

Engl 360
Spring 2016

FINAL TAKE-HOME ESSAY

For your final essay prompt, I thought about handing you a blank sheet of paper with just one four-word question on it: What Kind of Black?

Instead, I'll offer you something *nearly* as open-ended. Karim Amir, the young protagonist (and first-person narrator) of Hanif Kureishi's first novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, opens his story with the ironic proclamation that he is "an Englishman born and bred, almost." You could argue that it has been the ambition of *all* the people whose work we've studied since midterm to remove that qualifier *almost*. So if the guiding question of the latter half of the twentieth century was What Kind of Black—or What Kind of *Briton*—people of color in the U.K. would be allowed to be, then what has been the answer? What kinds of qualifiers were removed—or added—by the start of the new millennium?

Build your answer primarily around a discussion three literary (or filmic) texts, one each from the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. (Let's say that *White Teeth*, published in 2000, belongs to the 1990s.) Refer to additional texts if you wish. Your essay should also be substantively informed by—or at least make meaningful reference to—one of the critical or theoretical essays we've read since midterm.

In evaluating your work, I'll be looking for the sorts of things one expects to find in any competent essay: a smart framing of the topic; a compelling thesis; a coherent, well-structured argument; cogent and judicious citation of evidence; at least some degree of stylistic elegance. But this is also an occasion for you to demonstrate your understanding of the issues involved in the course. So enjoy the opportunity for retrospective reflection and independent intellectual exploration. Think hard, have fun, do good work. Go back through each of the works. Review the discussion boards and your own notes. Do some exploratory writing. Come and bounce some ideas off of me. And don't drag your feet, eh?