COLA 1500-52: WHITENESS: A Racial Category

Diversity in the U.S., circa 1940s

Fall 2017
Jalane Schmidt

Course description:
Race, it is often said, is a “biological fiction, but a social fact.” This class examines the formation of an important, but “unmarked category” of peoples: those designated as white. Whiteness has often served as an unstable marker of racial belonging and ethnic identity. It has been defined, and alternately reinforced over time and space to exclude Others, or expanded and blurred to include different groups. We will examine the history of this racial category by studying its
creation, how its boundaries have been guarded, and how various European immigrant groups to the U.S. navigated the status initially assigned to them, until they came to be classified as “white.”

**Course Requirements:**
Attendance at every class meeting (only one excused absence), the timely on-line weekly submission of a written paragraph of 100-300 words which responds critically and analytically (not simply provides a summary) to the assigned reading (marked with *), an active participation in seminar discussion (including the respectful consideration of different ideas), and the submission of a 3-5 page final reflection which discusses the student’s significant learning from the course.

**DEFINITIONS & HISTORY**

**Week #1, 22 August: Course descriptions**

**Week #2, 29 August: 18th century “science” categorizes Caucasians, Aryans.**
SCREEN: “The Color of Money: Colonialism and the Slave Trade,” parts 7, 3, 10


**Week #3, 5 Sept: From Anglo-Saxony to The Mayflower: “Who are the Americans?”**
Irish immigrant accosts America in “Uncle Sam’s Lodging House” (Joseph Keppler, 1882).

• Painter, chap. 8, “Early American White People Observed”
• Demby, “‘Cracker’: Origins of a Racial Epithet”
• Naturalization Act of 1790, http://www.indiana.edu/~kdhist/H105-documents-web/week08/naturalization1790.html

Challenging and Expanding Definitions of Whiteness: 19th c. European Immigration

Week #4, 12 Sept.: The status of the Irish in the “White Republic”

Week #5, 19 Sept.: Whiteness: “Is it good for the Jews?”
SCREEN: “The House We Live In,” parts 3-5.
• Brodkin, “How Did Jews Become White People?”

Week #6, 26 Sept.: Passing for White After Slavery. GUEST SPEAKER: Cinder Stanton, Historian of Monticello, emeritus


Week #7, 3 Oct.: NO CLASS: Fall reading days.

America embraces “white ethnics”

Week #8: 10 Oct.: “Unfit” White Folk and Eugenic Efforts to “Protect” the White Gene Pool

SCREEN: “War on the Weak: Eugenics in America” (COLLAB); “The Lynchburg Story: Eugenic Sterilization in America” (VIRGO)
• Painter, chap. 18, “The Discovery of Degenerate Families,” chap. 19, “From Degenerate Families to Sterilization”
• Morrison, Bill Clinton: America’s 1st Black President
• Coates,

**Week #9, 17 Oct.: School Desegregation and “Massive Resistance”**
VISITORS: Joe & Pam Starsia, Cville chapter of ShowingUpForRacialJustice.org (SURJ)

SCREEN: “Locked Out: The Fall of Massive Resistance”


**Week #10, 24 Oct.: GUEST SPEAKER: Rev. Tracy Howe Wispelwey, Presbyterian Campus Ministry.**

Read materials and screen films for Miscegenation Laws: Maintaining Marital Taboos:
• Phyl Newbeck, “Making Sense of Senseless Laws,” “The Supreme Court Speaks,” *Virginia Hasn’t Always Been For Lovers: Interracial Marriage Bans and the Case of Richard and Mildred Loving*.
• Virginia’s Racial Integrity Statute
• Loving v. Virginia 1967 Supreme Court Decision syllabus

SCREEN (COLLAB Resources “Images & Videos”): “Loving v. Virginia BBC documentary”
THE ECONOMICS & POLITICS OF WHITENESS

Week #11, 31 Oct.: Postwar Suburbanization: Space Creating and Reinforcing Race
VISITOR: UVA history Prof. Andrew Kahr

LISTEN: Pete Seeger, “Little Boxes”
SCREEN: “The House We Live In,” 25:20- post-WWII real estate; “Crisis in Levittown”

