

Crash (ING): Gender and Race in the U.S
Proposed Freshman Seminar
2 credit hours
letter grade

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Course Overview

Through the exploration of current and historic examples, we will explore topics such as the Abercrombie and Fitch controversy regarding diversity. A&F have had several cases against them, one for advocating underage drinking with a t-shirt “Drinking 101,” advocating racism with t-shirts that stated “Wong Brothers Laundry Service: Two Wongs can make it white,” and “It’s all relative in West Virginia;” provocative marketing to teens girls and boys that promotes active sexual behavior; and the \$40 million settlement awarded to Latino, African American, and Asian American, and women for discriminatory practices. Exploring companies such as Abercrombie and Fitch and Disney, movies such as *Crash*, and our participation and the effect of collusion demonstrates the power of visual representation, marketing, and images and their influence on our understandings of each other. Exploring cultural complexity and issues of power as associated with social affiliations and aspects of personal, national, and global cultural identity (ies) will be the goal.

How do the social and cultural formations of gender, sexuality, and class intersect with race and ethnicity to produce “American” identity? How does visual culture depict “Americanness?” What do we learn about each other and what should we forget? Visual culture deals with images from mass media such as television, movies, music videos, computer technology, advertisements, magazines, and newspapers. These images create meaning and a vision of life. We will have an opportunity to learn that real life is messy and issues are not solved by having “the” right answer. Solutions involve discussion, compromise, negotiation, arbitration, mediation, cultural sensitivity, and openness to community resources, and multiple representations and re-representations. ↓

Course Assignments and Requirements

Attendance and Participation

45%

You may miss 1 class, no questions asked. Beyond this, you will be proportionately downgraded (in the attendance portion of your grade). As with any class, an absence is not an excuse for being unprepared or late with an assignment for the next class: you are responsible for finding out what you missed and making it up.

The quality of our class depends upon your attendance and contributions to our class discussions. We are dealing with questions and issues whose complexities become clear primarily through thoughtful and interactive conversation that exposes and explores multiple perspectives.

Comment [HIS3]: I’d open with this concrete example, then give your leading questions, then the more abstract issues/language. And I’d close with the “real life is messy” sentence – that’s a good conclusion to tie it to their own lives.

Also, I’d break it into two paragraphs – the concrete/questions, then the abstract.

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Therefore we need to hear from everyone. The number of times you speak in class is less important than the quality of your engagement when you do speak. Furthermore, it is equally important to listen critically to others, and to read and reflect on the material.

Comment [HIS4]: Good. That's often forgotten.

Participation includes attendance, team assignments, and contributing to class discussion. Another component of participation will include a 10 minute conference with the instructor around mid-semester. This will be a time to check in outside of class regarding any issues, concerns, or problems. It will also allow the instructor and student to work one-on-one and allow the student to raise ideas and talk about anything pertaining to the class.

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Comment [HIS5]: I'd break these out and give them their own point value, even if only 5-10%. Our students seem to dislike written work when they feel they're not getting credit for it.

Written Assignments

There will be a few informal writing assignments that can either be hand written or typed. **20%**
One paragraph advertisement summary
Two paragraph criteria paper
One page critique on stereotypes

Comment [HIS6]: Okay – I've read through the whole syllabus now and think you really need to make a section that's for all the weekly out of class work they'll be doing. I'd make this the 50% of the grade that's missing here, as it is quite a bit of work.

Deleted: but also handing in occasional writing assignments. These assignments will be more personal in nature and not graded. You hand-write these assignments (only if you have legible writing) or type them. Please feel free to contact me with questions. ¶

Final Project 35%

The final project culminates the discussions, explorations, and issues on gender and race in US and the visual culture depictions. The first part of the final project deals with baggage—what did you come into this course with regarding beliefs and “facts” about other groups other than your own. Stereotypes, romantic view and so should be apart of this “baggage.” The second part is what will be your luggage—what have you learned and how will it be applied or is being applied in your daily life. The form can be a paper, visual art, poetry, film, power point, dance, and so on—a form of communication that you are comfortable with. On the last day of the class, these will be shared with the class.

Comment [HIS7]: I like this!

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Comment [HIS8]: Like the baggage/luggage imagery.

