” (RC)  
Graham, “I taught my Black Kids That Their Elite” (RC)  
Williams, “Race and Rights” (RC)

08 (F)  
Tatum, “Breaking the Silence” (RC)  
Feagin and Vera, “Confronting One’s Own Racism” (RC)  
Kivel, “How White People Can Serve as Allies” (RC)

10 (Sun)  
**Short Paper 2 due electronically by 5pm**

11 (M)  
Gallagher, “White Racial Formation: Into the Twenty-First” (BB)  
Foner, “Hiring Quotas for White Males Only” (BB)  
Ross, “Innocence and Affirmative Action” (BB)

12 (T)  
Patterson, “Black Lives Matter, Except When They Don’t: Why Slavery’s Psychic Hold Matter Stills”

13 (W)  
Anderson, “Prologue: Kindling” (BB)  
Anderson, “How to Unelect a Black President” (BB)

14 (R)  
**EXAMINATION TWO**

15 (F)  
Course Wrap-Up

18 (M)  
**Final Research Project due electronically by 11am.**