

Black Politics, Fall '21, PSCI 213/AAAS 296

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This course is about the politics of racial subordination and emancipation in the United States. We begin by thinking about different explanations of the rise, dynamics, and persistence of racial domination in the United States and of the cultural and political challenges to it. We will pay special attention to the Great Migration, the subsequent emergence of blacks as an important constituency of the Democratic Party, the Civil Rights Movement, and the role of race in structuring current party divisions. Next, we will examine the politics of black communities. Topics include the legacy of demobilization of the Civil Rights Movement and the channeling of political activity into electoral institutions; the politics of urban regimes; the challenge to political solidarity posed by increasing social economic and social inequality within the black community; the Black Lives Matter movement; and debates about the effectiveness of identity-based, class based, and coalitional strategies of political mobilization. In conclusion we will reflect upon the differences between the nature and dynamics of racial subordination today compared with the past and what, if any, prospects for change there are.

The following books are required:

George Fredrickson, *White Supremacy*, 0195030427
Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances*, 0691004641
Philip Klinkner, *The Unsteady March*, 0226443418
William Julius Wilson, *More than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City*, 039306705X

In addition to these, there are readings which will be posted on Blackboard.

Grades are based on:

Two three-page papers, 10% for the first, and 20% for the second
Midterm, 10%
Final, 30%
Perusall, 20% (I'll explain what this is in class)
Participation, 10%

I expect students to come to class, to have read the material assigned for that day, and to be ready to discuss it. Most of what you will get out of this, or any course, depends on this. Late papers will be penalized a half letter grade a day.

Some points about your papers:

1. **Establish a focus.** A good paper has a thesis, a central idea or claim that it is making, and it presents an argument supporting that thesis. You should be able to make an outline of your paper, which will at the same time be the skeleton of the argument you are making. It is often helpful to write out the outline – in sentence form, not simply as a list of topics – before writing the paper or, at least, the final draft. A good way to think about your paper is to ask yourself, “What do I want my readers to believe after they have read my paper? What reasons can I offer them to think that?” If you can answer these questions succinctly, you’re off to an excellent start.
2. **Title.** The title should express the main idea or focus of your paper, preparing your reader to see immediately what you’re going to say, and why it’s interesting.
3. **Structure and organization.** The paper should have a clear structure, with an introduction presenting the central question or problem you are addressing, a body that sets out a logical development of the reasons and evidence you are offering, and a conclusion that ties the paper together. In the longer paper it is often useful to provide section headings. The introduction should generally state your main thesis, and provide an overview of the structure of the argument, to make it easier for your reader to follow it.

4. Style. I expect your papers to be well-written. Your sentences should be simple and clear. You should avoid obvious errors; use spell check. You should write more than one draft. And you should proofread them before handing them in.

5. Guides. There are a number of excellent guides for good writing. Strunk and White *The Elements of Style* is a classic, especially for grammar and word usage; it also offers a useful set of “principles of composition.” I especially recommend Joseph Williams, *Style: Toward Grace and Clarity*. His work is particularly helpful in offering examples of how awkward passages can be rewritten, using rules or principles that are fairly concrete and address specific issues such as clarity, cohesion, emphasis, etc. (these are all chapter headings in his book). Anthony Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments*, offers a helpful discussion of how to develop (and express) an argument in a tight, logical way.

6. Grading. “B” papers will fulfill the foregoing criteria adequately. “A” papers will do more. They will not only be clearly and forcefully written, but they will show evidence of deep engagement with the issues. They will argue something interesting, and thought-provoking.

Aug 25

Introduction

Go to the following website: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/>

Register and fill out demographic information

read the preliminary information, click on “I wish to proceed”

click on “Race IAT” and take the test

I will not ask you to tell anyone how you did on this test. We will talk about it in class, though.

Foundations of Racial Classification

Explaining existence and persistence of ethnic, racial, and national classification. Primordialists, Social Psychologists, and Constructivists

Aug 27

“The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior,” Henri Taifel and John Turner, *Psychology of intergroup relations*, 1986

“Ethnicity as Cognition,” *Theory and Society*, 2004, #1, Rogers Brubaker

Sep 1

Loury, *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality*, chs. 2-3

Variables influencing ethnic identity formation: political entrepreneurs and institutions

Sep 3

Robert Bates, “Ethnic Competition and Modernization in Contemporary Africa,” *Comparative Political Studies*, January 1974, pp.457-483

David Laitin, “Hegemony and Religious conflict: British Imperial Control and Political Cleavages in Yorubaland,” Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, eds. *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 285-316

Historical Roots – Frederickson offers a largely materialist explanation for the rise and persistence of racial thinking and racial oppression in the U.S. Klinkner points to political-strategic variables to account for the extent to which African Americans have been able to challenge oppressive political and economic practices in American society. What, if anything, is missing from these accounts?

Sep 8

Desmond King and Rogers Smith, “Racial orders in American political development,” in reprinted in *Race and American Political Development*, eds. Lowndes, et al.

