

Passing: Black, White, and Jewish



Course Information

Instructor

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Course Description

Aren't we all *passing*? We navigate through various identities daily, changing our personalities and donning masks to present ourselves differently from who we are. In some cases, passing between identities help us to align with the demands of a mainstream culture. In others, it grants us access to opportunities and privileges exclusive to a different group. However, some forms of passing are deemed socially acceptable and understandable, while others are considered taboo. This prompts us to question

the innate human drive to pass, leading us to wonder: in a world where we all engage in some form of passing, how do we discern when we've passed too far?

Looking to answer these questions, we will start the course by establishing a solid foundation in the terminology and methodologies of race and racial bias through its American roots. We will analyze the extreme stakes faced by African Americans as white at the turn of the 20th century. We then extend our inquiry across time and disciplines to observe the manifestations of the phenomena in contemporary realities. Our multidisciplinary approach encompasses a spectrum of sources: historical recordings of mulatto slaves; memoirs and narratives of African American passers; poems and literary creations; legal theories surrounding cultural concealment and human right; even a reality TV show about switching races.

In the second phase of our course, we will foster a dialogue that transcends cultural boundaries. Here, we dissect passing as a global phenomenon, acknowledging its utilization by international communities and minority groups around the world. With a specific focus on transnational Jewish identities, we endeavor to reassess our own negotiation of identity and difference within this complex landscape.

Required & Recommended Course Materials (to purchase/rent)

Required: Larsen, Nella. *Passing*. Penguin Classics. ISBN - 9780142437278

Recommended: *The Little Seagull Handbook*, ISBN-13: 978-0393911510

Recommended website for writing support: OWL // Purdue Writing Lab @ www.owl.purdue.edu

All other readings and materials will be available on CANVAS. Please be in touch with the professor if you're having trouble accessing them.

Graded Work

Description of Graded Work

1. List of Graded Work

Assignment	Description	Requirements	Grade
Reading Journal	Through course website. Self-reflective responses to assigned readings.	100 words weekly	10 Points each 20%
Short response paper	2-page paper to show understanding and basic implementation of <i>passing</i> in a critical framework. (This assignment will count towards the Writing Requirement.)	500 Words	100 Points 15%

Analytical Essay	Comparative, 6-page paper analyzing course themes through literary analysis of two texts from syllabus, of different global cultures. Students will use a given question bank or a topic of their choice. (This assignment will count towards the Writing Requirement.)	1700 Words	100 Points 25%
Recorded Final Project	Podcast segment – a recorded edited submission of a 5-6 minute story, which includes a narrative, at least one interview, and a personal reflection component, discussing the class themes. Students will submit a pitch and a draft which will be workshopped in class.	Podcast pitch + Draft. Recorded podcast.	Prep: 10 Points Podcast: 90 30%
Participation	Class discussion and in-class group work.	Active participation	10 Points 10%

Written work submitted in this course will be thoroughly evaluated, and students will receive their papers with extensive feedback in respect, but not limited to: grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization. Feel free to contact me, or the UF's Writing Studio (www.writing.ufl.edu) for further instruction and consultation in regards to effective writing.

Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academicregulations/grades-grading-policies/>

A	94 – 100%		C	74 – 76%
A-	90 – 93%		C-	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B-	80 – 83%		D-	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

Grading Rubric(s)

Writing Assessment Rubric and Statements

	SATISFACTORY (Y)	UNSATISFACTORY (N)
CONTENT	Papers exhibit at least some evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources, and provide at least an adequate discussion with basic understanding of sources.	Papers either include a central idea(s) that is unclear or off-topic or provide only minimal or inadequate discussion of ideas. Papers may also lack sufficient or appropriate sources.
ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE	Documents and paragraphs exhibit at least some identifiable structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement but may require readers to work to follow progression of ideas.	Documents and paragraphs lack clearly identifiable organization, may lack any coherent sense of logic in associating and organizing ideas, and may also lack transitions and coherence to guide the reader.
ARGUMENT AND SUPPORT	Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas, strongly supported with evidence. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, documents may provide only generalized discussion of ideas or may provide adequate discussion but rely on weak support for arguments.	Documents make only weak generalizations, providing little or no support, as in summaries or narratives that fail to provide critical analysis.
STYLE	Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display complexity and logical sentence structure. At a minimum, documents will display a less precise use of vocabulary and an uneven use of sentence structure or a writing style that occasionally veers away from word choice or tone appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline.	Documents rely on word usage that is inappropriate for the context, genre, or discipline. Sentences may be overly long or short with awkward construction. Documents may also use words incorrectly.
MECHANICS	Papers will feature correct or error-free presentation of ideas. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, papers may contain some spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive so they do not muddy the paper's argument or points.	Papers contain so many mechanical or grammatical errors that they impede the reader's understanding or severely undermine the writer's credibility.