Look under “FHA & GI Bill” file of COLLAB Resources for:
• Beckman, “Racialization of Space,” chap. 5, pp. 60-81, Conclusion, pp. 82-87, and view illustrations in Appendix A, pp. 88-98.
• “Where Race Lives,” follow and read all three links
Week #12, 7 Nov.: ELECTION DAY! Mobilizing Whiteness: The GOP “Southern Strategy” & “White Ethnics”

SCREEN: “Boogie Man,” documentary about Lee Atwater

• Sean Wilentz, “The racist skeletons in Charles Pickering’s past” (excerpt)
• Fred Clark, “The Party of Lincoln is Not the Party of Lincoln”
• GOP’s 2005 Apology for Southern Strategy
• “How the GOP Became the ‘White Man’s Party’” Salon.com, Dec 22, 2013

Week #13, 14 Nov.: Trespassing and Infiltrating Whiteness

SCREEN: “The Human Stain” (2003); Bliss Broyard videos

• Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “The Passing of Anatole Broyard”
Week #14, 21 Nov: “Post-Racialism”? Whiteness & Irony in the Age of Obama
VISIT Alderman Library, Todd Burks will teach us re: library research

• Hua Hsu, “The End of White America”?  
• Stuff White People Like: How Irony is Killing Activism


“Whiteskins” parody football team logo; “Stuff White People Like”

WEEK #15: 28 Nov.: Present reflection papers

WEEK #16: 5 Dec.: LAST DAY OF CLASS.
RELG/AMST 2155; RELS 8500-001

WHITENESS & RELIGION:

Religious Constructions of a Racial Category

#ReligionSoWhite

University of Virginia
Spring 2017
Tues. & Thurs., 2:00-3:15 p.m.
Maury Hall 115

Instructor: Jalane D. Schmidt
Office: Gibson 364, ext. 4-1061
Teaching Assistant: Mae Speight

Office hours: Tu/Th 3:30 p.m. (or by appt.)

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“The Grand Council” of premortal life in heaven (Robert T. Barrett, LDS illustrator)
Course Description:
This class examines the role that colonial British North American and U.S. religious institutions, actions, and theology have played and continue to play in constructing, defining, reinforcing, contracting and at times expanding, blurring or challenging a racial category demarcated as “white.” Whiteness—an arbitrary racial designation and accompanying set of privileges which should not be conflated with peoples racialized as white—has conventionally been regarded as a self-evident, timeless, often monolithic identity, a natural and neutral race-less default against which Other “races” are known. Until the recent rise of “alt-right” white nationalist politics, Whiteness functioned as a background assumed norm or “unmarked category” which was not usually noticed or subjected to analysis, often tacitly conflated with “Americanness,” civic legitimacy, and cultural belonging. By reading historical accounts of the religious organizations and performances of various U.S. communities, we will examine how ethnic groups now classified as white (Irish, Italians, Poles, Jews, etc.), and even religious images (depictions of Jesus) "became white" and the role that religion played in producing this shift of racial classification.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class Attendance and Participation: 15%
Students are expected to attend each class meeting, having read all assigned materials (marked with a “•”) prior to class time. No more than one absence during the course of the semester.

Reading and Timely Submission of on-line Critical Responses: 15%
On nearly weekly occasions during the course of the semester, students will submit critical responses, via COLLAB “Forums,” to one of the week’s assigned readings. On-line submissions are to be brief (1-2 paragraphs, 100-300 words), and are due by 12 p.m. (noon), prior to Thursday afternoon’s class. Students are required to submit critical responses to these weekly questions which will form the basis of weekly section discussions.

In-Class Mid-Term Examination: 20 %
More information will be forthcoming as we approach the exam, Thursday, March 2, 2017, which is before Spring Break. Students are expected to abide by the UVA Honor Code. See http://www.virginia.edu/honor

5-7 page Group Project presentation and literature review: 15%
A group of 5 students will read and review the “Recommended” readings for their designated week and consult with the professor the week prior. On Thursday of that week, the group will make a 20-minute presentation to the rest of the class which analyzes this additional literature (in conversation with that week’s required reading). The group will upload, under “Assignments,” their 5-7 page summary of their findings, and distribute their essay to the rest of the class.