Sep 10

George Frederickson, *White Supremacy*, introduction and chs. 1-2

Sep 15

White Supremacy, ch. 4; Klinkner and Smith, *Unsteady March*, chs. 1-2

Sep 17

Unsteady March, chs. 3-4

Sep 22	<i>White Supremacy</i> , ch. 5
Sep 24	<i>White Supremacy</i> , ch. 6
Sep 29	Klinkner and Smith, chs. 5-6
Oct 1	Klinkner and Smith, chs. 7-8
Oct 6	Klinkner and Smith, ch. 9 and conclusion

Economic and social context – bifurcation of the African American community

Poverty and labor markets— although the Civil Rights Act of ‘64 banned discrimination in labor markets and education, African-Americans still lag behind whites in income and wealth. Part of the African American community now lives in areas of concentrated poverty which are associated with a variety of social problems, such as crime, drug abuse, and low educational attainment. Another, larger, part of the African American community has risen into the middle class and some have risen beyond that. Some fear that the economic and social polarization of the African American community threatens its political unity.

William Julius Wilson, *More than just race...*, chs. 1-2

Oct 8	Midterm
Oct 13	<i>More than just race</i> , chs. 3-5
Oct 15	Michael Dawson, chs. 1-2, <i>Behind the Mule</i> , (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 1994.
Oct 20	Henry Louis Gates, “Two Nations...Both Black,” <i>Forbes</i> , September 14, 1992. Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on ‘My Brother’s Keeper’ Initiative.” White House, Washington, DC, February 27, 2014. www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/27/remarks-president-my-brothers-keeper-initiative . Adolph Reed, Jr., “ The "Underclass" as Myth and Symbol: The Poverty of Discourse about Poverty,” pp. 179-96, from <i>Stirrings in the Jug</i> .
Oct 22	Frederick Harris, “Respectability as Public Philosophy,” in <i>The Price of the Ticket</i> .

Public opinion – In order to know what is politically possible, it is important to understand the constraints posed by public opinion, both White and Black

Oct 27	Meslissa Harris-Lacewell, <i>Barbershops, Bibles and BET</i> , pp. 1-34. Cathy Cohen and Jamilla Celestine-Michener, “‘Minority Report’: Kanye West, Barack Obama, and Political Alienation,” in <i>Democracy Remixed</i> , pp. 108-155
Oct 29	Lawrence Bobo, James R. Kluegel, and Ryan Smith, “Laissez-Faire Racism: The Crystallization of a Kinder, Gentler Anti-Black Ideology,” in eds. Martin and Tuch, <i>Racial Attitudes in the 1990s: Continuity and Change</i> , (New York: Praeger), 1997.

- Nov 3 Pp. 100-102 of Bobo, and Kluegel, "Status, Ideology, and Dimensions of Whites' Racial Beliefs and Attitudes: Progress and Stagnation," in *Racial Attitudes in the 1990s*.
- Sniderman, Crosby, and Howell, "The Politics of Race," ch. 8 in eds. Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo, *Racialized Politics: The Debate about Racism in America*
- Michèle Lamont, "Euphemized Racism: Moral qua Racial Boundaries," ch. 2, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*.

Political System — to what extent has the political system helped or hindered the cause of African American equality? To what extent are current political cleavages and conflicts based on racial divisions? To what extent does the political system exacerbate or depress racial thinking? More recent origins of current political conflicts over race.

- Nov 5 Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances*, chs. 1-3
- Nov 10 Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances*, chs. 4, 6-7

Leaders and Representation – The study of representation and leadership in the African American community focuses on a couple of questions. To what extent are leaders coopted by white economic and political elites? To what extent do the imperatives of white public opinion, the economic system, or some other structure leave them little choice in what they do? To what extent are their interests coincident with those they claim to represent? And to what extent is there a single African American community with a fixed set of interests to represent?

- Nov 12 Lani Guinier, *The Tyranny of the Majority*, pp. 41-118
- Nov 17 Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances*, pp. 87-119
- Nov 19 Adolf Reed, Jr., "The Black Urban Regime: Structural Origins & Constraints," pp. 79-119, *Stirrings in the Jug*.
- Katherine Tate, "Political incorporation and critical transformations of Black public opinion," *Du Bois Review*, 1:2 (2004) 345-59.
- Nov 24 Matt Bai, "Is Obama the End of Black Politics?" *New York Times*, August 6, 2008.
- Frederick Harris, "Wink, Nod, Vote," in *The Price of the Ticket*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 2012.

Nov 24-28 Thanksgiving break!

The Future

- Dec 1 Adolf Reed, "Sources of Demobilization in the New Black Political Regime: Incorporation, Ideological Capitulation, and Radical Failure in the Post-Segregation Era," in *Stirrings in the Jug*
- Dec 3 Herbert Gans, "The Possibility of a New Racial Hierarchy in the Twenty-First-

Century United States,” in eds. David Grusky and Szonja Szelényi, 2nd ed., *The Inequality Reader*, (New York: Routledge), 2011.

Dec 8

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, chs. 6-7, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books), 2016.

Orlando Patterson, “The Moral and Intellectual Crisis of Liberal Afro-American Advocacy,” in *Ordeal of Integration*, (New York: Basic Books), 1998.