Course Description

This is an undergraduate class on the role of race and ethnicity in American politics. There are no official prerequisites, but a basic understanding of American political institutions (something like what you might get in PSC 105: Introduction to American Politics or AP U.S. Government/A.P. U.S. History) will be helpful, as will a willingness to engage with complex reading material. The focus will be on political science theories and research about race and politics, though we will also draw on work from sociology, history, and economics. We will ask big social science questions about race in America: what is race? How could we possibly measure it, and what makes race politically relevant? What does it mean to say that a policy is discriminatory, and how have social scientists and courts tried to measure racial discrimination? What do Americans think about race in the 21st century, and how do these opinions shape their political behavior?

Class Structure

This class is designed to balance lecture and discussion. I will open most of our meetings with 20-30 minutes of lecture, after which I will break you up into small caucus groups¹ to discuss the day’s material and report on what you find. I’ll end each lecture with discussion questions to keep in mind as you read for the next class.

Grading Policy

Final grades for the course will be based on:

Class participation (10%): In-class discussion is an important part of this course, and I expect students to contribute regularly to the conversation. Participation can take a variety

¹It’s a political science class after all.
of forms, including (but not limited to): asking questions during lecture, participating actively in small group discussion, or serving as the presenter for your caucus group at the end of class. Quality is more important than quantity.

**Reading quizzes (10%)**: It is important that you come to class having read all the assigned text carefully, so that you are prepared to discuss it. To incentivize reading, I will give short, unannounced (closed-book) quizzes at the start of some class sessions. The quizzes are designed to be very easy for those who have done the reading but difficult for those who have not. There are no makeup quizzes for late arrivals or absences. In calculating final grades, I will drop the single lowest quiz score for every member of the class.

**Midterm (20%)**: We will have an in-class midterm on **Thursday, March 3**.

**Papers (60%)**: Over the course of the semester, you will write two short (3-5 page) essays that will allow you to engage more deeply with the class readings, and to apply them to current events or historical examples. Each will be worth 30% of the class grade. Submit your papers online via Blackboard before class begins on the marked due date for each paper. **Note: If you are enrolled in 228W one of your two papers must be 10 pages. You may choose the prompt you would like to write in extended format.**

**Submitting Assignments**

**Extensions**

**The Late Bank**

Each of you will have a 48-hour bank of extension time to apply to assignment deadlines in any way you choose. This means that you may, **without penalty**: turn in one assignment 48 hours late, turn in two assignments - each 24 hours late, etc. You do not need to notify me in advance if they plan to use this policy; I will apply this automatically using the timestamps on assignments submitted through the course website. This grace period cannot be applied to quizzes or exams.

**Additional Extensions**

The late bank is designed to help you manage your schedule by giving everyone some flexibility over deadlines. You may not submit late assignments if you have already used your 48 hours of late time unless one of the following applies: (1) a death in the family (2) an unforeseen medical emergency (3) a public health risk. If any of these circumstances apply, please inform the College Center for Advising Services and request that they reach out to me. You may also contact me directly to discuss the length of your absence and arrange a modified schedule for assignments. I do not require you to provide notes from health care providers or to share other personal information.

If you do not have an approved extension, assignments turned in after the 48-hour grace period will not be evaluated. These will count as zeroes toward the final grade.
Academic Honesty

I encourage all students to discuss readings and assignments with classmates. However, you must do all of your written work independently; you may not collaboratively write papers. All written work submitted for this course requires citations and a “Works Cited” or “Bibliography” section. You may want to consult the Chicago Manual of Style or guidelines for other commonly used citation formats before submitting assignments. All course assignments and in-class activities must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester’s Academic Honesty Policy (https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/). Please note that the university requires me to report possible violations of this policy to the Board on Academic Honesty.

Resources

If there are accommodations of any sort that would make the class work better for you, please come talk to me about it.

