FRCL 10101:12
FIRST YEAR COLLOQUIUM: PASSING AND AMERICAN IDENTITY
Fall 2015 (201510) 12 week
CRN 1503
Prerequisites: None
INSTRUCTOR: Jeffrey Swenson
4 Credit Hours

Course Description: America has often been called the land of self-making, in the sense that the American dream presupposes, as James Truslow Adams argues, “a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of what they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.” If Americans are supposed to be recognized by “what they are,” however, they also seem to be fixed by a variety of factors including race, class, gender, sexual identity, and religion. What happens when Americans try to shift their identity beyond where it is supposedly fixed? What happens when we try to pass for some other identity? Is there such a thing as an authentic identity? Through a reading of autobiography, fiction, and film, we will examine the depiction of passing in popular American culture, and look at how American identities are formed and discarded, hidden and shed. Students will be required to complete and be prepared to thoughtfully discuss all course readings, to participate in curricular and co-curricular activities at the college, to give at least one oral presentation, and to write two three-to-five page essays and one five-page essay with research.