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Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America

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Suddenly whiteness studies are everywhere. The rapid proliferation of a genre that appears to have come out of nowhere is little short of astonishing: a recent keyword search on my university library's electronic

catalog yielded fifty-one books containing the word “whiteness” in their titles, almost all published in the past decade and most published in the past five years.¹ All around us, American historians and scholars in related disciplines from sociology and law to cultural studies and education are writing books with titles such as *The White Scourge*, *How the Irish Became White*, *Making Whiteness*, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, and *Critical White Studies*.² Although the term “whiteness studies” might at first glance suggest works that *promote* white identity or constitute part of a racist backlash against multiculturalism and “political correctness,” virtually all the whiteness studies authors seek...

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