If you think you may need to seek accommodations due to a disability, the Office of Disability Resources (http://www.rochester.edu/college/disability/index.html) can help you figure out your options. Speaking with faculty about disability-related accommodations is strictly confidential; I encourage you to come see me with concerns or requests.

Other resources that may prove helpful during your time at the University of Rochester:

- CARE (https://www.rochester.edu/care/about.html).
- The Writing & Speaking Center (http://writing.rochester.edu/index.html)
- Tutoring (http://www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/undergraduate/tutoring.html)
- University Counseling Center (http://www.rochester.edu/uhs/ucc/)
- David T. Kearns Center (https://www.rochester.edu/college/kearnsceneter/)
- Office of Minority Student Affairs (http://www.rochester.edu/College/OMSA/)

Readings

Most readings for this course will be made available in electronic form on the course website. We will be reading excerpts from the following books in class; these are available through the University’s library and can be purchased online via Amazon.com and other online retailers.


Class Schedule and Readings

This syllabus is tentative and subject to change. I will give students opportunities to provide feedback throughout the course; if there is a topic students want to explore further we can devote more of the syllabus to that topic. Readings marked with a * are optional.

I. What is Race?

Thursday, 01/13  Introduction

Tuesday, 01/18  What is Race? Where do Modern Ideas about Race Come From?
- Graves Jr., Joseph L. “What We Know and What We Don’t Know: Human Genetic Variation and the Social Construction of Race.” Social Science Research Council. [Link](#)

Thursday, 01/20  Measuring Race
- American Sociological Association: The Importance of Collecting Data and Doing Social Scientific Research on Race [Link](#)
- Pew Research Center: Social & Demographic Trends: Multiracial in America [Link](#)

Tuesday, 01/25  Studying Race

II. Race and the Formation of American Political Institutions
Thursday, 01/27  Slavery and its Legacy I


Tuesday, 02/01  Slavery and its Legacy II


Thursday, 02/03  Lynching and Political Violence in the US

- Wells-Barnett, Ida B. *The Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States*. 1895. (See Section 8: Miss Willard’s Attitude) [Linked here](#)


Tuesday, 02/08  Immigration History and Policy


- *Swidey, Neil. “Trump’s Anti-Immigration Playbook was Written 100 Years Ago. In Boston.”* *The Boston Globe*. [Linked here](#)

Thursday, 02/10  Citizenship and Belonging


Tuesday, 02/15  Japanese Internment


Thursday, 02/17  Changing Tides? The New Deal and Civil Rights Eras


III. Representation

Tuesday, 02/22  Descriptive Representation: Theory and Practice

Paper 1 Distributed


Thursday, 02/24  Majority-Minority Districts and Redistricting


Tuesday, 03/01  Voting Rights and Electoral Districting


  - https://www.scotusblog.com/2013/06/how-big-is-shelby-county/
  - Amicus brief from historians and social scientists

Thursday, 03/03  Midterm Exam (In Class)

Tuesday, 03/08  Have a Great Spring Break!

Thursday, 03/10  Have a Great Spring Break!

IV. Political Attitudes

Tuesday, 03/15  Measuring Racial Attitudes

- Take an Implicit Association Test (IAT) on the Project Implicit Site Linked here


Thursday, 03/17  Linking Attitudes to Outcomes

**Paper 1 Due before Class Begins**


Tuesday, 03/22  Majority Identity and the Threat Hypothesis


Thursday, 03/24  Campaign Messages, Media, and Policy Views


Tuesday, 03/29  Linked Fate, Conflict, and Competition


Thursday, 03/31  Minority Political Attitudes and Partisan Alignments


Tuesday, 04/05  Mobilization, Participation, and Empowerment


Thursday, 04/07  Protest


V. Discrimination and Bias
Tuesday, 04/12  Measuring Discrimination


Thursday, 04/14  Policing I


Tuesday, 04/19  Policing II


Thursday, 04/21  The Carceral State: Causes and Consequences


Tuesday, 04/26  Implicit Bias in Politics

Paper 2 Due before Class Begins


