

Images of Ethnicity: Families Histories and Public Perceptions
School for New Learning / DePaul University class # 21501-5 cat # AI 142 801-805
Winter Quarter 2010 Saturdays 9:00a –Noon
Class Location: TBA

Instructor: Michael Boruch
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“Why did you come here?”

*“Here rice and grain are easy to eat, friends are easy to have, housing is easy to set up,
utensils and other material needs are easy to acquire and business is easy to do.”*

Words of a 13th c. Chinese merchant living in Cambodia when asked by a visitor why he left his homeland.

Course Syllabus

Perhaps the above quote best describes economic migrants and mostly those finding success in their new surroundings. But we are a nation of immigrants from abroad and within our own borders. Many others were motivated by fear. Often they sought asylum or were transported here against their will. Most of us know at least generally who we are and where we originate. And we have an idea as to how we place ourselves (and are placed) within the tossed salad of American society.

But we can learn more. Who we are and how we are perceived are often filled with misconceptions. This class examines our notions of identity both for ourselves and of others around us. We all belong to a tribe given to them or chosen by aspiration. Some families set themselves apart from the mainstream and wear their differences with pride. Others have witnessed their later generations losing touch with their cultural roots. Adaptation often breeds estrangement.

Students will examine the history of their own family against the backdrop of their ethnic and social identities as they understand it and how those identities are viewed by others. To do this we will gather genealogical information, visual images (family photographs, newspaper or magazine articles, possibly drawings), oral history (interviews with family members) which reflect both the particulars of your family and the forces behind cultural preservation and the pressures to assimilate. Personal investigations will be integrated with original research from local ethnic museums and institutions, the Chicago History Museum and other web-based archives. Access to Ancestry.com’s vast database will be included with this class. This research will provide context for your “tribe’s” experiences in Chicago, called “the most ethnically aware city in America”.

Perhaps greatest benefits of this course will be to those from ethnic, social and cultural traditions other than Western European. These would include Persons of Color, African-American and Native-American, and those 2nd or 3rd generation Americans from Hispanic, Eastern European, African, Islamic or Asiatic traditions. Another transition, the adaptation from a rural to urban lifestyle, is shared by many of all backgrounds. The survival instinct and adaptation over generations can include persons from every social strata. Established families of the privileged are not exempt.

Final Documentary PowerPoint: Students will produce a final project on their family using Microsoft PowerPoint™. These will incorporate text with images, voice-over narration and interviews and (1) should contain a brief family genealogy and (2) address some of the issues of stereotyping as stated above. Scanning equipment will be provided for copying vintage genealogical materials (photos, records etc) for inclusion in the PowerPoint. New photographs made for this project may also be included.

A Reflection Paper will also be required describing your research methods (an account of your efforts) and personal reflections about how you view yourself in this American culture. Do you support the notion of the “melting pot”, the “the tossed salad” (a new paradigm for a multicultural America) or something else entirely.

Competencies

Choose from the five below. Specific assignments will be issued of each.

- A-1-B Make a detailed on-site study of the genealogical or ethnographic resources of a Chicago cultural institution.
- A-5 Define and analyze a creative process. Define the concept of creativity. Identify, analyze and Describe the components of the creative process in one or more fields of human endeavor. Explain how engaging in a creative process affects one’s perception of the world.
- H-1-X Student-designed. Review issues listed in H-1 and apply to a specific aspect of this syllabus.
- H-3-X Student-designed. Review issues listed in H-3 and apply to a specific aspect of this syllabus.
- S-3-X Student-designed. Proposal: Review available literature on the effectiveness of PowerPoint™ as a vehicle for teaching and persuasion. How does research pertain to the success your final Documentary PowerPoint project?

Please Note:

All students must be registered and listed on the class roster by the beginning of the second week of the term. Students not on the roster by this time cannot stay in the class under any circumstances. Please contact the SNL Advising Center (snladvicing@depaul.edu) or the Office of Financial Aid (finaid@depaul.edu) to work out your particular situation.

Students who need to withdraw from the course must do so by the end of the second week of the quarter. After that point is reached, 100% tuition is charged. It is possible to withdraw from a course or competence through the end of the seventh week of the quarter, but there is no tuition refund after the end of the second week.

In certain circumstances (such as illness, death of family members, natural disasters, etc.), a late withdrawal will be refunded tuition. These circumstances must be documented, and presented to the University through the SNL Exceptions Committee (snlexceptions@depaul.edu). In no case is such a refund allowed more than once during a student’s career at DePaul.

Goals for the Course:

1. To produce a basic genealogy of your family reaching back several generations and to gather background information on those ancestors through online and other databases and by interviews with older member of your family.
2. To begin to understand the events and observations made by mainstream American culture that formed the basis of an ethnic or social stereotyping of your group.
3. To learn how your family reacted (and is reacting) to these cultural perceptions. How do they see themselves in relation to Anglo-American culture? Has the issue of assimilation versus protection of ethnic identity been dealt with differently in your grandparents, your parents, yours or your children's generations?
4. Develop a set of specific questions stemming from goals 2 and 3 above. With these questions, survey family members and other members of your 'tribe'. With this collected data, develop your own view of the nature and value of your ethnic or social identity and your proper place within it.

