

Communication 3712
Communication and Cultural Diversity
Fall 1996

Prof. Gil Rodman

Office Hours: Tu 1-2p, Th 5-6p, and by appointment
3040 CIS // 974-3025 // grodman@cis01.cis.usf.edu

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.

We live in a society where questions of difference and diversity have come to play an increasingly central role in public 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, orientation, geography, etc. -- our primary focus this semester will be on the categories of race, gender, class, and youth, with special emphasis on issues relating to communication and culture (both broadly defined).

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* (which is not necessarily to say "change") your current way of looking at U.S. culture and the different types of people who make up that culture.

WARNING: The subjects that we'll be discussing this semester are, without exception, controversial ones. The readings reflect a diverse spectrum of strongly held opinions and viewpoints on these issues, and it's likely that your classmates will hold -- and express -- a similarly broad range of beliefs and values. As a result, our class sessions will often generate heated arguments, and it is likely that we will *all* walk away from one or more meetings angry, frustrated, and/or offended by our discussions. If this possibility makes you uncomfortable, then you should *not* take this course. I should emphasize, however, that while I expect our meetings to be confrontational, I also expect those confrontations to be *respectful*. Impassioned 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. Available at the University Book Store.
 - (a) Neil Howe and Bill Strauss, *13th Gen*
 - (b) Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey, *Race Traitor*
 - (c) Katha Pollitt, *Reasonable Creatures*
- (2) Photocopied articles: Available at Staples and the reserve desk of the USF Library.
- (3) An e-mail account: Participation in the listserv (DIVERSITY-L) that has been set up for this course will require you to have (and use) an e-mail account. For those of you who don't already have an e-mail account, information on how to sign up for one is available on a separate handout.

Grading schedule:

Attendance/participation	10%
Listserv participation	10%
Thought paper	10%
Weekly one-page response sheets	10%
Three (3) 3-4 page critical essays	30% (10% each)
Take-home final exam	30%

Attendance/participation/pop quizzes:

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. In the event quizzes become necessary, final grades will be calculated on a revised schedule:

Attendance/participation	5%
Listserv participation	10%
Thought paper	0%
Weekly one-page response sheets	5%
Three (3) 3-4 page critical essays	30% (10% each)
Take-home final exam	30%
Pop quizzes	20%

Because we only meet once a week, and because issues will be raised in class that will not necessarily be apparent from the readings, it is vital not just that you show up every week, but that you do so on time. Attendance will be taken at the start of every class period, with both absences *and* late arrivals noted. If you have more than one unexcused absence, or if you are consistently and/or excessively late to class, I reserve the right to lower your semester grade by more than just the 10% listed for "attendance/participation" on the grade schedule above.

Listserv participation:

The primary purpose of the listserv is to provide an ongoing informal forum for discussion of the issues raised by the assigned readings and our class sessions. Prompts intended to spur on the dialogue will be posted on a semi-regular basis.

Because listservs tend to be somewhat freeform in nature, there is no neat and simple formula for me to use in assessing grades for this aspect of the course. The *minimum* contribution to receive a *passing* grade, however, will be five substantial (i.e., more than a paragraph long) posts addressing material from five different sections of the syllabus.

- To *join* the list, send an e-mail message consisting of **subscribe DIVERSITY-L your-firstname your-lastname** to **LISTSERV@nosferatu.cas.usf.edu**
- To *post* to the list, send an e-mail message to **DIVERSITY-L@nosferatu.cas.usf.edu**

Additional information about the list and how to use it will be sent to you when you subscribe.

Listserv tips

- (1) If you're new to e-mail, get your account set up right away. This gives you plenty of time to get used to using e-mail early on and still do well on this part of the course.
- (2) Subscribe to the list. If you're not subscribed, you can't post. If you can't post, you can't participate. If you can't participate, you've given up 10% of your final grade. It's that simple.
- (3) Post often. Five posts addressing questions from five different units are worth more than five posts all on the same topic.
- (4) Post in a timely fashion. While it is better to post late on a topic than not at all, it's worth far more to post while an issue is still under active discussion.

Writing assignments:

General rules:

Your written work *must* be typed and double-spaced. The page lengths given are based on pica-sized type (10 characters per inch) and one inch margins, and should be seen as estimates of how much you'll need to write to complete the assignments well. I will not automatically penalize shorter papers, but it's highly unlikely that you will be able to do "A" work if your papers are shorter than 3 pages. 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.