5 page final essay: 5%
Students will write a critical appraisal of one of our themes by applying assigned theoretical literature as a critical lens. Due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, May 2.

Final Examination: 30%: Friday, May 12, 9 a.m.-12 noon
COURSE MATERIALS
All required texts are available, free of charge, as eBooks online through VIRGO on the UVA library website, or for reading and/or download through COLLAB under Written Resources. Required textbooks are also available for purchase at the UVA Bookstore, and hard copies will be on reserve at Clemons Library.

“Whiteness & Religion” required books: (* = eBook available through VIRGO, search by title)


Recommended texts, on reserve at Clemons:

@Twitter: #ReligionSoWhite
Tweet our authors: @hwinant, @historianess (R. Goetz), @pharvey61, @WPaulReeve, @PainterNell, @LauraJVeltman, @PrestonCHogue, @MikulichAlex, @TracyHoweMusic (Rev. Tracy Wispelwey), @rachelheldevans (evangelical blogger), @jimwallis (Sojourners community)

(“Scientific” chart correlates “race” with intelligence.)

WEEK 1: Introduction: Racialization, Critical Whiteness Studies, & Religion

Thurs., Jan. 19:
WEEK 2: Colonial Anglo-America: Christianity & The Birth of Whiteness in 17th c. “Old Dominion” Virginia

Tues. Jan. 24: SCREEN: “Powhatan Confederacy and James Town”; “Rebels” (America—the Story of Us), parts 1, 2, & 3

“The Baptism of Pocahontas” (John Gadsby Chapman, 1840)

Thurs., Jan. 26: SKYPE conversation with Rebecca Goetz
Recommended: Remainder of Goetz.

WEEK 3: White Anxiety: Racial Demarcations in Colonial Churches & Republican Belonging in the Jacksonian “Common Man” Era

Tues., Jan 31:

• Harvey, Paul. 2003. “‘A Servant of Servants Shall He Be’: The Construction of Race in American Religious Mythologies,” pp. 13-19, Religion & the Creation of Race & Ethnicity. @pharvey61
• Naturalization Act of 1790


Tues., Feb. 7:

Recommended: Taves, “Shouting Methodists,” chap. 3, Fits, Trances, and Visions

Thurs., Feb. 9:
• Donna Ladd, “Confederates Speak”
• Josh Marshall “The White Man’s Flag” (Confederate flag)
• Gordon Rhea, “Why Non-slaveholding [white] Southerners Fought”


WEEK 5: Lost Cause Religion: “Reconciliation” and “Redemption” in Post-Reconstruction White Protestant Remembrances of the Civil War


• Christopher Petrella, “Amnesty for ex-Confederates in the White Republic.”
• Merritt, “How Slave Emancipation Benefited Poor Whites”

Thurs., Feb. 16: SCREEN: “History of Silent Film—‘The Birth of a Nation’: Why do the KKK ride to the rescue?”


• Post-Reconstruction NC Dem Party, 1898 election, “Appealing to White Voters to Redeem the State”
• Sam Biddle, “The ‘Southern Belle’ Is a Racist Fiction”

Recommended: W. Scott Poole, “Confederate Apocalypse: Theology and Violence in the Reconstruction South,” Edward Blum, ed. Vale of Tears, pp. 36-52; Gardiner Shattuck, “‘One Fold and One Chief Shepherd’: The Sewanee Conference of 1883 and the Beginnings of Racial Segregation in the Episcopal Church, Vale of Tears;

WEEK 6: “White and delightsome”: Racial Tr(av)ails of a Mormon Religious Minority


Thurs., Feb. 23:
Recommended: Remainder of Reeve; Smith_Critique of Reeve; Johnson_Accounting for Whiteness in Mormon Religion

WEEK 7: LDS Whiteness, con’t: Statehood, Citizenship, Inclusion; Mid-Term Exam
Tues., Feb. 28: SKYPE conversation with Paul Reeve

**Thurs., March 2:** MID-TERM EXAM (No critical response question this week.)

**WEEK 8:** Spring Break, March 4-12. No Class.

**WEEK 9:** “Kiss Me, I’m Irish!”: How Catholic immigrants became “White Ethnics”

**Tues., March 14:**
• Knights of Columbus and Italian-American Whiteness (C).

**Thurs., March 16:** (Eve of White Ethnic High Holy Day)
• St. Patrick’s Day and Irish-American Whiteness (C)

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St. Patrick’s Day parade, South Boston, March 15, 2015. The Ancient Order of Hibernians fraternal organization was established to defend 19th c. Irish-Americans from nativist mobs.

