

Fall 1998

SWMS 384 Tu-Th 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

OVERCOMING PREJUDICE

Walter L Williams, Ph.D. Professor of Anthropology & Gender Studies
tel. 213-740-1911 room 170 Social Sciences Building
University of Southern California Los Angeles CA 90089-0032

Office hours: meet with professor at the end of class, for appointment

This class is designed to appeal to students from a wide variety of majors, with multidisciplinary theoretical, cross-cultural and historical approaches to the study of prejudice reduction. This class will begin with the assumption that unwarranted discrimination has existed and continues to exist toward women in many societies, and toward various racial, religious, ethnic, class, disabled, and sexual minorities. The focus of the class is not to try to prove that prejudice exists or is a problem, but to use various historical examples of prejudice and various theories to suggest ways in which prejudice might best be reduced. The ultimate aim of the class lectures, films, and readings is to evaluate effective strategies and techniques for the reduction of prejudice.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Take-home midterm exam, based on readings and class lectures.
[30% of total semester grade].
2. Take-home final exam, based on class lectures plus your visit to the MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE 9786 W. Pico Blvd. in West Los Angeles. Call 310-553-8403 for tickets. You will be expected to take the tour of this nationally-famous museum after the midterm exam. Classes will not be held for one week at the end of October, in order to give you time to visit this museum. One part of your final exam will be based on your analysis of this museum's effectiveness.
[30% of total semester grade].
3. Research paper (17-20 pages), based on outside readings. The research proposal will be due by September 30 or before, and each student will be expected to consult individually with the professor during the course of research. The final paper will be due before or by noon on Wednesday December 9. Plagiarism of a paper, or purchasing of a paper, is a serious offense, and will be grounds for an "F" grade in the class.
[40% of total semester grade].

RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC CHOICES

For students majoring in gender studies, history, sociology, religion, pre-law, political science, American Studies, etc. possible research topics include a focus on one particular stigmatized group to discover how that group has made progress in overcoming prejudice against them. Some examples of this approach might be:

Jewish-Americans (ex. do research in publications about and by the B'Nai B'Rith Anti-Defamation League, and interview leaders in that kind of activist organization, to find out

which tactics and strategies have been most successful for them, and which were less successful).

Other groups and anti-prejudice social change movements which might be studied include those relating to:

African Americans, Asian/Pacific Americans, Latin Americans, Native Americans, etc. European immigrants (ex. Irish, Polish, Italians, etc.) since 1840s.

Mormons or other religious minorities.

Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1920.

Women's liberation movement, 1963-1980 and since 1980.

Women's anti-violence movement (rape, domestic violence, etc.).

The disabled movement.

What are the most effective strategies that have been used to weaken and destroy hate groups? Why did such hate groups decline after a time? For example, the Ku Klux Klan was founded after the Civil War, but was attacked and weakened in the 1870s.

Lynchings against African-Americans reached a peak in the early 20th century and then declined. How did that decline come about?

Anti-immigrant sentiment declined after World War II. Why?

The Klanwatch Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, in Montgomery Alabama, has had amazing success in weakening the Klan in the 1980s and 1990s. What tactics have been most successful for them? What approaches are successful in changing prejudicial attitudes of Klansmen, Skinheads, and other perpetrators of hate crimes against minorities? Do programs in criminal correction facilities work to change such persons?

What approaches have worked best for human rights groups that are fighting anti-abortion or anti-gay initiatives and campaigns sponsored by Right Wing Fundamentalist groups in the 1980s and 1990s?

What lessons can be learned from the experience of focused political lobbying groups like the National Rifle Association, the American Association of Retired Persons, or the Right Wing Fundamentalist Christians, which even though they are minorities of the population, have exerted massive influence on Congress. Which tactics and strategies have been most effective for them, in exerting influence in public policy arenas, and in creating more respect for their group?

How could an activist anti-prejudice group use this knowledge to construct their own maximum influence on the political system and the public at large?

Anthropology or international relations majors might look at ethnic conflict in another culture, to see how it became resolved over time. Have international peace groups been successful in reducing conflict? What has worked best for Amnesty International, in how to reduce unjust persecution in different countries? Are there "success stories" in which different ethnic groups have learned to lose their tribal antagonisms and work together peacefully in the same national government, or in multi-national efforts? What are successful tactics that have worked to reduce anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, bias against "untouchable" castes in India, or class-based prejudices?