Thought paper:

This assignment (3-4 pages, due 5 September) will be *ungraded*. Assuming you turn the paper in, you should receive full credit (10% of your final grade) 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 sheets:

For *every* non-film week after 5 September (i.e., Sep 19, 26; Oct 10, 17, 31; Nov 7, 21; and Dec 5), you will write up a one-page response to that week's readings. Your response does *not* have to address all of that week's readings, though you are more than welcome to do so if you like. This response can take the form of asking questions you may have about the readings, or offering a critique of them. It should *not*, however, simply be a summary of the reading(s) to which you are responding. Response sheets will be graded on a ✓+/✓/✓- scale. Late response sheets will not be accepted.

Critical essays:

You will write 3-4 page papers for three of the four course sections beginning with #2 ("Race"), each of which will be a *critical response* to the material covered in that section. Specific due dates are listed on the syllabus. Further details about this assignment will be made available on a separate handout.

Exam:

The take-home final (due December 12) will consist entirely of *long essay* questions and will be based on the assigned readings and films as well as our in-class discussions. The final *will* be cumulative. Barring verifiable emergencies of the highest order, *no* make-up exam will be given.

TEN TIPS ON HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE

(1) Read your syllabus and assignment handouts. Aside from telling you what to read and when you need to do so, these documents contain the basic ground rules by which this course works. And while, under exceptional circumstances (e.g., life and death emergencies), I may be willing to bend some of these rules, ignorance of the rules on your part isn't one of them.

(2) Read and view the required course materials as scheduled. This should be self-explanatory. But to drive the point home: *everything* you'll do for a grade this semester depends on your having thoughtfully consumed the assigned readings and films. If you blow these off, you will have *lots* of trouble with our in-class discussions, the papers, the listserv, and the exam.

(3) Think about what you read and see. None of the material for this course is intended to be consumed passively. If you're *only* reading (or watching) to absorb "facts" or to be entertained, you will not do well. And while you're certainly allowed (and even encouraged) to learn new facts and have fun, it's more crucial that you approach the assigned readings and films in a critical and thoughtful fashion.

(4) Attend class . . . and show up on time. Not just because I'll take attendance, but because our discussions will raise questions about the material at hand that won't always be obvious to you from the readings alone. Our class periods will be spent discussing (and often arguing about) the readings, *not* summarizing them. You can (and should) expect issues raised in class to be on the exams. Also, be forewarned that I *will* treat consistently late arrivals as if they were absences.

(5) Come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Think about what the readings are trying to say and then share those thoughts with the class. Even if you don't understand a given article, feel free to ask questions about it. Not all of these readings are easy: if you're confused, it's likely other people are as well. The more people who participate in our discussions, the more we'll all get out of them.

(6) Write clearly. This is not a remedial writing class, so you aren't guaranteed a good grade on either your papers or your exams merely by constructing grammatical sentences made up of properly spelled words. Nevertheless, if your grammar (or spelling or punctuation) interferes with my ability to understand what you're trying to say, your grade *will* be negatively affected.

(7) Argue your points. Do not merely assert them. For example, simply saying that you think that affirmative action is harmful is far less convincing (and receives far less credit) than explaining *why* you think it's harmful. On a related note, avoid using terms like "obviously," "clearly," and "of course." In most cases, if you have to say something is "obvious," it isn't obvious at all.

(8) Argue your points well. Make sure the facts support your case. Avoid overly broad generalizations. And, perhaps most importantly, anticipate potential counter-arguments or alternate explanations to your position -- *especially* if your argument runs contrary to ideas we've already covered in the course. You *don't* have to agree with any of the authors we'll read, but if you take a contrary position to an argument made in the assigned course material, you *do* have to explain *why* you're right and the reading in question is wrong.

(9) See me as necessary. If you don't understand why you received a particular grade, or the reading has you baffled, or you have any other questions about the course, feel free to come talk to me during my office hours (or make an appointment to meet with me at some other time).

(10) Think ahead. The chances of my accepting late work without penalizing you improve dramatically with advance notice *and* a reasonable justification for the anticipated delay. Similarly, do *not* wait until the night before the final is due to catch up on all the reading. This is not a course where simple rote memorization of names and dates will earn you an acceptable grade. Bear in mind that the semester will go by faster than you think and plan accordingly.

WARNING: The opinions expressed in the readings do not necessarily reflect those of the instructor. Just because a given essay is part of this course does not mean the instructor agrees with it. In other words, THINK about what you're reading, don't just absorb it.