WEEK 10: Whiteness: “Is it good for the Jews?”


Thurs., March 23: SKYPE conversation with Eric Goldstein
Recommended: Remainder of Goldstein.

WEEK 11: Religious affiliation: Proxy for Whiteness & U.S. Citizenship in SCOTUS Cases


(Considered “Aryan,” but judged to be non-white, Indians were ineligible for U.S. citizenship.)
WEEK 12: Whiteness and Godliness: How a 1st-century Middle Eastern Jewish prophet-healer was posthumously promoted to Whiteness

Tues., April 4:

Thurs., April 6: SKYPE conversation with Paul Harvey


Recommended: remainder of Blum & Harvey, *Color of Christ*.

(“Head of Christ,” Walter Sallman, 1941. The blessing of “Nordic” images of beauty meets North American mass production and distribution.)

WEEK 13: Christianity & Anti-Miscegenation Laws: “Mixed” Marriages during Jim Crow

Tues., April 11:
SCREEN: Loving v. Virginia BBC documentary

• Virginia Racial Integrity Statute of 1924
Thurs., April 13:
• Botham, Chap. 6, “The Southern Lingua Franca of Race,” 159-178, and “Epilogue,” 179-192, *Almighty God Created the Races*.
Recommended: Remainder of Botham.

(“Massive Resistance” rally against school integration. Note “keep white” institutional trifecta: schools, churches, marriages [flier].)

WEEK 14: White Flight in the Bible Belt: Suburban housing policies & the “Southern Strategy” re-defined space and politics

Tues., April 18:
SCREEN: “The House We Live In,” parts 10-21; “Crisis in Levittown.” Segregation in post-WWII real estate
• NPR interview with Richard Rothstein (audio link in COLLAB_Resources_Images & Video)


Thurs., April 20: SKYPE conversation with Preston Hogue
• Randall Balmer, “Real Origins of the Religious Right,” politico.com (C)
• McBride, “Christ Episcopal Church [Charlottesville] Amidst Massive Resistance” (C)


WEEK 15: The Quest for Racial Justice: Christians Challenging White Fragility

Tues., April 25: Guest speaker: Rev. Tracy Howe Wispelwey, UVA Presbyterian chaplain
• Westmoreland, “Racial Reconciliation in the Flesh of Jesus, part 1”
• Richard Beck, “Race, Politics, and Christianity in the American South,”
• Tranby & Hartmann, “Critical Whiteness Studies and the Evangelical ‘Race Problem’,”

Anti-racist activism: white ally participating in #BlackLivesMatter protest march

Recommended: Jim Wallis, America’s Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America.


• Karin Case, “Claiming White Social Location as a Site of Resistance to White Supremacy,” Disrupting White Supremacy From Within, pp. 63-90.
• Karen Teel, “What Jesus Wouldn’t Do: A White Theologian Engages Whiteness”

WEEK 16: Summing Up: “Huck Finn” Moments and Strategies for Allies to Dismantle White Supremacy
Tues., May 2: Last day of class
• Rachel Held Evans, “All right then, I’ll go to hell”
• Michael Eric Dyson interview.

FINAL EXAM: Friday, May 12, 9 a.m.-12 noon

Bibliography of more resources on Critical Whiteness Studies and Whiteness & Religion:


Mae Speight, TA (Mormonism, gender mechanisms, women’s ordination); Jesse Robinson (Reformed theology, pastoral care, U.S. 20th c. evangelicalism); Kelvin Parnell (art history PhD. Cand 20th c. Af-Am artists in Paris); Kevin Rose (evangelicalism and environmentalism); Dropped: Bradley (U.S. Am hist, Mormonism, knows Paul Reeve);