Majors in psychology, education, public administration, marketing, business management, philosophy, social work, communications, and others interested in attitude change, may choose to study the findings of research on attitude change in those fields, and their implications for applying these insights to benefit stigmatized minorities. A student might take a certain discipline, for example, studies of attitude change and inter-group relations in social psychology. Another topic would be to review the literature on conflict resolution, to see which strategies and techniques are most successful in reducing bad feelings between groups. Someone interested in marketing might do research to see which approaches are most successful in advertising, to persuade people to buy a certain product, and then apply those techniques to persuade people to drop their prejudices against one or more different groups.

Cinema, journalism, or communications majors might examine what role the media play in fostering and overcoming prejudice, and how best to influence the media to change its prejudicial attitudes toward a specific group. Within the field of Communications Theory, persuasion research and writings about Public Communications Campaigns are applicable.

The ultimate goal of this class is to go beyond merely an understanding of the nature of prejudice, and to look for the most effective means by which discrimination may be overcome in the future. As Los Angeles becomes even more of an international city, it is especially important that our citizens learn to respect diversity and promote equality. Classes like this one, to decide what works, what doesn't, and where we go from here, are particularly timely as we prepare for the new world ahead in the 21st century.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE:

The time required for each topic is not specified, but will be approached in this order.

PART I: HETEROSEXISM

Assignment: As a case study in how to write an essay on prejudice reduction, read James Sears and Walter Williams, eds., Overcoming Heterosexism and Homophobia: Strategies That Work. Read the Introduction, and all essays in Part I, Part II, and Part V. Then choose at least three essays from Part III, and at least five essays from Part IV, depending on your areas of interest. Turn in the first essay of the midterm exam on Tuesday September 22, or at the latest before noon on Wednesday September 23 [see Midterm below].

PART II: SEXISM

Assignment: Choose a research project for your term paper, and submit a research proposal (two or three paragraphs explaining what topic you will research, and what kind of research you plan to do) on Tuesday September 29, or at the latest before noon on Wednesday September 30. Include at least THREE library sources (books or articles), plus at least one source from the Internet. The professor will respond and suggest avenues for research, and may ask for a revised research proposal. Research topics

cannot be changed without submitting a revised research proposal that is approved by the professor.

PART III: DISABLISM

Assignment: Spend a full twenty-four hours living as a disabled person. For example, wrap bandages covering your eyes so you cannot see, and get people to lead you around for a day; sit in a wheelchair or walk on crutches while doing daily tasks, going to the market, to the bathroom, etc. You must do this experiment for a full twenty-four hour period, on a day when you must leave home and negotiate with people and terrain outside your home. Do not enter buildings that do not have disabled access ramps. The class will have a discussion with a disabled activist following this experience.

PART IV: SOCIAL SCIENCE THEORY ON PREJUDICE

PART V: RACISM AND ETHNOCENTRISM

PART VI: RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC PREJUDICE

PART VII: EFFORTS TO REDUCE PREJUDICE -- CASE STUDIES

PERSUASION, MARKETING, AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE THEORIES

DISADVANTAGES OF PREJUDICE TO THE PREJUDICED PERSON
AND TO SOCIETY

INDIVIDUAL INTERACTION AND DIALOGUE

ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT OF A MINORITY GROUP AS A MEANS OF
REDUCING PREJUDICE

MEDIA INFLUENCE

USING SCHOOLS TO REDUCE PREJUDICE

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP COUNSELING TO REDUCE PREJUDICE

COURT LITIGATION

POLITICAL INFLUENCE

(Voting blocs, Influencing public officials, passing legislation,
Electing members of a minority to public office)

PROTEST TACTICS

(Boycotts, Peaceful demonstrations, Violent actions)

MAXIMIZING EFFECTIVENESS AMONG ANTI-PREJUDICE GROUPS

MIDTERM EXAM for SWMS 384 (each essay is ten percent of your semester grade):

1. Write a critique of the essays you have read in Overcoming Heterosexism and Homophobia: Strategies That Work. What are the strong points of the essays? What are their weaknesses, and how might they be improved? What different approaches would make

the book more effective as a tool in helping to reduce prejudice?

[This part of the midterm is to be turned in before noon on Wednesday September 22.]

2. Based on the lectures and class discussions, critique the social science theories that have sought to explain prejudice and how it might most effectively be reduced. Do not be afraid to disagree with the approaches of the professor.

3. Based on historical examples cited in the lectures and class discussions, what can we learn about how best to reduce prejudice in the future? Do not be afraid to disagree with the approaches of the professor.

FINAL EXAM for SWMS 384 (turn in as soon as possible after the last class, but no later than Wednesday December 16):

1. Write a critique of the Museum of Tolerance, based upon your intensive analysis of this museum. What are the strong points of the museum? What are its weaknesses, and how might it be improved? What different approaches would make the museum more effective as a tool in helping to reduce prejudice?