- 0: Introduction and Overview
- Aug 29 no readings
- 1: Communication, Culture, and Diversity
- Sep 5 **Thought paper due**
Williams, "Culture Is Ordinary"
Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication"
Beck, "Troubling Deeds Under the Banner of 'Diversity'"
Quindlen, "The Mosaic vs. the Myth"
Lapham, "Who and What Is American?"
Pollitt, "Why We Read" [*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. 16-25]
Garvey, "My Problem With Multi-Cultural Education" [*Race Traitor*, pp. 25-31]
- 2: Race
- Sep 12 FILM: *Do the Right Thing*
Downing and Dyson, "Media Images of Blacks"
Omi, "In Living Color"
Howe and Strauss, "That Funny Vibe" [*13th Gen*, pp. 133-146]
- Sep 19 Mills, "Fire and Race"
Cohen, "The Color of Anger"
Rensberger, "Forget the Old Labels"
Newsweek, "What Color Is Black?"
Mathews, "More Than Identity Rides on a New Racial Category"
Marriott, "Multiracial Americans Ready to Claim Their Own Identity"
Jones, "Mama's White"
Jones, "Is Biracial Enough?"
"Abolish the White Race" [*Race Traitor*, pp. 9-14]
Ignatiev, "Immigrants and Whites" [*Race Traitor*, pp. 15-23]

Sep 26 "When Does the Unreasonable Act Make Sense?" [*Race Traitor*, pp. 35-37]
Clarke, "Running the Ball in Crown Point" [*Race Traitor*, pp. 39-42]
"Aux Armes! Formez Vos Battalions!" [*Race Traitor*, pp. 93-95]
Olson, "Police-Assisted Homicide" [*Race Traitor*, pp. 135-141]
Rubio, "Crossover Dreams" [*Race Traitor*, pp. 149-161]
Washington and Garon, "Responses to Crossover Dreams" [*Race Traitor*, pp. 163-175]
Garvey, "Family Matters" [*Race Traitor*, pp. 247-256]
Sleeter, "White Silence, White Solidarity" [*Race Traitor*, pp. 257-265]

3: Gender

Oct 3 **Essay #1 (on race) due**
FILM: *Thelma and Louise*
Dargis, "Guns N' Poses"
Baber, "Guerilla Feminism"
Thompson, "Hollywood Is Taken to Task by Its Women"
Holden, "Real Men, an Endangered Species on Film"
Goodman, "Beauty and the Broadcast"
Faludi, "Introduction: Blame It On Feminism"
Heimel, "The Jig Is Up"

Oct 10 Pollitt, "That Survey" [*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. 3-10]
Pollitt, "Violence in a Man's World" [*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. 26-30]
Pollitt, "Why I Hate 'Family Values'" [*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. 31-41]
Pollitt, "Marooned on Gilligan's Island" [*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. 42-62]
Pollitt, "On the Merits" [*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. 81-84]
Pollitt, "Naming and Blaming" [*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. 85-99]

Oct 17 Pollitt, "Who's Afraid of Hillary Clinton" [*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. 115-123]
Pollitt, "Not Just Bad Sex" [*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. 157-168]
Pollitt, "Fetal Rights, Women's Wrongs" [*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. 169-186]
Spender, "An Alternative to Madonna"
Stabile, "Erasing Racism"

- 4: Class
- Oct 24 **Essay #2 (on gender) due**
 FILM: *Roger and Me*
 Gilbert, "Who Lost an American?" [*Race Traitor*, pp. 43-57]
 Hill, "Black-Jewish Conflict in the Labor Context" [*Race Traitor*, pp. 215-246]
- Oct 31 Pollitt, "Preface to the Vintage Edition" [*Reasonable Creatures*, pp. xiii-xviii]
 Brandon, "6-Figure Families Claim Life Isn't Grand for Them"
 Bennis, "Stage Is Set for Major Upheaval in the U.S."
 Greider, "The Rich Get Richer, The Poor Get Five to Ten"
 Howe and Strauss, *13th Gen*, pp. 93-120
- Nov 7 Fiske, "Class and Family Values"
 Dent, "The New Black Suburbs"
 Steele, "On Being Black and Middle Class"
 Gates, "Must Buppiehood Cost Homeboy His Soul?"
 Howe and Strauss, "New Jack School" [*13th Gen*, pp. 120-126]
 Ignatiev, "The American Intifada" [*Race Traitor*, pp. 97-101]
 The Chicago Surrealist Group, "Three Days That Shook the World Order"
 [*Race Traitor*, pp. 103-121]
- 5: Youth
- Nov 14 **Essay #3 (on class) due**
 FILM: *to be announced*
 Howe and Strauss, *13th Gen*, pp. 3-32
- Nov 21 Howe and Strauss, *13th Gen*, pp. 33-90
- Nov 28 NO CLASS -- THANKSGIVING
- Dec 5 Howe and Strauss, *13th Gen*, pp. 177-229
- Dec 12 **Essay #4 (on youth)/Take home final due**