Participation Grading Rubric:

	High Quality	Average	Needs Improvement
Informed: Shows evidence of having done the assigned work.	Student shows convincing range and quality of knowledge, having thoroughly read the assigned material in preparation for class discussion. (9-10 pts.)	Student seems informed on the subject, having done minimal preparation for class discussion. (6-8 pts.)	Student is almost never prepared for class, exhibits very little or no knowledge of the assigned material/topics covered. (1-5 pts.)
Thoughtful: Shows evidence of having understood and considered issues raised.	Student proactively contributes to class by offering relevant ideas and asking leading questions more than once per class. (9-10 pts.)	Student contributes to class by offering somewhat relevant ideas and asking content questions once per class. (6-8 pts.)	Student rarely or never contributes to class discussion or group projects. (1-5 pts)
Considerate: Takes the perspective others into account.	Student listens when others talk, both in groups and in class. Student incorporates or builds off of the ideas of others. (9 – 10 pts.)	Student listens when others talk, both in groups and in class. (6 – 8 pts.)	Student does not listen when others talk, both in groups and in class. Student is distracted or interrupts when student speak. (1 – 5 pts.)

Reading Schedule



Week 1: So You Want to Talk about Race?

Working definition of race, identity and passing. How do we define ourselves, our identities? How do we define others? What are the motives, benefits, costs that are associated with racial passing in the US.

Tue. Welcome!

Thu. Haney Lopez "The Social Construction of Race."

Week 2: Passing. A Chosen Exile.

Reading Nella Larsen's novel *Passing*, we will discuss whether identities are fixed/fluid, looking at fictional and real narratives of passing between race, gender and class. We will reevaluate assumptions regarding race as biological/social construct, discuss the visibility of race and the feasibility of being color-blind.

Tue. James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* Selections + Langston Hughes, "Passing" from *The Ways of White Folk*.

Thu. Nella Larsen, *Passing*. (Part I, One + Two)

Week 3 :Passing. Cont.

Tue. Larsen, *Passing* (finish part one and read part two, One + Two)

Thu. Larsen, continue discussion + writing exercise.

Week 4: Assimilating/Covering/Passing

Is passing a term that fits every case of changing or adapting one's identity? We will examine various degrees of passing, the differences between temporary and permanent passing, discussing whether passing is a chosen or forced endeavor.

Tue. *Passing* (Finish novel)

Thu. Kenji Yoshino, *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights*. Intro. + Langston Hughes + "Theme for English B" (1949)

Week 5: Trading Races

Looking at documented cases of race swapping, discussing how prejudice and racism look when one crosses the color the line. Can walking a mile in someone else's shoes help us understand each other's lifelong experiences?

Tue. Ice Cube's Black. White. (Watch episode 1 and episode 2)

Thu. Ice Cube's Black. White. (Watch episode 3 and episode 4)

Week 6: "Papa Can You Hear Me?"

Utilizing our familiarity of passing in the American context, we will work to identify other forms of passing as they occur in international cultures. We will establish understanding of Jewish life in the diaspora and explore the reasoning behind passing in gender-segregated societies.

Tue. Isaac Bashevis Singer. "Yentl the Yeshiva Boy" (1962)

Thu. Barbara Streisand. Yentl (1983). Selections screened in class.

Week 7: The Passing of a Nation

This week we will examine the assimilation, covering and passing demands experienced by immigrants in global settings. We will generate our discussion by looking at Zionism which did not just move Jewish people to Israel, but also wished to recreate the Jewish body, and produce a new "race" of Jews. Thus, immigrants had to change their identities, erasing past lives to become New Hebrews.

Tue. Haim Hazaz, "The Sermon" (1942) (Pg. 233 – 249)

Thu. Alain Locke, "The New Negro" [Links to an external site.](#)

Week 8: Passing of a Nation, Part II

Looking at more personal narratives of switching identities, we will examine how studying one culture can help us better understand another, and perhaps better understand ourselves. Which experiences can be compared? Are some issues completely taboo? Can African American passing narratives shed light on other contemporary identities?

Tue. Dahn Ben-Amotz, *To Remember, To Forget* (1968), (pg. 3-10, 26-59)

Thu. Kaniuk. *Adam Resurrected*. Chapter 4, pg. 80 to at least 112)

Week 9: Arabs Passing as Jews

This section will look at experiences of non-Jewish minorities passing in Israel, specifically the Arab-Israeli population. We will examine the current conflict in the Middle East while raising questions of self-definition as a racial/religious minority living in a nation state.

Tue. Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" (Parts 1 - 3)

Thu. Cont.

Week 10: 2nd Generation Passing

Tue. Orly Castel-Bloom, "Umi Fi Shurl

Thu. *My Name is Achmed*. Screening + Discussion.

