Not Fit for the Dinner Table: Religion, Race, and Politics in America  
FYSE 134 | TR 10:50-12:05 | ECTR 219

**Course Description**  
What are you told not to talk about around the dinner table? Religion... politics... and we’re encouraged not to talk about race pretty much anywhere. The irony, of course, is that we live in a society deeply divided along these very lines. This course seeks to break these taboos by cultivating the tools to engage in conversations around the issues that really matter in the twenty-first century. What is race? What is religion? How are these concepts connected? And how do they shape politics in the United States, not just electoral politics but even more so the politics of everyday life? We will examine these questions by exploring America’s past and present in the classroom and around Charleston.
Course Objectives
1) To cultivate critical thinking, reading, and writing skills
2) To practice crafting coherent and compelling evidence-based arguments
3) To develop the necessary tools to talk about race and religion in America

Course Assignments and Assessment
- Attendance, Participation, and Successful Completion of Synthesis Seminar (10%)
- Participation (15%)
  - I take attendance daily.
  - You cannot participate if you are not present.
  - Quality counts more than quantity, but you must speak to contribute.
  - If you miss more than FIVE classes, you will be dropped from this course.
- “This I Believe” Video-Essay: Due Tuesday, August 29 (5%)
- Lead (10-minute) Class Conversation (5%)
- Midterm Exam: In Class October 12 (10%)
- Film Review (2-pages): Due Tuesday, November 14 (5%)
- Unessay (50% Total)
  - Topic: Meet with Me by Thursday, Sept. 21 (5%)
  - Annotated Bibliography: Due Thursday, October 26 (10%)
  - Draft Creator’s Statement (3-pages): Due Tuesday, November 21 (10%)
  - Presentation: In Class Tuesday, November 28 and Thursday, November 30 (5%)
  - Unessay: Due Tuesday, December 12 (20%)

Extra Credit
- The African American Studies Film Festival (already included in the syllabus) is your primary extra credit opportunity. You may receive extra credit for attending additional film screenings and writing a short review essay (1-page, double-spaced, 12-point font) on it. Your response is due via email within one week of said event.

Course Materials
Since our collective success in this class depends on careful and critical reading of all assigned materials, it is imperative that you have your own physical copies of all texts. I expect you to actively engage the texts (underline arguments, star key points, write exasperated comments in the margins, etc.) while reading outside of class and to bring them with you to class to facilitate discussion. Don’t worry, we will practice this together in class!

There are three required books. If you buy the book somewhere other than the CofC Bookstore, please make sure you are buying the correct edition. All other readings will be in your Reader. Here’s how you make your Reader in three easy steps! Step 1: buy a three-ring binder. Step 2: print off the Reader (found in OAKS under COURSE RESOURCES). Step 3: place the Reader in your binder and bring to class when assigned. ☺ If a reading is listed as “In Class” on the syllabus, you need not read it ahead of time but you still must bring the book with you to class. Otherwise, each reading is due on the day it is assigned.
You will receive a 0 for attendance if you fail to bring assigned material on any given class day. Digital copies are prohibited without permission of professor (see Technology policy below).

- Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give* (Balzer + Bray, 2017)
- Three-ring Binder

**Expectations**

- **For Your Professor**
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- **For Yourself**
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- **For Each Other**
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**Attendance and Late Policies**

- You can only participate in our class if you are physically present, so attendance is essential to success. I will take attendance daily. If you miss more than FIVE classes you will fail and be dropped from the class.
- Class begins promptly at 10:50AM on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I expect you to be seated and prepared for class when the proverbial iPhone strikes 10:50. Points will be deducted if you arrive late or if you leave before the end of our scheduled class time (12:05PM).
- Assignments are due at the time specified on the assignment itself. Any assignment turned in after the designated deadline is considered late. You will be penalized one letter grade (10 points) for each day that your assignment is late. Days are calculated by 24-hour periods that begin with the original due date and time.
- No one is more sympathetic to the busyness of our curricular and co-curricular schedules than I am (I have a wife, almost three daughters, and a dog, after all). Nevertheless, it is crucial that we all learn to plan ahead and balance our respective responsibilities. Deadlines for other classes and other prior commitments are not acceptable excuses for missed class or late work.
- The same goes for technological problems. We are increasingly dependent on our devices and other technologies. However, as I know you know, technology can fail us. Computers crash, iPads break, servers are sometimes down, etc. Again, though I am sympathetic, technical difficulties are not acceptable excuses for late assignments or
missed class. I expect you to complete assignments well enough in advance to factor in these variables and remember, always (ALWAYS!) back up your documents!!!

