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## HCOL 86: Race, Literature, and the Dangers of the Single Story

**Spring 2018**

In an interview several years ago, Nobel Prize winning author Toni Morrison stated that racism is a scholarly affair and one that is useful for whites.  In the 1998 movie *American History X*, Ed Norton's character claims that all problems in this country are race-related.  The late poet and activist Maya Angelou envisioned a time when “ideally, race should be [only] as important as the color coordination of one’s costume.” During a 2016 presidential debate, Hillary Clinton acknowledged that “race still determines too much.” What do these statements mean?  And what relevance do they have for us, in 2018, as this country experiences overt racist acts and rhetoric?

This course considers a variety of contemporary texts -- novels, short stories, movies -- written by and about non-hegemonic groups living in the United States today that explore the intersections of race, class, socioeconomics, racism and institutionalized racism.  Because the course expects students to engage in polemical and engaging dialogue, students are asked to “agree to disagree’ in a respectful environment.

Over the duration of the course, students will consider the questions of race and racism through a variety of lenses – and will work toward a more comprehensive view of race as a social construct while at the same time exploring stereotypes they themselves might hold.

Attendance is mandatory: after 3 unexcused absences, final grades will be lowered by one ½ letter grade per missed class. i.e. if you miss 4 classes, a B becomes a B-. Athletic events, academic teams, and religious holidays must be documented in writing the first week of class.

**Academic Integrity:** Any form of academic dishonesty including plagiarism, cheating on exams, or misrepresentation of your own work will result in an **F** for the class. The university may take further action. Make sure to properly cite all sources.

**Course Requirements:**

Active Participation 20% -- In class and group work

Poster Presentation 25% -- (individual 15% and group 10%)

Annotated Bibliography 15%

Discussion Postings 20% -- Due by midnight every Tuesday (10 in total)

Final Paper 20% -- Please follow MLA formatting for all papers

Students should take advantage of the Writing Center for all writing assignments

\*Emailed papers will not be accepted!

**Required Texts**:

Toni Morrison *The Bluest Eye*

Firoozeh Dumas *Funny in Farsi*

T.C. Boyle *The Tortilla Curtain*

Claudia Rankine *Citizen*

Various articles and short stories available through Blackboard – these articles are to be printed out and brought to class to enable discussion. Moreover, you are to bring your books to class each day; the excuses “it’s too heavy” or “I forgot it” are not acceptable.

**Course Schedule (subject to change):**

16th Jan: Course Introduction – Adichie and the single story

\*17th Jan: Plenary with Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst

18th Jan: Toni Morrison’s “Recitatif” (available on Blackboard)

23rd Jan: Morrison’s*The Bluest Eye*

*Toni Morrison Uncensored* (video)

25th Jan: *The Bluest Eye*

 *Bamboozled* Clip

 Clark Doll Experiment

 Susan Willis’ “I Want the Black One” (Blackboard)

30th Jan: *The Bluest Eye*

*SNL* Skit (Chevy Chase and Richard Pryor – YouTube)

1st Feb: *The Bluest Eye* (including the Afterword)

 Morrison on *The Colbert Report*

6th Feb: Meet at the Fleming Museum to view Bechdel show – generate questions for the plenary

\*7th Feb: Plenary with Alison Bechdel

8th Feb: Dumas’s *Funny in Farsi*

 *Little Mosque on the Prairie* (video)

13th Feb: *Funny in Farsi*

 *Argo* Trailer

 Dumas Interview: “Muslims in the Media”

15th Feb: *Funny in Farsi*

Miss America

20th Feb: Introduction to the Poster Project

22nd Feb: Group Contract and Discussion – Generate Possible Research Topics

27th Feb: Sherman Alexie’s “My Father was the only Indian…,” “Assimilation,” “Lawyer’s League,” & “Breaking and Entering” (Blackboard) – Please read in this order as they are chronological

*The Siege at Wounded Knee* (video – \*this is available on YouTube – please watch it in preparation for today’s class)

Alexie on *The Colbert Report*/Hendrix at Woodstock (videos)

\*28th Feb: Plenary with Pablo Bose

1st March: Alexie’s “My Father was the only Indian…,” “Assimilation,” “Lawyer’s League,” & “Breaking and Entering”

Churchill’s “Let’s Spread the Fun Around” (Blackboard)

King’s “Arguing Over Images: Native American Mascots and Race” (Blackboard)

John King’s “Life is Bare bones on the Lakota Reservation” (Blackboard)

6th March Town Meeting Day: No Class

8th March: In-Class Group Work on Projects

**Preliminary book list and annotated bibliography/sources for final syllabus project due.**

13th March: Spring Break: No Class

15th March Spring Break: No Class

20th March:T.C. Boyle’s *The Tortilla Curtain*

“Who Left the Door Open?” (Blackboard)

 *Illegal Immigrants* video

\*21st March: Poster Plenary – 5:05 to 6:20 in Billings LH

22nd March: *The Tortilla Curtain*

27th March: *The Tortilla Curtain*

29th March: *The Tortilla Curtain*

3rd April: Groups 1 & 2 Presentation Workshop

5th April: Groups 3 & 4 Presentation Workshop

\*9th April: **Poster Projects Due Today** (no extensions) – emailed to me as PowerPoint slide

10th April: *Citizen*

\*11th April: Research/Poster Presentations(evening TBA)

12th April: “Babies” (Blackboard)

 “Learning While Black” (Blackboard)

 “The Color of Skin is the Color of Crime” (Blackboard)

17th April: *American History X*& *Hate.com* video

\*18th April: Research/Poster Presentations(evening TBA)

19th April: *American History X*

24th April: *American History X*

\*25th April: First Year Research Symposium Grand Maple Ballroom, Davis Center

26th April: “*American History X*: Tool for Teaching or Tool for White Supremacy?” “What’s White, Anyway” (both on Blackboard)

1st May: Final Project Presentations

3rd May: Last Day of Class: Evaluations & Final Project Presentations

\*4th May: **Papers Due by 4:00**