

**Communication 3710 // Africana Studies 3710  
Communication and Cultural Diversity  
Fall 1999**

**Prof. Gil Rodman**

**Office Hours: Tu, Th 2-3p, or by appointment  
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**course website:**

**<http://scholar.acomp.usf.edu:90/courses/SPC3710/index.html>**

*This course satisfies 3 hours of the Social Science requirement in the USF Liberal Arts Curriculum. Specific dimensions of the curriculum addressed include (1) values and ethics, (2) race and ethnicity, and (3) gender. This course will require students to demonstrate competence in both written and oral communication skills, and will emphasize conceptual, analytical, and creative thinking.*

***course description and objectives***

We live in a society where questions of difference and diversity play an increasingly central role in debates over cultural values, public policy, and the shape of our daily lives. This is a course devoted to exploring many of these questions in depth. While “cultural diversity” encompasses a broad range of subjects -- including social divisions based on religion, age, geography, language, etc. -- our primary focus this semester will be on the categories of:

- class
- gender
- sexual orientation
- race and ethnicity

Barring a small miracle or three, we will not solve any of the social, cultural, and political problems that lie at the heart of this class. This course is not designed, however, to provide you with the “right” answers, as much as it is intended to make you think *critically* about the issues involved. Regardless of who you are or what you may believe at the start of the semester, this course will *challenge* (and perhaps even change) your current way of looking at US culture and the diverse populations that call the US home.

***WARNING!!!***

The subjects that we’ll be discussing this semester are, without exception, controversial ones. The readings reflect a range of viewpoints on these issues, and it’s likely that our group will hold an even broader range of opinions. As a result, our class sessions will undoubtedly include heated arguments, and it’s quite possible that you’ll walk away from one or more of our meetings feeling angry, frustrated, and/or offended. Nevertheless, I expect *all* of our conversations to be characterized by mutual respect. Passionate arguments and strongly expressed opinions are perfectly acceptable in this class; verbal bullying and personal attacks, on the other hand, will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

## ***required course materials***

### ***(1) Books.***

- Paul Beatty, *The White Boy Shuffle*
- Noel Ignatiev & John Garvey, *Race Traitor*
- Michael Nava & Robert Dawidoff, *Created Equal*
- Katha Pollitt, *Reasonable Creatures*
- Juliet B. Schor, *The Overspent American*
- Carol Tavis, *The Mismeasure of Woman*
- Jeanette Winterson, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*

Available at Inkwood Books, 216 S. Armenia, Tampa (253-2638, inkwoodbks@aol.com). See separate handout for directions and store hours.

***(2) Photocopied articles.*** Available from me and/or at the reserve desk of the USF Library. More details will be announced in class.

***(3) Reliable, regular access to the World Wide Web.*** In particular, in order to make full use of the course website, you will need a web browser that supports frames, Java, and Javascript. Recent versions (e.g., 4.0 or later) of both Netscape and Internet Explorer should work fine, as should Opera 3.60 -- though it's possible that one or more of these will have minor problems handling certain pages and/or features. AOL's most recent browser (4.0) should also handle CourseInfo properly, but you have to configure it to cope with Java first (if you want/need this information, let me know and I'll send you a copy of Academic Computing's instructions on how to do this).

## ***grading schedule***

Your final grade will be determined by the grading contract that you will complete and return to me by September 14. The overall range of options is as follows:

***Attendance	10%
***In-class participation	10%
***CourseInfo Discussion Board participation	10%
Thought paper	10%
1-4 response papers	10% each
1-4 book reviews	10% each
1-4 website reviews	10% each
Take-home final exam	30%

Starred items are required portions of your grade. Further details on the various written assignments can be found below, on separate handouts, and on the course website.

Once approved, your contract is binding: e.g., you don't get to blow off the book reviews you contracted for and make up for it by completing assignments you originally chose not to do. So choose carefully. Also note that contracts that aren't turned in on time or that don't add up to exactly 100% will be "fixed" by me -- which may set you up for work you would rather not do. So double-check your math and turn your contract in on time.

### ***attendance/participation/pop quizzes***

Because issues will be raised in class that will not necessarily be obvious from the readings alone, it's important that you show up every time we meet and that you do so on time. Attendance will be taken at the start of every class period, and absences, late arrivals, *and* early departures will all count against you. If you accumulate more than 1.5 weeks in unexcused absences, I reserve the right to lower your semester grade by more than 10%. (N.B.: Because our Thursday sessions last twice as long as our Tuesday sessions, they count twice as much when it comes to both attendance and participation.)

This course is geared towards in-class participation. It will thus be more enjoyable for all of us (and you'll do better) if you (1) attend class regularly, (2) do the required reading and (3) be prepared to discuss what we've read. Consistently lackluster discussions will force me to take drastic measures (i.e., pop quizzes) to assure me that y'all are doing the required work. Should quizzes become necessary, final grades will be calculated on a revised schedule, with the required portions of your grading contract counting as follows:

Attendance	5%
Participation	5%
CourseInfo Discussion Board participation	5%
Pop quizzes	15%

### ***CourseInfo Discussion Board participation***

The primary purpose of the Discussion Board is to provide an informal space that's always available for discussion of the issues raised by the assigned readings and in our class meetings. Because discussions of this sort tend to be freeform in nature, there is no easy-to-summarize formula for assessing your Discussion Board grade. The minimum contribution to receive a passing grade, however, will be ten substantial (i.e., more than a paragraph long) posts spread out over the course of the semester. A more detailed explanation of how this portion of your grade will be calculated is available on a separate handout. There are two further rules to keep in mind with respect to this portion of the course:

(1) You must make your first on-topic post to the Discussion Board by 1 pm on 7 September. The penalty for missing this deadline will be a grade point for every week or fraction thereof that you're late (e.g., not posting for the first time until 16 September will mean that the best you can do for this portion of your grade is an 8 out of 10).

(2) Over the course of the session, I will place at least ten "virtual lectures" on the course website under the "Course Documents" heading. You are required to respond to each of at least three of those virtual lectures with a post to the Discussion Board (i.e., one post/virtual lecture, as opposed to one post that responds to three virtual lectures at once). The applicable penalty here will be a grade point for every post short of three that you fall (e.g., making only one virtual lecture post will mean that your maximum Discussion Board grade will be an 8 out of 10).

N.B.: Should either of the penalties described above come into play, they will be applied to the top end of the scale: i.e., they lower the maximum credit you can receive for this portion of the course, rather than subtracting points from the score you earn otherwise.

Occasionally, the CourseInfo site will be used to make course-related announcements (e.g., “please add the collected works of Stuart Hall and Meaghan Morris to next Tuesday’s reading”) or to pass word on about other topics that may be of interest to the class (e.g., calls for papers, upcoming conferences, recently published articles and books, etc.). So check the site at least once per week (and preferably more often).

### ***written assignments***

#### General rules.

(1) Your written work *must* be typed and double-spaced. The page lengths listed below are based on an average of 250 words/page, and are *estimates* of how much you’ll need to write to complete the assignments well. I will not automatically penalize shorter papers, but it’s unlikely that you will be able to do “A” work if your papers are shorter than the suggested length. Also note that fudging margins and font sizes to make your papers *look* longer will not help your grade -- so concentrate on writing good papers, not what appear to be long ones.

(2) Except where explicitly noted otherwise, all due dates require you to hand in your work at the start of class. Late work will generally not be accepted except in cases of genuine emergency. In the event that I do accept late work, I reserve the right to reduce its grade in direct proportion to its lateness. The minimum penalty in all such cases will be one full letter grade.

(3) You’re welcome to turn your work in either digital or hard copy form. If you choose to go the digital route, you *must* format your work properly: if I can’t read your work, I can’t grade it. In descending order of preference, the acceptable formats for your written work are as follows:

- (a) WordPerfect 8.0 (or earlier)
- (b) Word 97 (or earlier)
- (c) RTF (Rich Text Format -- most current word processing software should allow you to save your work as an RTF file)
- (d) HTML
- (e) ASCII/plaintext

Also, if you turn your work in electronically, the acceptable delivery methods (again, in descending order of preference) are as follows:

- (a) The “Student Drop Box” available on the course website
- (b) Via e-mail (preferably as a file attachment, but ASCII text is acceptable)

N.B.: If you choose to turn your work in digitally, it’s *your* responsibility to make sure you’ve met the formatting and delivery requirements described above. Assignments that don’t meet these rules will be treated as if they were never turned in at all.

If you turn your work in on plain old paper, you should *only* do so directly to me or to my department mailbox in CIS 3058. Any other delivery method (e.g., fax, regular mail, etc.) *must* be pre-arranged with me on a case by case basis. I reserve the right not to accept work that arrives via alternate delivery methods that have not been arranged with me in advance. *Never, ever* slip assignments under my office door: papers delivered this way will be automatically marked down a full letter grade.

(4) As a safety precaution, you should *always* keep at least a hard copy -- and preferably a hard copy *and* a disk copy -- of any written work you hand in.

Thought paper (10%).

This assignment (3-4 pages, due 7 September) will be *ungraded*. Assuming you turn the paper in, you should receive full credit for doing so. I reserve the right, however, to give partial or even no credit to papers that fail to meet the assignment's requirements. Further details concerning this paper can be found on a separate handout.

Response papers (10% each).

You may write one response paper (3-4 pages each) for each of the four major sections of the course (i.e., class, gender, orientation, race), each of which is due the first class meeting after the relevant section has been completed (i.e., 30 September, 21 October, 11 November, 7 December). Each of these papers should be a *critical* response to the material covered in the relevant course section. Further details about these papers can be found on a separate handout.

Book reviews (10% each).

For up to four of the seven books we'll be reading this semester, you may write a *critical* review (3-4 pages each) that addresses the overall argument of the book with respect to the theme of the course. Each review is due in class one week after we finish with the book for the semester (specific dates are listed on the course timetable). Further details about these essays can be found on a separate handout.

Website reviews (10% each).

You may write critical reviews (4-5 pages each) of up to four websites related to the course's theme. *At least half* of these must come from the list of sites provided on the "External Links" page of the course website. You also have the option of reviewing websites of your own choosing, provided that you choose sites relevant to the course's theme. Due dates are listed on the course timetable. Again, further details about this assignment can be found on a separate handout.