**Technology**

Students are expected to have a CofC email address linked to OAKS that they check regularly. Email is my most frequent and effective means of communication. (Seriously, tho. Check it!)

Please turn your cellphones on silent when you enter the classroom. Use of cellphones in class is strictly prohibited and will result in a 0 for attendance.

I prefer that you use paper and pen/cil as your note-taking devices (crayons and markers also acceptable). If you prefer to take notes on a laptop or tablet, I ask that you sign an agreement with me for responsible use and that you sit in the rear of the classroom, so as not to distract your classmates. If your use of devices disrupts our class, I reserve the right to embarrass you and/or ask you to leave. (Please see me if and when you wish to sign an agreement.)

**Disability Accommodation**

If you have, or think you may have, a documented disability (physical, learning, psychiatric, visual, hearing, etc.) please visit the Center for Disability Services. The Center can provide you with the information and documentation necessary to arrange accommodations you may require. The Center for Disability Services / Students Needing Access Parity (SNAP) can be accessed via: [http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu/](http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu/).

**Religious Accommodation**

The College acknowledges that religious practices differ from tradition to tradition and that the demands of religious observance in some traditions may cause conflicts with student schedules. In affirming this diversity, the College supports the concept of “reasonable accommodation for religious observance” in regard to class attendance, and the scheduling of examinations and other academic work requirements, unless the accommodation would create an undue hardship on the College. Our full Statement on Religious Accommodations Policy can be found here: [http://president.cofc.edu/community-relations/rlc/accommodation.php](http://president.cofc.edu/community-relations/rlc/accommodation.php)

**The Center for Student Learning**

The CSL, located on the first floor of the library, offers a wide variety of tutoring and other academic resources that support many courses offered at the College. Services include walk-in tutoring, by appointment tutoring, study strategies appointments, Peer Academic Coaching (PAC), and Supplemental Instruction (SI). All services are described and all lab schedules are posted on the CSL website: [http://csl.cofc.edu/](http://csl.cofc.edu/).

**Writing Lab**

I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Lab in the Center for Student Learning (Addlestone Library, first floor). Trained writing consultants can help with writing for all courses; they offer one-to-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more, visit [http://csl.cofc.edu/](http://csl.cofc.edu/).
Honor Code and Academic Integrity
Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved. Incidents where the instructor determines the student’s actions are related more to a misunderstanding will be handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student’s file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student’s transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration—working together without permission—is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others’ exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance. Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php

Course Schedule (subject to change with advance notice)

Who are we?
Week 1 – August 22: What are we doing (and how will we be doing it)?
 Tuesday: Syllabus
 Thursday: Crafting Class Expectations
 Romaissaa Benzizoune, “I’m Muslim, but My Roommate Supports Trump”
 K.n. Pineda, “Divisions in My Dorm Room” (Reader)

Monday, August 28: Last Day of Drop/Add
Week 2 – September 5: Who am I?
Tuesday: Who am I? What do I believe?
   NPR’s *This I Believe* series:  
   Eboo Patel, “We Are Each Other’s Business”
   Sheri White, “Seeing Beyond Our Differences”
   Joshua Yuchasz, “All Different in Our Own Ways”
   Alaa El-Saad, “America’s Beauty Is In Its Diversity”
   Andrew Sullivan, “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness” (OAKS)

    Thursday: Who am I? How am I situated in the world?
    Richard Wright, “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow” (Reader)

