

July 28 2022 Comment @ D86 Board of Education Regular Meeting

(1. Curriculum Alignment)

Three weeks ago, Ethan showed me a few assignments from a summer course he's taking from D86. Before I reveal the name of the course, please allow me to read some of the questions:

This is a graded discussion: 20 points possible

CC&T Assignment #4: What Role Does Race Play in Getting the Job? Part 1

- Please read: [Minorities Who 'Whiten' Job Resumes Get More Interviews](#)
- Do you feel non-white applicants should "whiten their resumes" to get more interviews?
- What can be done to make the hiring process more equitable?
- Please also reply to two of your classmates' posts.

This is a graded discussion: 20 points possible

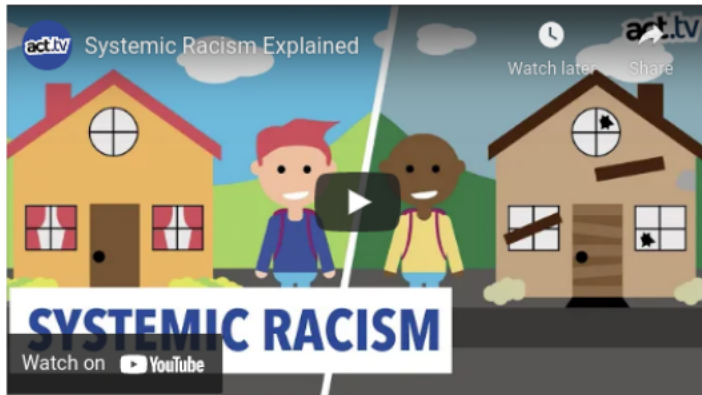
CC&T: Assignment #5: What Role Does Race Play in Getting the Job Part 2

- Please read: "[Do job-seekers with 'white' names get more callbacks than 'black' names?](#)"
- Explain the role of racial stereotypes in the difference in the number of callbacks between various racial groups.
- Then, analyze the role of racial stereotypes in the decisions we make in our everyday life.
- Finally, propose at least 2 policies or solutions to help reduce racial discrimination.
- Please also respond to two of your classmates' posts.

Banking Assignment #7: Racism & Banking

New Attempt

Due Jul 14 by 11:59pm Points 10 Submitting a text entry box



1. Please watch the video above
2. Explain what redlining & systemic racism are in your own words.
3. Analyze how systemic racism has played a role in racial minorities having reduced access to mortgages, high-quality housing, and consequently, education.
4. Reflect on our community: How has housing & property taxes contributed to the quality of education? Who has access to it and who is left out?
5. Finally, propose solutions to the legacy of racism, redlining, and inequities in education & wealth.

Guess what course these are from? Socialism 101, Racism in the United States? ...

Let me reveal the answer: these are graded assignments from Consumer Economics, which is a required course for high school students in Illinois to graduate. I printed out a few copies of the course curriculum. Here it says:

Topics covered include: development of skills needed to budget money, use credit wisely, purchase goods and services rationally, and make sound investment plans. Consumer Education helps students to better understand their role in the economy as a successful citizen, consumer, and member of the workforce. Students will specifically examine money management, banking, purchasing of goods and services, consumer rights and responsibilities, the efficient use of credit and loans, consumer protection, insurance, investment strategies, and our tax system. Emphasis in this course is on preparing students to make personal economic decisions for their future.

How is the teaching of redlining, whiteness, systemic racism aligned with the curriculum? Why are those ideological topics forced onto the minds of students when they are supposed to learn how to make good financial decisions and be a responsible consumer?

At first, Ethan told me that he's hesitant and reluctant to answer those questions, and he asked whether he can skip these assignments altogether. He didn't want to be compelled to say things that he doesn't believe. He didn't want to lie about his true beliefs just to receive grades. I told him to be brave, to be honest, and to share what he truly feels. I'd like to have Ethan read some of his answers and comments.

(2. Ethan speaks of his answers and past experience)

This is my answer I had for the resume whitening question:

As an Asian, I do not feel left out or unwelcome in my school environment or any of the activities that I participate. However, my dad has a very typical Chinese name, which is kind of difficult to pronounce. He picked an English name when he was in college and had been using it ever since. He doesn't hide his Chinese name, but tells his colleagues "I go by my English name Allen". He doesn't feel embarrassed or discriminated when he had to "whiten" his name. In fact, this is a very common practice in Hongkong, Taiwan, and China, Even at home, I sometimes address him using "Allen".

This is my answer to the question "What can make hiring process more equitable":

The hiring process should be color blind. As Dr. Martin Luther King said, people should not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I believe that any policy that discriminates or favors a specific race in hiring and admission is racism in practice. There should be no benefits or discrimination to anybody while applying or hiring, but instead, be chosen by their capabilities.

I was hesitant to answer these questions on the discussion board because I was bullied in middle school for stating my opinion that "cancel culture" is bad for the country. In 8th

grade, a teacher forced us to take sides on “cancel culture” and I was repeatedly called racist by other students just because I dared to speak up. The teacher allowed that to continue. I’m afraid this could happen to me and other students in future classes.

(End of Ethan’s speech)

(3. Validity of the assigned article)

Thank you Ethan ...

Talking about “whitening your resume”, I never felt that I whitened myself by using the name “Allen”, or by listing hiking, kayaking, fishing as my hobbies, or by not including my involvement in the Asian communities that’s not related to the job posting. As a minority and immigrant, I came to the US for the American cultures, shouldn’t American culture be a color-blind culture? Why are some people so obsessed about races and trying to see everything in color?