[This part of the final exam is to be turned in by Wednesday November 11.]

2. From the lectures and class discussions, write an essay on what you think are the most effective strategies and techniques for reducing prejudice on the basis of sex, gender, sexuality, and disability. Do not be afraid to disagree with the ideas presented by the professor.

3. From the lectures and class discussions, write an essay on what you think are the most effective strategies and techniques for reducing prejudice on the basis of race, ethnicity, and religion. Do not be afraid to disagree with the ideas presented by the professor.

OPERATING ASSUMPTIONS FOR THIS CLASS

The topic of prejudice, especially in its many manifestations, is so controversial that this class will not be able to operate unless we agree on the following assumptions:

1. Prejudice is widespread in American society, it is a significant problem facing members of various stigmatized groups, and justice requires making stronger attempts to

reduce the impact of the various forms of prejudice on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and other factors.

2. Prejudice has a negative impact on society in general, and we need to take active steps to try to reduce prejudice for the benefit of everyone. It is not just a sense of justice, but our nation's own long-range progress which requires us to work to overcome prejudice.

3. We will take the word of members of a specific stigmatized group that prejudice exists, and no class member who is outside of that particular stigma will try to deny the reality of the impact of prejudice on that group. The assumption of this class is that a member of the group which has directly experienced such stigma best understands the situation, and for the purposes of class discussions those who are not in that group should accept that perspective. For example:

* When an African-American speaks about racism, non-blacks will not try to deny the reality of racist prejudice.

* When a woman speaks about sexism, males will not attempt to deny or dismiss such concerns.

* When a lesbian or gay man speaks about homophobia and heterosexism, those who are heterosexual will not try to deny the reality of this type of prejudice.

* When a Jew talks about anti-Semitism, those who are not Jewish will not attempt to deny the reality of religious prejudice.

We each must individually recognize that in some ways, most of us are members of a privileged and dominant group in this society (whether we are white, male, heterosexual, Christian, able-bodied, etc.). It is important that we recognize our areas of privilege before attempting to pass judgment on others who are different.

4. The focus of this class is to try to figure out which strategies and techniques work best, in reducing stigma against the group BOTH by changing the general society and by changing the group itself. There will be times when lectures may suggest criticisms of the various ways that specific groups have reacted to prejudice, and will suggest alternative possible strategies and techniques. This is not meant to "blame the victim," but to suggest that any effective effort at prejudice reduction may require changing BOTH the mainstream and the group itself. The goal is to locate better ways of bringing about socioeconomic advancement of the stigmatized group. We can certainly disagree about the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of any specific suggestion for change, but no group's strategies will be exempt from critique. Through constructive criticisms, it is hoped that better progress in changing prejudicial attitudes by the privileged majority and in developing more effective strategies by stigmatized groups will result.

IMPORTANT: If you do not agree with ALL of these assumptions, for the purpose of interaction within this class, I encourage you to drop this class and instead sign up for a class like those on Race Relations (Sociology 3) or sexism/heterosexism (SWMS 210g). If this class degenerates into a debate on the existence of racism, sexism,

homophobia, anti-Semitism, or other forms of prejudice, it will defeat its purpose of focusing on discovery of the most effective strategies and techniques for reducing prejudice.

INTRO ON WLW:

WALTER L. WILLIAMS, Professor of Anthropology & SWMS

I'm a native of Atlanta, graduated from Georgia State University with an interdisciplinary double-major in history and anthro. A major influence shaping my college years in the late 1960s was the civil rights movement, which was swirling all around me. Atlanta was a major center of civil rights activity, being the home of Martin Luther King and several civil rights organizations. I got involved in the civil rights movement, and that started a period of political activism that would lead me into other forms of anti-discrimination.

I then went on to graduate school at the Univ. of North Carolina, specializing in the ethnohistory of inter-ethnic relations (how culturally-different peoples interact when they come into contact).

At age 24, I received my Ph.D. in History and anthropology, with my dissertation on inter-ethnic relations between Black Americans and Africans.

From that I published several articles in black studies journals, as well as a book **BLACK AMERICANS AND THE EVANGELIZATION OF AFRICA** published by the University of Wisconsin Press

But my major research area has been in the field of American Indian studies.

In college I participated in three archaeological excavations.

Then while I was still in graduate school, in 1973-74 (an event that changed my life), I lived for a year doing fieldwork on the Eastern Cherokee Indian reservation (in North Carolina). I also worked on developing the Museum of the Cherokees.

In 1974 I was hired to teach U.S. History and American Indian History at the University of Cincinnati, and was a professor there for several years.

In 1978 I did more fieldwork, with the Seminole Indians of Florida.