Comment [HIS9]: Sounds interesting and fun. Students will love this.

Criteria for Final Project

1. Explain two or more major concepts that are discussed in the readings or in class.
2. Evaluate concepts using various sources of knowledge, especially being critical and analytical by utilizing the texts and materials that are read.

The following rubric will be used to evaluate your final project:

1. Well articulated thesis;
2. Clearly explained concepts from the readings;
3. Excellent organization and communication;
4. Insightful conclusion; and
5. Free of grammar and spelling errors (if written).

Comment [HIS10]: Final Project + Attendance = 50%. Where's the rest?

Grading Policy

I consider a “B” and an “A-” high grades. The University also considers these high grades – according to the Student Handbook, a “B” is given for “good” work and an “A” is given for “excellent” work. If you complete the work and participate (Participation is both contributing to class discussion and also listening to classmates. Moreover, I will be noting the generating of class discussion and whether or not people are thinking critically and providing insight towards

discussion.) Regularly in class, you can expect a grade of “B.” An “A-/B+” and an “A” will be given for very good and excellent work, and these grades are reserved for those students who exhibit outstanding performances in attendance, discussion, responses, papers, and projects. Please note that anything handed late may not be accepted – but if the assignment is accepted (subject to instructor’s approval) then do be aware that the assignment will be lowered by one grade each day that it is late.

Academic Integrity

This course adheres to the Honor Code system. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Please read the guidelines for plagiarism carefully. *If ANYONE is caught cheating and/or plagiarizing, it may result in an immediate failure for that assignment.*

For those who do not know:

Plagiarism is the failure to acknowledge the source of all information gathered in the preparation of class and written work. It includes direct quotation, paraphrase, and the “borrowing” of information or facts which are not common knowledge, without acknowledging the source through footnote, adequate means of citation, or proper quotation structure...

In addition:

Cheating is the intentional use or attempted use of materials, information, or study aids other than those specifically authorized in an attempt to claim credit for learning not with one’s own work. Under University policy, this can include unauthorized collaboration with others in conducting research or preparing work, the unauthorized collaboration with others in conducting research or preparing work, the unauthorized use of commercial term paper companies; improper use of computer file, program, user-name, or password; use of books, notes, calculators, or discussion with others during an examination unless specifically authorized; falsification of signatures and initials; and repeated use of all or substantial portions of the same work without specific approval....Facilitation of dishonesty is knowingly helping or attempting to help another commit an act of academic dishonesty...

If you have ANY questions, please see me immediately.

Attendance Policy

Attendance to all classes is critical. If you are unable to attend class for any reason, you are expected to provide a written explanation of your absence to be excused. You will not lose points from your class participation points for excused absences, but will be responsible for the work that you miss during your absence. Whether excused or unexcused, more than two missed classes may result in failure (an F) for the course. As the instructor, I reserve the right to decide whether an absence is excused or unexcused. Tardiness is also unacceptable. This includes coming to class late or leaving class early. Persistent tardiness (three or more times) will result in an absence. Your grade will be affected.

Turn off all cell phones and pagers or put them on vibrate during class. Disruption of the class is rude and you may be asked to leave.

Documented Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation. Please make me aware of any documented disability that requires accommodation, so that I may work with you and the Office of Disability Services.

Class Schedule

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First Week—Race, Racism in the United States

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We will review syllabus and sign up for one on one. Discuss terms and view excerpts from the movie *Crash* and begin discussing issues of stereotyping, derogatory terms, and collusion.

Class norms for discussion will be established.

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I will review

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For Next Week's Class—Find 3 examples of advertisements that seem to be racist or sexist to you. Write a brief summary of why you view these images in that way and be prepared to share them in small groups.

Second Week—Racism and Sexism in Advertising

In small group, images and critical reviews will be shared. Be open to other's ideas of what is racism and sexism. We will document key ideas and criteria gleaned from the small group discussions. Several commercials will be shown and discussed in the larger group to illustrate how we view these images differently depending on our personal experiences.

Comment [HIS11]: Maybe break up each week by topic. This would be Racism and Sexism in Advertising. Week Three would be Racism and Sports Mascots, etc. This would help the students see the major issues in the course.