Take-home final (30%).

The take-home final (due 7 December) will consist entirely of essay questions and will be based on the assigned readings and our in-class discussions. It will consist of one mandatory essay question and two questions that you will choose from a larger selection. Each of the three essays should be 3-4 pages long and will be weighted equally in your exam grade.

Rewriting assignments for a better grade.

You have the option of revising and resubmitting written work for a *potentially* higher grade. While rewriting assignments does *not* guarantee that you will receive a higher grade (it's possible, after all, to revise a paper without improving it enough to change its grade), it will never lower your grade. You *must* turn in the graded copy of the original assignment with any revisions you do. You will *not* receive credit for revisions of assignments that (1) you have already revised once, (2) were penalized for lateness, or (3) were never turned in at all. A *maximum* of 20% of your semester grade is eligible for this option. Revisions that do not result in a changed grade still count against the 20% limit. The final due date for all rewritten assignments is 7 December.

### ***miscellaneous***

- The purchase and/or sale of either written notes or audio recordings of our class meetings is strictly prohibited.
- Cell phones, beepers, pagers, etc. are to be *turned off* or set to vibrate *silently* before you come to class. If your phone rings or if your beeper/pager goes off loudly enough to be heard during class, you *will* be required to leave immediately and you will *not* receive credit for attending or participating in class that day.
- In keeping with the University Policy on Religious Observances, students who anticipate being absent from class due to a major religious observance must provide notice to me *in writing by 7 September* explaining which class period(s) you expect to miss and why.

### *introduction*

- Aug 24 no reading
- Aug 26 Joan Beck, "Troubling Deeds Under the Banner of 'Diversity'"  
Anna Quindlen, "The Mosaic vs. the Myth"  
Lewis Lapham, "Who and What Is American?"
- Aug 31 Raymond Williams, "Culture Is Ordinary"  
James Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication"
- Sep 2 *Race Traitor*, pp. 25-31  
*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. 16-25
- Sep 7 **Thought paper due**  
**First Discussion Board post due**  
*The Mismeasure of Woman*, pp. 93-130  
Beverly Daniel Tatum, "Defining Racism"

### *class*

- Sep 9 Warren Bennis, "Stage Is Set for Major Upheaval in the U.S."  
William Greider, "The Rich Get Richer, The Poor Get Five to Ten"  
*The Overspent American*, pp. 1-24
- Sep 14 **Completed grading contract due**  
*The Overspent American*, pp. 25-64  
*Race Traitor*, pp. 43-57
- Sep 16 *Race Traitor*, pp. 97-121
- Sep 21 **Website review #1 due**  
*The Overspent American*, pp. 65-110
- Sep 23 *The Overspent American*, pp. 111-142
- Sep 28 *The Overspent American*, pp. 143-174  
*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. xiii-xviii  
Carol Stabile, "Erasing Racism"

### ***gender***

- Sep 30      **Response paper #1 (on class) due**  
*The Mismeasure of Woman*, pp. 15-56
- Oct 5        ***The Overspent American* book review due**  
*The Mismeasure of Woman*, pp. 57-92
- Oct 7        *The Mismeasure of Woman*, pp. 131-169
- Oct 12      **Website review #2 due**  
*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. xix-xxii, 3-10, 26-41, 81-84, 145-151, 157-168
- Oct 14      ***The Mismeasure of Woman* book review due**  
*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. 85-99, 115-123, 152-156
- Oct 19      *Reasonable Creatures*, pp. 11-15, 63-80, 100-110, 169-186

### ***orientation***

- Oct 21      **Response paper #2 (on gender) due**  
Donna Minkowitz, "Love and Hate in Laramie"  
*Created Equal*, pp. ix-28
- Oct 26      ***Reasonable Creatures* book review due**  
*Created Equal*, pp. 29-74
- Oct 28      *Created Equal*, pp. 75-112
- Nov 2        **Website review #3 due**  
*Created Equal*, pp. 113-167
- Nov 4        *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, pp. 1-68
- Nov 9        ***Created Equal* book review due**  
*Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, pp. 69-176

***race***

- Nov 11      **Response paper #3 (on orientation) due**  
Boyce Rensberger, "Forget the Old Labels"  
Lisa Jones, "Is Biracial Enough?"  
*Race Traitor*, pp. 1-23
- Nov 16      ***Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* book review due**  
Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege"  
*Race Traitor*, pp. 35-42, 247-265
- Nov 18      *Race Traitor*, pp. 85-95, 123-141
- Nov 23      **Website review #4 due**  
*Race Traitor*, pp. 148-175
- Nov 30      ***Race Traitor* book review due**  
*The White Boy Shuffle*, pp. 1-150
- Dec 2        *The White Boy Shuffle*, pp. 151-226

***finals week***

- Dec 7  
5:00 pm      **no class**  
***The White Boy Shuffle* book review due**  
**all rewritten assignments due**  
**deadline for Discussion Board posts**  
**Take-home final due**  
**Response paper #4 (on race) due**