Evaluation:

- Reflection Paper (at least 6 pages) contributes 20% toward your course grade.
- Final Presentation (a 6-9 minute PowerPoint documentary with sound overlay) weighs in at 35%.
- Work to demonstrate fulfillment of the Competencies will add another 15%.
- Type-written notes and comments on the readings and class research projects (at least ½ page per assignment).....due at the final class session...10%
- Produce a "Grand List" of at least 10 Stereotypes commonly held about your 'tribe'. Assess each one by its accuracy and how widely it is held and by whom. This will earn you 10%.
- Participation in Class Discussions fulfils the remaining 10%.

Attendance Policy:

- Attendance (or lack of it) will have a negative effect over your grade (see below).
Two unexcused absences will lower your final grade by one half letter.
Two 'lates' (15 minute) equal one unexcused absence.

You must attend BOTH our two final class sessions.

Optional: Open Lab Sessions for Advanced Work with PowerPoint™

On any weeknight throughout the quarter, our classroom / lab TBA can be opened for your use by appointment. I will be present to help with your assignments. Also, I will stay well into the afternoon, after our class session, to assist anyone needing help assembling their PowerPoint presentation.

MATERIALS provided

*Use of Computers, Imaging Software, Tape Recorders
Printers, Scanners, Chairs, Heat, Air, Gravity, etc.*

MATERIALS you might need to purchase.

Recommended: 64 mb or larger USB 'Jump Drive'.

A small portable tape recorder.

(I can lend you a digital camera for shooting your relatives-no guns.)

Required Text:

Jacob Riis; How the Other Half Lives, (HTOHL). (*Available free in full text.. on-line*)

<http://www.cis.yale.edu/amstud/inforev/riis/contents.html>

<http://www.authentichistory.com/postcivilwar/riis/contents.html>

Recommended Text:

Barbara Renick; Genealogy 101: How to Trace Your Family's History and Heritage, Rutledge Hill

Other weekly readings will be assigned in xeroxed photocopy or posted on the course's BlackBoard site. Readings from original sources (newspaper editorials, magazine, textbooks, and pamphlets) specific to various ethnic, social or racial groups will be issued. Students will also be responsible for doing some original research....locating similar background materials on their group from the web and other sources.

Class Calendar

Session One / January 2nd

Introduction and Syllabus explained. Handouts on the four competencies issues guidelines issued and discussed. First readings issued. Sample outline of your research issued. Sample outline for your documentary PowerPoint issued. In HTOHL: read introduction and chapters 1-3, 5.

Session Two / January 9th

Discussion of the first reading. Demo of web archives for materials on genealogy. Demo of basics of image and textual downloading from web sources for your ethnic researches. Basic plan for fulfilling your competencies finalized. Research on-line.....to locate and review at least four sources on stereotyping of your "tribe" This material may be included as background in your PowerPoint and your "Grand List".

Class Calendar (continued)

Session Three / January 16th

Discussion comments of internet stereotyping research. Bring print-out examples. Demo of sound overlay to PowerPoint 'slides'. From HTOHL: read introduction and chapters 9-14. Distribution of readings on **your** ethnic history from various sources. These, as with your other readings, will be outlined and commented upon (due at the final class session) but probably will inform only indirectly later class discussions.

Session Four / January 23rd

Present your work-in-progress toward your PowerPoint. Discussion of reading assignment from HTOHL. This should include some oral history (interviews- preferably as tape recordings, however text transcription will suffice). Refine further the outline for your PowerPoint.

Session Five / January 30th

Guest Speaker. TBA. Reading Assignment from Herrnstein and Murray, The Bell Curve. (from xerox)

Session Six / February 6th

Present for class discussion your work-in-progress toward your genealogical researches. progress on your PowerPoint. By this week you should have your PowerPoint a partially completed. Discussion of the reading assignment (Bell Curve).
Reading assignment: Excerpt from Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*. (.pdf on BlackBoard).

Session Seven / February 13th

Lab Time to work on your PowerPoint. One-on-One discussions with instructor. Fourth Reading Assignment discussed. One-Page Reflection due.

Session Eight / February 20th

Present progress on your PowerPoint. By this week you should have your PowerPoint a partially completed. Lab Time to work on your PowerPoint. Work on the integration of taped interviews and narration. One-on-One discussions with instructor about your PowerPoint (your PowerPoint outline should be finalized) and discussion of your progress toward completion of the competencies. Discussion of the reading assignment (*The Mismeasure of Man*).

Session Nine / February 27th

Possible Genealogical Field Trip. TBA

Reflection Papers due. Notes and comments on the readings and other assignments due.

Session Ten / March 6th

Lab Time to work on your PowerPoint. One-on-One discussions with instructor. Fourth Reading Assignment discussed. One-Page Reflection due.

Exam Week Session / March 13th

Presentation of Documentary PowerPoint

Pick-up Reflection Papers and notes on readings-graded with comments. Conferences with instructor.

Instructor's Biography:

Assistant Professor Michael Boruch designed and administered the photography program in the art department at Barat College, 1974-2005. In addition, there he has also taught courses in the art history, the humanities, DePaul's First Year Program, digital imaging and astronomy. Experienced as architectural and fine arts photographer, he has exhibited widely and is represented in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Contemporary Photography, and many private collections. His undergraduate studies were mainly in the field of applied music at Northwestern University. He holds a Masters of Fine Arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1974).