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For Next Week's Class—Research the internet for sites that explore the topic of sports mascots and the use of Native Americans. Print 2 examples and bring to class, be prepared to discuss the key points of that site, author or arguments.

Comment [HIS12]: I don't think you need to detail like this what you'll do, especially if they know the theme for the day.

Third Week—Racism, and Sports Mascots

We will view excerpts of *In Whose Honor*. In two groups, you will share your examples and key points of that site, author or arguments—one group will be Native people and the other group will be students, faculty, alumni from the University of Illinois—the goal will be to share thoughts, and see if there are solutions, and what strategies could be developed to heal.

Deleted: I will share examples of marketing race and gender and in the large group, we will discuss these examples.¶

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For Next Week's Class—You will be given an episode of *Black and White* (Fox Television reality series) and you will watch it in your small group—as a group, have one person record responses and be prepared to share responses and discussion.

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Fourth Week—Race, Gender and Reality TV

Each group will share their experience (using examples of the television series if possible to illustrate points.) The bigger questions that we will consider: Did you find yourself more

actively looking for racism/sexism than before and explain how that manifested and how it felt? Who did you relate to and why? What truths did you gain and what myths were revealed?

For Next Week's Class—Next week marks the half waypoint of the class—gender and race has been explored in the forms of advertisements, movies, and television. Other forms such as literature, comics, spaces, places, markets, music, games, toys, etc have yet to be explored. Choosing one of the forms that have not been explored, find examples that you view as racist/sexist and examples of the same form that you feel are representative or positive. Write 2 paragraphs that share your thoughts, criteria, and conclusions. Bring a visual documentation of the form to share in class.

Fifth Class—Racism and Sexism Criteria

We will exhibit the examples and writings and we will individually review the materials. A form will be required to fill out that ranks the top 3. Those 3 will be reviewed as a class as well as how this project affected/effected you and what you have learned so far or not and wish to learn.

For Next Week's Class—For the longest time, race and ethnicity has been an issue on television. Watch a show and see what they say and do not say about questions of race and ethnicity. Do members of a particular race play a particular role on the show? Do these roles embrace or reject previous stereotypes? Shows such as: Shield, CSI, Real World, ER, Trading Spouses, Boston Legal, to name a few.

Comment [HIS13]: You may want to list some possibilities of tv shows here that seem especially rich for this. Also, I'd really prep them on the "do not say" part, as it's harder for them to recognize absence than presence – though by this point in the class they may be ready.

Sixth Class—Disney's Diversity

We will review class findings and watch three examples of Disney shows and read race and ethnicity signs and symbols. What is the long-term affect/effect? How is gender represented visually? Discuss the reality of body image issues in our society. How is sexual orientation represented? What is the reality of self-hatred in gay, lesbian, and transgender communities?

For Next Week's Class—Do you think constructions of public space matter? Are symbolic values of space crucial in our world? Do you think genders have different ways of looking at public space? If so, where does this difference come from? What does it persist? Think about public spaces or buildings where separation of people into genders, races, or classes is built into the design (hint: think of places where people spend more or less money to sit in different places). Be prepared to share what that space is and how is this separation explained in our society, how are the rules conveyed, what policies are in place to maintain the difference.

Seventh Class—Gender, Race and Spaces

We will review historical examples of separation and then current examples. We will spend half the class time visiting buildings to explore gendering and racializing public spaces at campuses.

For Next Week's Class—Research, identify, and read an article that explores stereotyping (gender or race), hate crimes or Americanism and write a one-page summary and critique. Bring article to class to share.

Eight Week—Stereotypes

Do you think this essay represents a particular reality in American today? What encourages us to be close to others who may not look like us? What discourages us? Do you remember when you first realized that others were different from you in appearance? Who had influence in helping you determining this? These questions will be fodder for discussion as well as the article critique.

Final Project—Begin to finalize this project—any questions please make an appointment.

Ninth Week—Race and Gender in the Arts

We will review several artists' works that explore the topics of race and gender. Class will be divided into groups and will read the art. You will determine what the artist is stating in relationship to their specific group and how it defines America and Americans.

For Next Week's Class—Have project completed and be prepared to present.

Tenth Week—Final projects reviewed—baggage and luggage. Class evaluations