Back to the course, why are these topics such as whiteness, systemic racism and redlining even a part of the economics course? And why are the students required to read those opinion articles and to be graded? Why are the students exposed to only one side of the opinions but not the other? I did some research: The article “**Minorities who whiten job resumes get more interviews**” was published in May 2017 on Harvard Business Review by Dina Gerdeman (<https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/minorities-who-whiten-job-resumes-get-more-interviews> , May 17, 2017, Dina Gerdeman et al). Please note the date, May 2017, that’s when **Students For Fair Admission** started the legal actions toward Harvard for discriminating against Asian applicants.

There was a WSJ article published in May 2015 (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-new-jews-of-harvard-admissions-1432077157> , May 19 2015, Jason Riley) exposing such discrimination: Asian American are rebelling over evidence that are held to a much higher standard.

In 2017, same year as the “resume whitening” article, here is another article by Washington Post: Harvard’s discrimination against Asian Americans must end ([Harvard’s discrimination against Asian Americans must end - The Washington Post](#)).

As all of you may have seen on the news, Asian parents and students are waking up toward the discrimination in the name of diversity. Nearly every study shows that Asian and White applicants are held to much higher standards than other racial groups in the college admission process. But that assigned article wants the students to believe that white people are to be blamed for Asian’s disadvantaged admission, how ironic!!

As minority, many of us 1st or 2nd generation immigrants, we are not asking for any preferential treatment. All we are asking is to be treated fairly in a colorblind setting where everyone is provided with the same opportunity and held to the same standard. Don’t discriminate against any group in the name of diversity.

(4. CRT vs CRT: Culturally Responsive Teaching or Critical Race Theory)

When I emailed the teacher with my concerns of these ideologies being taught in the classroom, she claimed that this is a part of Culturally Responsive Teaching, not Critical Race Theory. Let me provide some definitions. This is what ISBE’s guideline says about Culturally Responsive Teaching

<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Culturally-Responsive-Teaching-Leading-Standards.aspx>): it will help aspiring educators build the skills they need to engage students who may come from different backgrounds and cultures than them, in order to create an environment most conducive to learning.

Based on the definition, the course should have included resources and literature such as influence and effects on finances by different cultures, family structures, immigration status, education levels, etc, if the teacher is following Culturally Responsive Teaching standards. However, I didn't see any mention of those factors. I see "race theory" as the only discussion topics assigned to students.

Let me also give you the definition of CRT, Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory is not a theory, but an ideological methodology (<https://criticalrace.org/what-is-critical-race-theory/>). In education, it's the coordination and normalization of indoctrination of race theory through teaching and assignments. It blames all disparities on racism and attempts to solve all problems using race. Even though the teachers could be unconsciously teaching critical race theory, the damage has been done to the curriculum and to the students who are supposed to learn academics rather than ideology. Let academics be academics.

(5. Assignment Format: Compelled Speech)

I also emailed the teacher asking why those assignments require students to agree with those opinions. This is what the teacher said: the questions do ask for a student's opinion, and YES the students can disagree with the articles. But which of these questions provide students the options to disagree with the claims of racism?

- i) Analyze the role of racial stereotypes in the decisions we make in our everyday life.
- ii) Propose at least 2 policies or solutions to help reduce racial discrimination.
- iii) Explain what redlining & systemic racism are in your own words.
- iv) Analyze how systemic racism has played a role in racial minorities having reduced access to mortgages, housing, and education.
- v) Propose solutions to the legacy of systemic racism, redlining, and inequities in education & wealth.

These types of questions and prompts are very divisive and could easily steer students' minds, requiring the students to treat ideological opinions as facts. This simply reminds me when students in China were often required to answer questions such as "Explain why only Communists can save China", "Why communism is the people's ultimate choice". Don't they sound so similar? Well, compelled speech should never have a place in the classroom.

(6. Cyberbullying via Discussion Board)

I also want to point out that some of these assignments require students to share their answers on a discussion board for others to comment on. Bullying and cyberbullying have been a huge issue for high schools. Do you all remember how Ethan was harassed by peers when he protested the mask mandate? If D86's true vision is to create a safe, inclusive and friendly environment, why do the teachers require students to share their opinions on these divisive issues with others, and for others to comment? How many more victims of cyberbullying are you

expecting? I'm not saying that Ethan's answer is all correct, but he's entitled to his opinion and he's entitled to the protection by the teacher and school not to be harmed by sharing his opinion.

Unfortunately, Ethan's worry came true when someone commented on his answers. The person said: *It seems as though you went into this assignment with your answer already planned out; you created a straw man argument yourself, if you are going to defend **bigotry** at least use legitimate reasoning.*

What is this course format about? Public humiliation? I'm not going to name that student. But why is the course empowering bullying and name calling? Why is the course putting students such as Ethan into harms way unless they silence themselves? And who get to define "legitimate reasons"?

(Closing)

We are living in a world full of labels. I personally have many labels, minority, immigrant, legal immigrant, engaged parent, data scientist, teacher. But I'm still puzzled by some labels that have been flying around on social media and by some young people, "Haters", "Racists". Why are people labeled "haters" just for disagreeing with political agenda and narratives? Why are traditional beliefs and conservative values called "hatred"? Why is it "racism" when we are calling for a colorblind admission system? Why is it "bigotry" when we simply want everyone to be treated equally, using the equal standards?

We need a lot of courage to speak here today. In the end, all we want is a more friendly, inclusive, safe environment. Teach the kids how to think, not what to think. Coursework should stick with curriculum, not political agendas. Allow me repeat what I have always believe about DEI: Diversity of opinions, Equal opportunity and equal standards for every student, Inclusion of the different minds.