Week 3 – August 29: Who are We (the People)?
Tuesday: What makes a “We the People”?  
   Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” (Reader)
Thursday: Who are “We the People”?
   Preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America (OAKS)
   Parker J. Palmer, “Introduction to the Paperback Edition” of *Healing the Heart of Democracy* (Reader)

Week 4 – September 12: What are the stories we tell ourselves (about ourselves)?
Tuesday: We visit the Old Slave Mart Museum
   Edward Baptist, “Feet” from *The Half Has Never Been Told* (Reader)

    Thursday: Where are we? What is the story Charleston tells itself?
    Chimimanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story” (OAKS)

Week 5 – September 19:
Tuesday: Old Slave Mart Museum comes to campus
   Gene Demby, “The Charleston Story: A Knotted Mix of Race, Grace, and Injustice” (Reader)
What are we talking about?

Thursday: “You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.”
“A Conversation with White People on Race”
“A Conversation with Latinos on Race” (OAKS)

Sunday, September 24: B-DAY!!!

Week 6 – September 26: The Making of “Race” and “Religion” in American History
Tuesday: Unessay Tutorial (ft. Sigrid Johannes & various artists)
Paul Harvey, * Bounds of Their Habitation*, Introduction and Chapter 1
Thursday: What are “race” and “religion”? Where did they come from?
Paul Harvey, * Bounds of Their Habitation*, Chapters 2-3

Week 7 – October 3: Race and Religion in Modern American History
Tuesday: Who gets to be an “American”?
Paul Harvey, * Bounds of Their Habitation*, Chapters 4-5
Thursday: Visit Addlestone Library (room 122) to kick-start Annotated Bibliographies
Paul Harvey, * Bounds of Their Habitation*, Chapters 6

Monday, October 9: AAST Film Fest: *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*

Week 8 – October 10: Race and Religion in Our Present Moment
Tuesday: Where are we now? (And how did we get here?)
Paul Harvey, * Bounds of Their Habitation*, Chapter 7 and Epilogue
Thursday: Midterm Exam

Monday – Tuesday, October 16-17: Fall Break

Okay, Let’s Talk!
Week 9 – October 19: Talking about America’s Past and Present
Thursday: What is Coates arguing for, exactly? And how?
Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations” (Reader)

Friday, October 20: Midterm Grades due

Monday, October 23: AAST Film Fest: *Night of the Living Dead*

Week 10 – October 24: Talking about Past Debts and Present Payments
Tuesday: What do you think about Coates’s argument?
Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations” (Reader)
Thursday: Do you agree or disagree with Coates?
David Frum, “The Impossibility of Reparations” (Reader)
Thursday, October 26: Last day to Withdraw ("W")

Monday, October 30: AAST Film Fest: Get Out

Week 11 – October 31: Talking about Race, Religion, and Representation
Tuesday:
    G. Willow Wilson and Adrian Alphona, Ms. Marvel: No Normal
Thursday:
    Samara M. Anarbaeva, “YouTubing Difference: Performing Identities in Video Communities” (Reader)

Monday, November 6: AAST Film Fest: I Am Not Your Negro

Week 12 – November 7: Talking about Police and Protestors
Tuesday:
    Angie Thomas, The Hate U Give, Chapters 1-7
    “A Conversation with Black Women on Race”
    “A Conversation on Growing Up Black” (OAKS)
Thursday:
    Angie Thomas, The Hate U Give, Chapters 8-12

Saturday, November 11: Thanksgiving Dinner Rehearsal

Week 13 – November 14: Talking about Riots and Rebellions
Tuesday:
    Angie Thomas, The Hate U Give, Chapters 13-19
    Radley Balko, “How Municipalities in St. Louis County, Mo., Profit Off Poverty” (Reader)
Thursday:
Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give*, Chapters 20-26

Week 14 – No Class

Friday – Tuesday, November 17-21: American Academy of Religion
Wednesday – Sunday, November 22-26: Thanksgiving Break

Week 15 – November 28: Unessay Presentations
   Tuesday: Unessay Presentations
   Thursday: Unessay Presentations

Monday, December 4: Last day of Classes

Friday, December 15: Final Grades Due