Out of all this, I published another book SOUTHEASTERN INDIANS SINCE THE REMOVAL ERA, published by the University of Georgia Press.

Next I was a fellow at the Newberry Library Center for the History of the American Indian, in Chicago, where I worked on Indian legal status.

Several articles came out of this, the most important of which is in THE JOURNAL OF AMERICAN HISTORY (March 1980) "U.S. Indian Policy and the Debate over Philippine Annexation".

And also from this research I edited a third book: on TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN INDIAN LEADERSHIP.

In 1980 (another important turning point in my life) I came to Los Angeles, to teach at the American Indian Studies Center at UCLA. (though I'm told I'm not supposed to mention that to USC students!).

I fell in love with Los Angeles, and have been out here most of the time ever since. I taught at UCLA until 1984, when USC hired me, and pulled me over to the good side of town.

By the late 1970s I was getting interested in doing research on sexuality among American Indians, partly prompted by my activism in the gay liberation movement. In 1979 I became the head of the Greater Cincinnati Gay Coalition, and later that year was a founder and chairperson of the Committee on Lesbian and Gay History, for the American Historical Association.

And I began research for my fourth book, on the respected role of homosexuality and gender nonconformity among many tribes of American Indians. In 1982 I won a grant to do fieldwork living among the Sioux Indians of South Dakota, the Omaha tribe in Nebraska, and the Crows in Montana. I did not realize, when I began this research on sexuality, that it would get me intensely involved in American Indian religious experiences. During my time on the reservations I participated in some of the most intense spirituality, with their traditional religious leaders, that I have ever experienced in my whole life. It represented another important turning point in my life, and since then I have moved in a more spiritual direction.

In 1983 I continued this fieldwork with the Maya Indians of Yucatan, Mexico. And in 1984, a brief trip to do fieldwork among native Hawaiians for a similar type of cultural tradition. I have continued to do research among Polynesians since then, studying in the Pacific islands of Moloka'i and Rarotonga.

I was elected as President of the Board of Directors, of the International Gay and Lesbian Archives, and also am Director of Advanced Studies for the ONE Institute of Homophile Studies. Those organizations, both located in Los Angeles, are the major research centers for this subject.

In 1986, the results of my research were published by Beacon Press in a book titled *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*.

OPTIONAL (only if students are not reading *Spirit & Flesh*): Briefly, the idea of many American Indian cultures is that not all people can be fit into the categories of "men" or "women." Instead, there are some individuals who are created as gender non-conformist, that is, they are neither women nor men but somewhere in between. They transform gender roles, and become a third alternative (to translate the Navajo word for it "nadleh"), which means "half-man/ half-woman".

In our society, such androgynous gender non-conformists are often looked down upon. But many Indian cultures considered them as sacred people, with special gifts and high prestige.

Immediately after that book appeared, all hell broke loose. It got major positive reviews in the media (*Psychology Today*, *NY Times*, *LA Times Sunday Book Review*, etc.). It won an award presented at the American Anthropological Association, and another award from the American Library Association. Then the World Congress for Sexology flew me out to address their annual meeting in Heidelberg Germany, and gave me their award for the best book published on a sexological subject (anywhere in the world).

After that, my life was a swirl of speaking engagements, radio and TV interviews, and newspaper interviews. The book is now the lead paperback title for Beacon Press, so they are very happy about that.

Partly as a result of the success of *The Spirit and the Flesh*, in 1987 I won a Fulbright Scholar award to do research on male gender roles in Southeast Asia. I chose Indonesia, because there are some similar forms of accepted and institutionalized

homosexuality in various traditional cultures of Indonesia, that are in some ways very similar to the patterns of sexuality in American Indian cultures. I was assigned to teach a graduate seminar in American Studies and research methodology, at Gadjah Mada University -- Indonesia's oldest and largest university, located in Yogyakarta (in central Java).

On the way to Indonesia, I stopped off in Thailand for a brief research trip, and also in Malaysia. I lived for a little over a year in Indonesia, and it was one of the most pleasant living situations I have ever encountered. Both in terms of my personal life, and in my research, it was one of the most fascinating experiences I have ever had, and one of the best years of my life.

So, I came back to America a bit reluctantly, but I've been enjoying life since then, and published another book *JAVANESE LIVES: WOMEN AND MEN IN MODERN INDONESIAN SOCIETY* (Rutgers University Press). Now I have been promoted to the rank of full professor, which is the highest rank of teachers at the university. So now I'm at the top, and I don't care what people think, so I do what I want. One of the things I do is to teach controversial courses like this one. I also teach courses on American Indians ANTH 316G, SWMS 210 (Introduction to the Study of Women and Men in Society), and a seminar on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies.