

HONR 10197-007 (13804)—Freshman Honors Colloquium I

Multiethnic America in Black and White

Instructor: Wesley Raabe

E-mail: wraabe@kent.edu

Class: T Th 11:00–12:15 Johnson Hall, Rm. 60

Office Hours (Satterfield 202c)

Office Hours (Library 1118)

Office Phone: 672-1723

Office Phone: No Phone

T Th 9:30–10:45

M W 10:30–12:00

Course Description

Why are both Barack Obama and Tiger Woods often described as black or African American? Obama's mother is usually identified as "white," and Woods has described himself as of Caucasian, Black, [American] Indian, and Asian descent? On the Oprah Winfrey show in 1997, Woods used the word "Cablinasian" to describe his ethnicity.

This seminar explores the function of race in American identity. We will assess contemporary discursive practices, but we will explore the continuing relevance of 19th- and mid-20th-century concepts of race for 21st-century American society. Most readings will be drawn from literary texts, but we will also use film, social science, and cultural criticism to aid understanding.

Our subjects of inquiry may include the following: scientific racial categories (and varieties of racisms) in the nineteenth century, political and cultural concepts that define racial difference and that voice myths of cultural unity, individual and collective efforts to challenge and redefine cultural myths, and attempts to fit ethnic descent (for example, Hispanic) into the national concepts of racial categorization.

Course Expectations

Students will blog in response to readings (selected students will blog in response to each reading), write two formal papers (5 and 7 pages) each semester, will prepare a project or offer a presentation, and will contribute to electronic sites for literary interpretation.

Textbooks and Materials

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (W. W. Norton)

Ishmael Reed, *Flight to Canada* (Simon & Schuster)

Nella Larsen, *Passing*, ed. Carla Kaplan (W. W. Norton)

Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, ed. Sidney E. Berger (W. W. Norton)

Charles Waddell Chesnutt, *House Behind the Cedars*, ed. Judith Jackson Fossett (Modern Library)

Malcolm X, *Autobiography of Malcolm X (as told to Alex Haley)*, (Ballantine)

Grading Breakdown

25%	Blog and Participation
25%	Papers
25%	Project or In-Class Presentation
25%	Game Play (Ivanhoe)

Class Policies

Class Disruptions

Forms of disruption include arriving late, allowing your cell phone to ring, permitting text messaging or other electronic interaction to distract yourself or others, holding conversations unrelated to class matter, and using class time to discuss individual matters that are better reserved for office hours. Please keep disruptions to a minimum.

Official Policies

Late Work

- **Papers:** One paper version (draft, final, revised) may be turned in late without penalty. For a paper to qualify as “late,” it must be turned in by the day following the next class session (i.e., by Friday if the due date was Tuesday, by Wednesday if the due date was Thursday). Each subsequent late submission will result in a grade penalty.
- **Reading Responses and Assignments:** No credit is given for late reading responses or assignments. You may submit them for evaluation.
- **Projects:** Projects must be presented on time.

Absences

You are permitted to miss the equivalent of 1.5 weeks of class, with said absences only harming your participation grade. Every additional absence will harm your final grade. If you miss more than 2 weeks, you can withdraw. In general, explanations for occasional absences on regular class days—you oversleep, contract a contagious illness, or must attend to a pressing matter—are not necessary.

Absences on assignment due dates, to avoid penalties, must include documentation. Missing a scheduled office visit without notification will be counted as an absence.

Provide proper notice for absences due to scheduled university activities (which will be excused). Assignments are due prior to the expected absence.

Excessive absences late in the semester, if less than 75 percent of the course work is complete, will result in a failure. Incompletes may be offered if you have a record of regular attendance and an extraordinary circumstance that merits such consideration. An inability to complete assignments on time is not an extraordinary circumstance.

Registration Requirement

The official registration deadline for this course is September 7, 2008. University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Each student must confirm enrollment by checking his/her class schedule (using Student Tools in FlashFast) prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to the deadline.

Accommodations for Documented Disability

University Policy 3342-3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, **you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Accessibility Services** (contact 330-672-3391 or visit www.kent.edu/sas for more information on registration procedures).

Cheating and Plagiarism

Cheating and plagiarism constitute fraudulent misrepresentation for which no credit can be given and for which appropriate sanctions are warranted and will be applied.

“Cheat” means to intentionally misrepresent the source, nature, or other conditions of academic work so as to accrue undeserved credit, or to cooperate with someone else in such misrepresentation.

“Plagiarize” means to take and present as one’s own a material portion of the ideas or words of another or to present as one’s own an idea or work derived from an existing source without full and proper credit to the source of the ideas, words, or works.

The official “Administrative Policy and Procedures Regarding Student Cheating and Plagiarism (3342-3-01.8) includes additional detail to define “Cheating” and “Plagiarism” and provides further elaboration of

“Definitions,” “Intent and Scope,” “Sanctions,” “Procedures,” and “Appeals.” See <http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/chap3/3-01-8.cfm>. A condensed version of policy is also provided in the student *Flashguide*.

Instructor Note: For sanctions that rely on the judgment of the instructor (see the “Sanctions” section), you can expect to fail the course. For serious violations, you can expect me to pursue further sanction with the department chair. This abbreviated version of the “Cheating and Plagiarism” policy is provided on this syllable for convenience. The official policy (see *Flashguide* or *Policy Register*) will apply for all cases of suspected cheating or plagiarism.

