

RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ACADEMIC COURSE OUTLINE

ENGL 214
Race in American Literature and Popular Culture

I. Basic Course Information

A. Course Number and Title: ENGL 214 Race in American Literature and Popular Culture

B. New or Modified Course: Modified

C. Date of Proposal: Semester: spring Year: 2022

D. Effective Term: Fall 2022

E. Sponsoring Department: English

F. Semester Credit Hours: 3

G. Weekly Contact Hours: 3 Lecture: 3
Laboratory: 0
Out of class student work per week: 6

H. Prerequisites/Corequisites: ENGL 111 English Composition I

I. Laboratory Fees: None

J. Name and Telephone Number or E-Mail Address of Department Chair and Divisional Dean at time of approval: Ronald Tyson Ronald.Tyson@raritanval.edu; Patrice Marks patrice.marks@raritanval.edu

II. Catalog Description

Prerequisite: ENGL 111 English Composition I. This course examines the social construction of race in the US through the lens of American literature and popular culture. It focuses on key moments in American history, from seventeenth-century colonial America to the present, to explore how racial categories have been created and re-created. Students will analyze the evolution of these racial categories, like white, black, Asian, Latino, and Native American, while exploring how racial groups are pitted against each other and how categories like gender, class, and sexuality intersect with race. Readings from a range of disciplines will provide students with the historical and social context necessary to analyze cultural texts, like novels, short stories, advertisements, films, political cartoons, TV shows, songs, and speeches.

III. Statement of Course Need

- A. This kind of course, one that directly confronts ways in which cultural texts inform our understanding of race, is very important in an age in which students are constantly bombarded by these texts, whether it is through music, the internet, television, films, or books. Students need to become better equipped to read the sub-text of these messages and decide for themselves whether to accept or reject their meaning. Furthermore, even though the course will encourage students to apply their critical thinking skills to cultural messages about race, this course will also provide students with the tools to better assess various types of cultural messages they receive. In addition, this course also teaches students to take action based on the results of their analysis of these cultural messages. Finally, this course contributes to the English major by strengthening elective offerings in cultural studies and American studies, interdisciplinary approaches that expand the study of literature to include popular culture.
- B. This course does not have a Lab component
- C. This course generally transfers as an English a Humanities/English Literature general education course

IV. Place of Course in College Curriculum

- A. Free Elective
- B. This course serves as a General Education course in Humanities/English Literature and it is designated as Global and Cultural Awareness.
- C. This course meets a diversity-based English elective requirement (Category C) in the English AA degree.
- D. To see course transferability: a) for New Jersey schools, go to the NJ Transfer website, www.njtransfer.org; b) for all other colleges and universities, go to the individual websites.

V. Outline of Course Content

- A. Social construction of race
- B. Systemic racism
- C. Critical Race Theory
- D. Ideology
- E. Role of the media in constructing race and shaping ideology
- F. Racial representation in literature and popular culture
- G. Emergence of race as a category in the 1600s
- H. Invention of whiteness as racial category
- I. Genocide
- J. Slavery
- K. Eugenics
- L. Chinese Exclusion Act and “Yellow Peril”
- M. Immigration and xenophobia
- N. Lynching
- O. Blackface and minstrelsy
- P. Jim Crow segregation

- Q. Civil Rights movement
- R. Racial stereotypes
- S. Social change and social action

VI. General Education and Course Learning Outcomes

A. General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze American literary and cultural texts within the historical and social context of race, both orally and in writing (GE- 1, 6, 7, 8, *)
2. Use textual evidence to support logical and persuasive claims in writing (GE-1, 6, *)
3. Explain key characteristics of the history of race in the US (GE- 7, 8)
4. Take a position about a contemporary popular culture's representation of race (GE- 1, 8, ER, *)

(*Embedded critical thinking)

B. Course Learning Outcomes:

SEE ABOVE

C. Assessment Instruments

Given the outcomes described above, the following assessment methods may be used:

1. required: essay in which a student takes a position about a contemporary popular culture's representation of race
2. essays
3. responses papers
4. exams

VII. Grade Determinants

Given the outcomes described above, the following grade determinants may be used:

- A. essays that communicate effectively in standard English with attention to grammar, mechanics, and the finer points of writing style
- B. research paper
- C. projects
- D. exams
- E. presentations

- F. discussion questions
- G. reading quizzes
- H. class participation
- I. response papers

This course may include the following modes of teaching:

- A. lecture/discussion
- B. small-group work
- C. guest speakers
- D. student oral presentations
- E. student collaboration
- F. independent study

VIII. Texts and Materials

Samples of specific texts are:

- A. Toni Morrison, *Beloved*
- B. Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give*
- C. Excerpts from: *When the Light of the World Was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through: A Norton Anthology of Native Nations Poetry*
- D. *Race: Are We So Different?*, edited by Alan H. Goodman, Yolanda T. Moses, and Joseph L. Jones
- E. Excerpts from: Helen Zia, *Asian American Dreams*
- F. Excerpts from: Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*
- G. Excerpts from: Maria Hinojosa, *Once I Was You: A Memoir of Love and Hate in a Torn America*
- H. Excerpts from: Karen Gaffney, *Dismantling the Racism Machine: A Manual and Toolbox*
- I. *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (documentary)
- J. *Precious Knowledge* (documentary)

(Please Note: The course outline is intended only as a guide to course content and resources. Do not purchase textbooks based on this outline. The RVCC Bookstore is the sole resource for the most up-to-date information about textbooks.)

IX. Resources

Students ~~will~~ may need to use library databases and other library resources.

X. Honors Options

There is no Honors Option for this course.