Week 11: Don't Ask, Don't Tell + Jews Passing as Arabs

This week we will discuss reverse passing, or passing from mainstream culture to minority culture. We will also examine notions of identity/difference, belongingness, racial and ethnic biases, and other visual biases that effect minorities.

Tue. *Yossi and Jagger*. (2002) Film. In class screening.

Thu. Bouzaglo. *Fictitious Marriage*.

Week 12: Black and Jewish

W.E.B. Du Bois described African American "double consciousness": "One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body." How does one live with two identities and are people today still feel the same way? Is double consciousness limited to race? We will try and answer these questions by reviewing the experiences of Ethiopian Jews, and what it means to be both black and Jewish.

Tue. *Red Leaves*. Dir. Bazi Gete. Watch at home + Discussion

Thu. Podcast Workshop

Week 13: Blacks and Jews.

Coming to a closure, we return to the States, leaving the theoretical comparisons and focusing on concrete examples of the African American and Jewish connection, we will discuss identity making, identity politics, and the Black-Jewish alliance in context.

Tue. Spike Lee. *Blackkkklansman* + Brett Ashley Kaplan, “JewKkKlansman” (2020)

Thu. Cont.

Week 14: Podcast Extravaganza!

Tue. Podcasts!

Thu. Podcasts!

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Content: *Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline(s).*

- **Analyze:** Students will analyze the concept of passing, tracing its historical and literary evolution, with a focus on its African American roots and contemporary global occurrences, particularly within the Jewish world. They will demonstrate the ability to **identify, describe, and explain** the multifaceted nature of passing and its relevance in today's fluid racial identity landscape. Assessments: Class participation, journal entries, comparative papers, and final project.
- **Critique:** Students will critically **examine** both historical and contemporary visual biases, dissecting the perception of fixed identities and investigating the complex interplay between race as a biological and social construct. They will **engage** in discussions regarding the negotiation of identity and difference within mainstream culture. Assessments: Class participation, journal entries, comparative papers and final project.
- **Explore and apply:** Students will **explore** the unique phenomenon of passing within the African American context and its implications for global communities. They will **apply** their

understanding to illuminate the intersections of transnational Jewish/Israeli and Palestinian identities, fostering a deeper comprehension of the complexities in these relationships. Assessments: Class participation, journal entries, comparative papers and final project.

Critical Thinking: *Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).*

- **Analyze and Evaluate:** Students will **analyze** and critically **evaluate** historical and contemporary narratives authored by or about individuals who have engaged in passing. This analysis will shed light on the intricate experiences of passing and empower students to develop a critical approach to the challenges of conforming one's racial and ethnic identities to those of the majority, both in local and global contexts. Assessments: Class participation, journal entries, short and comparative papers and Final Project.
- **Connect and Interpret:** Students will **establish** connections between the complex dynamics of unique international identity structures, such as black/Jewish identities, and contemporary perceptions and enforcement. They will **explore** the intersections of culture, ethnicity, race, class, and gender through a comparative lens, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of the foundational ideas upon which these identities are built. Assessments: Class participation, journal entries, short and comparative papers and Final Project.
- **Examine and Assess:** Students will **review** and **assess** how passing between identities serves as a means for individuals (and themselves) to adapt to the demands of mainstream culture and gain access to opportunities and benefits typically available to a different group. Assessments: Class participation, journal entries, comparative papers and final project.

Communication: *Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).*

- **Develop and Present:** Students will **cultivate** the ability to **articulate** and **present** their own findings, both verbally and through recorded means, utilizing an experiential project. This project will **apply** insights gained from the experiences of black/Jewish communities to personal and local narrative. Assessments: Class participation and Final Project.
- **Explore Effects Through Writing:** Students will hone their communication skills by **exploring** how passing impacts the Black/Jewish experience. They will **engage** in personal and comparative written assignments, **analyzing** works from the course syllabus, including literature, film, and memoir. Assessments: Journal entries, short and comparative papers and Final Project.

Connection: *Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).*

- **Self-Exploration:** Students will delve into their personal connection and identification with the intersection of the Black/Jewish experience. This exploration will entail a reassessment of the intellectual and cultural framework that shapes their personal and political perspectives. Assessments: Class participation, journal entries, short and comparative papers and Final Project.
- **Promoting Equality, Empathy, Understanding:** Students will **leverage** their communication skills to review how narratives of passing can empower them to devise approaches and strategies for

promoting Equality, Empathy, and Understanding, particularly for marginalized identities on campus, whether their peers' or their own. This engagement with diverse lived experiences will foster a better and expression of their own backgrounds and realities today and in the future. Assessments: Class participation, journal entries, comparative papers and final project.

Required Policies

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory, will be taken daily and recorded in the Canvas gradebook. You are allowed three “personal days” for the semester, after which each absence that does not meet university criteria for “excused” will result in a two-point deduction from your final grade.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report

any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/> , 3921575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

In-Class Recordings

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.