

HIST 585-4: Special Topics in History:

Topic: Passings in American History

Instructor	Day(s)	Time(s)	Maximum Enrollment
Prude	TH	4:30 – 7:30 pm	12

Semester Description:

What does it mean for people to transform themselves in a society devoted to both self-improvement and authenticity, reinvention and sincerity? When is acquiring a new identity permissible and commendable? When is it dangerous and subversive? Who decides? Have some shiftings--perhaps social and economic?--been taken as more legitimate than others--say across racial, ethnic, and gender thresholds? Why?

Under the broad lag of “passing,” this seminar will explore such questions as they unfolded in America from colonial times to roughly the present. Materials for the course will include primary and secondary sources, fiction and nonfiction, texts, images, and film.

Required Textbooks, Articles, and Resources:

1. Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*. Vintage. 1990.
ISBN: 0-679-72613-6.
2. Herman Melville, *The Confidence Man*.
ISBN: 1-5732-038-X.
3. Karen Haltunnen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women*
ISBN: 0-300--3788-0.
4. H. Alger, Jr., *Ragged Dick*.
ISBN: 01403-90332.
5. D. Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*.
ISBN: 0-86091-55006.
6. Cahan, Yekl and the Imported Bridegroom and Other Stories of Yiddish New York.
ISBN: 0-486-221427-9.
7. Elizabeth Phelps, *Silent Partner*.
ISBN: 0-935312-08-0.
8. Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure*.
ISBN: 0-8139-1289-X.

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9. D. Richardson, *The Long Day: The Story of a New York Working Girl*.
ISBN: 0-8139-1289-X.
10. Nella Larsen, *Passing*.
ISBN: 0-14-118025-0.
11. B. Schulberg, *What Makes Sammy Run?*
ISBN: 0-679-73422-8.
12. B. Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*.
ISBN: 0-8050-6389-7.
13. Martha A. Sandweiss, *Passing Strange: A Gilded Age Tale of Love and Deception Across the Color Line*.
ISBN: 978-0-14-311686-8

Grading:

Class participation and two roughly ten page written assignments