

Don't Judge a Class By it's Title:

Student Reactions to "Whiteness and the University" at UIUC

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Introduction-

My project originated from my enrollment in the "Whiteness and the University" discovery course and listening how my fellow classmates would get different reactions when they would tell people about the class. I asked students from different racial backgrounds what they thought about a course called "Whiteness and the University," and then asked them to elaborate on their responses.

Research Question

What do people truly feel and think of a course called "Whiteness and the University?"

Methods

- I conducted 9 individual interviews with students who identified as White ($n = 3$), Asian American ($n = 3$), and African American ($n = 3$).
- I audio-recorded each participant's responses and wrote down key things I thought some of the students said about the course.
- I noted their initial impressions of a course called "Whiteness and the University" and also after informing them about it. I also included which one of these students would actually enroll in such a class.
- When appropriate, I asked them to elaborate on their initial responses whether it be positive or negative.

	White (n=3)	Asian American (n=3)	African American (n=3)
First Impressions	<p>"You go to a college to learn things that will make you smarter."</p> <p>"It doesn't really offer you anything educational, seems pointless." (P2)</p> <p>"Sounds like an important class, we are mostly a white college." (P3)</p>	<p>"I definitely don't think it is racist the first time I hear it, because I know it's a University class. You can't do that." (P1)</p> <p>"I'm hoping the class identifies problems about whiteness and tries to solve them." (P2)</p>	<p>"I honestly don't care but I believe it has to do with being white at a University." (P1)</p> <p>"Interesting that something like this is being explored into class, considering the white population is the dominant population on campus."(P3)</p>
Impressions after Explanation	<p>"In the year 2010 race is not a problem, compared to what it was like 60 years ago." (P1)</p> <p>"People need to understand that white people are put on another level because of their skin color." (P3)</p> <p>"I have a problem with identifying myself as being white because with my parents and all and I know the history." (P3)</p>	<p>"I believe whiteness isn't the problem, just make sure that people aware of the fact that white people are a dominant race." (P1)</p> <p>"All that stuff bother me, and I would love to take that class." (P2)</p>	<p>"I've never had opportunities to talk about these things, seems interesting." (P1)</p> <p>"Things like that should be addressed even though its pretty apparent." (P3)</p> <p>"I hope the class goes in depth, and makes that point known." (P2)</p> <p>"White privilege was very apparent to me, I remember the first time I cam to this University and looked at the Black Frat houses compared to the White ones." (P3)</p>
Would they enroll?	<p>"No I doubt it, it is not something I am interested in." (P1)</p> <p>"I don't think so." (P2)</p> <p>"Most definitely because It is interesting, now that I have taken 4 "AFRO/AAS" classes." (P3)</p>	<p>"Yes, definitely, it promotes awareness."</p> <p>"How many white people are in that class? They should take that class."</p>	<p>"I'd enroll in that." (P1)</p> <p>"I would like to express my opinions on such a subject, yes."(P2)</p> <p>"That would be an interesting course to take." (P3)</p>

Conclusions/Recommendations

- I believe that everyone should be made aware of this course because it does teach important facts that need to be known, especially for the one's who do not see it as a big deal. Due to my interviews it was Asian-American section and the white section. Overall I think peoples reactions were what I expected.
- My recommendation for the University would be to advertise this class more, make it known, because according to my findings the white and Asian-American population need to be aware of whiteness and how it affects everyone on campus.