Class Schedule

- (Tu) 8/26 For Thursday: Set up blog workgroups.
Watch “Blackness” on <http://1001lights.blogspot.com/>
- (Th) 8/28 Read *UTC* chaps. I—V
Read James Baldwin, “Everybody’s Protest Novel.” *UTC*, ed. Ammons, pgs. 495–500.
Read Henry Louis Gates, “Cabin Fever,” *New York Times* 22 Oct. 2006
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/22/books/review/Gates.t.html?ref=review>
Watch (in-class video) Part I of *Race: The History of an Illusion*
- (Tu) 9/2 Read *UTC*, chaps. VI—XVIII.
Add 1st Student Response to *UTC* book or *Race* video (250 words, signed) to workgroup blog.
Comment on another workgroup’s 1st Student Response (100 words, signed by author) to workgroup blog.
Read Jane P. Tompkins, “Sentimental Power,” *UTC*, ed. Ammons, (501-23).
- (Th) 9/4 Read *UTC*, chaps. XIX—XXVI.
Add 2nd Student Response to workgroup blog.
Comment on another workgroup’s 2nd Student Response (100 words, signed) to workgroup blog.
Read Curtis Sittenfeld, *Prep* Selection (online reserve)
- (Tu) 9/9 Read *UTC*, chaps. XXVII–XL.
Read Stephen F. Railton, “Uncle Tom on Film 2: Tomming Today” *Uncle Tom’s Cabin & American Culture*
<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/sitemap.html>
Click “Interpret” | “Interpretive Exhibits”
Direct Link to Same Railton Article
<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/interpret/exhibits/tomming/tomminghp.html>
Add 3rd Reading Response (250 words, signed) to workgroup blog.
Comment on another workgroup’s 3rd Reading Response (100 words, signed) to workgroup blog.
- (Th) 9/11 Read *UTC*, chaps. XXIII–XL.
Add Reading Response and Reading Response Comment.
- (Tu) 9/16 Read Reed, *Flight*, chaps. 1–5
Paper 1 Proposal Due
No Reading Response or Reading Response Comment.
- (Th) 9/18 Read Reed, *Flight*, chaps. 6–14
Add Thursday Reading Response and Reading Response Comment.
- (Tu) 9/23 Read Reed, *Flight*, chaps. 15–end
Read Hortense J. Spillers, “Changing the Letter,” *UTC*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons, 542–57 [or photocopy]
Read Glenda R. Carpio, “Conjuring the Mysteries of Slavery[...]”, [see Vista]
Add Tuesday Reading Response and Reading Response Comment.
- (Th) 9/25 **Paper 1 Due**
Read Twain, *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, chaps. 1–4.
No Reading Response.
- (Tu) 9/30 Read Twain, *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, chaps. 5–16.
Add Tuesday Reading Response and Reading Response Comment.

(Th) 10/2	Read Twain, <i>Pudd'nhead Wilson</i> , chaps. 17–Conclusion. Add Thursday Reading Response and Reading Response Comment.
(Tu) 10/7	Read Twain, <i>Extraordinary Twins</i> , chaps. 1–10. Read Linda A. Morris, “Beneath the Veil[...],” <i>Pudd'nhead Wilson</i> , 381–95. Add Tuesday Reading Response and Reading Response Comment.
(Th) 10/9	Read Malcolm X, <i>Autobiography</i> , chaps. 1–3. Add Thursday Reading Response and Reading Response Comment.
(Tu) 10/14	Read Malcolm X, <i>Autobiography</i> , chaps. 4–9. Add Tuesday Reading Response and Reading Response Comment.
(Th) 10/16	Read Malcolm X, <i>Autobiography</i> , chaps. 10–12. Exploration Topic: See Blog Paper 1 Revision Due
(Tu) 10/21	Read Malcolm X, <i>Autobiography</i> , chaps. 13–16. Paper 2 Proposal Due
(Th) 10/23	No class. Read Malcolm X, <i>Autobiography</i> , chaps. 17–19. Read Alex Haley, “Epilogue,” <i>Autobiography</i> , pgs. 441–523. Read Ossie Davis, “On Malcolm X,” <i>Autobiography</i> , pgs. 524–27. Add Tuesday Reading Response and Reading Response Comment.
(Tu) 10/28	Read Nella Larsen, <i>Passing</i> , Part I, pgs. 1–35. Read Deborah E. McDowell, From “Black Female Sexuality [...],” <i>Passing</i> , pgs. 363–78. Add Reading Response and Reading Response Comment.
(Th) 10/30	Paper 2 Due
(Tu) 11/4	Read Nella Larsen, <i>Passing</i> , Part II, pgs. 36–59. Read Carla Kaplan, “Introduction,” <i>Passing</i> , ix–xxvii. Begin Ivanhoe Gameplay.
(Th) 11/6	Read Nella Larsen, <i>Passing</i> , Part III, pgs. 59–82. Final Project Proposal Due
(Tu) 11/11	(Veteran’s Day Holiday) No class.
(Th) 11/13	Read Charles W. Chesnutt, <i>House behind the Cedars</i> , chaps. I–XVI.
(Tu) 11/18	Read Charles W. Chesnutt, <i>House behind the Cedars</i> , chaps. XVII–XXV.
(Th) 11/20	Conclude Ivanhoe Gameplay.
(Tu) 11/25	Read Charles W. Chesnutt, <i>House behind the Cedars</i> , chaps. XXVI–end.
(Th) 11/27	(Thanksgiving Holiday) No class.
(Tu) 12/2	Final Project Presentations
(Th) 12/4	Final Project Presentations
	Presentations during Final Exam as Designated on Schedule