

## Black Politics, Fall '23, PSCI 213/AAAS 296

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Office hours: M, 9:30-10:30 and 4:30-5:30; W, 1-2:00  
By appointment, in person and zoom

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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.

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%

### Papers:

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.

## Readings:

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. I will supply all of the readings for this class. They will all be posted on a social e-reader called Perusall. There is a link to Perusall at the bottom of the course homepage on Blackboard. Once in Perusall, you will see a list of the reading assignments for the course. Most of the work for this course will involve reading the assignments, reflecting upon them, and discussing them with your classmates (on Perusall and in class). I’ve given more details about how Perusall works below.

## How Perusall Works

I have not placed any book orders with the bookstore. I will be supplying the books for this course (with a few exceptions – in some courses, there will be one or two books you need to buy) through an online reading software package called “Perusall.” All of the reading assignments for the semester must be completed through this online software package, which you can access by clicking on the Perusall link on the bottom of the course’s Blackboard homepage.

**Reasons I am doing this:** *Perusall* helps you master readings faster, understand the material better, and get more out of the class. To achieve this goal, you will be collaboratively annotating the readings with others in the class. The help you’ll get and provide your classmates (even if you don’t know anyone personally) will get you past confusions quickly and will make the process more fun. While you read, you’ll receive rapid answers to your questions, help others resolve their questions (which also helps you learn), and advise me, the instructor, how to make class time most productive. You can start a new annotation thread in *Perusall* by highlighting text, asking a question, or posting a comment; you can also add a reply or comment to an existing thread. Each thread is like a chat with one or more members of your class, and it happens in real time. Your **goals** in annotating each reading assignment are 1. to stimulate discussion by posting good questions or comments, 2. to help others by answering their questions, and 3. to identify and evaluate the main claims in the piece.

**Rubric:** Research shows that by annotating thoughtfully, you’ll learn more and get better grades, so here’s what “annotating thoughtfully” means: *Effective annotations deeply engage points/arguments in the readings, stimulate discussion, offer informative questions or comments, and help others by addressing their questions or confusions.* To help you connect with classmates, you can “mention” a classmate in a comment or question to have them notified by email (they’ll also see a notification immediately if online), and you’ll also be notified when your classmates respond to your questions. For each assignment I will evaluate the annotations you submit on time (see below). Based on the overall body of your annotations, you will receive a score for each assignment as follows

10 = demonstrates **exceptionally thoughtful and thorough reading of the entire** assignment; student has engaged with others, asked questions others want answered, answers questions, and made important insights.

7-9 = **demonstrates thoughtful and thorough reading of the entire assignment**; occasionally engages with others, asks questions, and so forth. Some comments state the obvious or are the equivalent of saying “amen” or just free associating, as when someone says, “based off of what he said, I think” and then goes on to talk about something only tangentially related to the question or issue at hand.

4-6 = demonstrates superficial reading of the entire assignment Or thoughtful reading of only part of the assignment; comments state the obvious, are trivial, often irrelevant.

<4 = demonstrates superficial reading of only part of the assignment; comments state the obvious, are

trivial, often irrelevant.

### **How many annotations do I need to enter?**

When I look at your annotations I want them to reflect the effort you put in your study of the text. It is unlikely that that effort will be reflected by just a few thoughtful annotations per assignment. At the other extreme, 30 per assignment is too many, unless a number of them are superficial or short comments or questions (which is fine, because it is OK to engage in chat with your peers). Somewhere in between these two extremes is about right and, thoughtful questions or comments that stimulate discussion or thoughtful and helpful answers to other students' questions will earn you a higher score for the assignment. Note, also, that to lay the foundation for understanding the in-class activities, you must familiarize yourself with each assignment *in its entirety*. Failing to read and annotate across the entire assignment will result in a lower score.

### **What does “on time” mean?**

The work done in class depends on you having done the reading in advance, so it is necessary to complete the reading and post your annotations before the deadline to receive credit. I allow a late annotation period of two days during which the credit for your annotations linearly decreases from 100% at the deadline to 0% at the end of the late annotation period. Similarly, to encourage you to talk to each other, there is a reply window after each deadline during which you can continue to reply, for full credit, to questions posted by others. However, the number of additional points you can earn after the deadline is capped at the credit you receive for annotations made on that assignment before the deadline.

Aug 30

Introduction

### **Foundations of Racial Classification**

Explaining existence and persistence of ethnic, racial, and other sorts of classification. Instrumentalists, Social Psychologists, and Constructivists. Variables influencing ethnic identity formation: political entrepreneurs and institutions.

Sep 1

Orlando Patterson, "Context and Choice in Ethnic Allegiance: A Theoretical Framework and Caribbean Case Study," in eds. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1975.

Herbert Blumer, "Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position," *Pacific Sociological Review*, vol. 1, #1, Spring 1958.

Sep 6

Muzafer Sherif, "Experiments in Group Conflict," *Scientific American*, Nov. 1956.

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

Sep 8

Winthrop Jordan, ch. 2, *White Over Black*

Edmund Morgan, chs. 15-7, *American Slavery, American Freedom*

**Historical Roots** – In order to understand the very existence of the subject of Black politics, one needs to understand the origins of the formation of groups of people marked as White and Black. Moreover, some sense of the different forms of racial subjugation in different historical periods is necessary in order to think about the various factors that cause change in the status of African Americans.

Sep 13

Barbara Fields and Karen Fields, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America," in *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life*, (New York: Verso), 2022.

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

Sep 15

Philip Klinkner and Rogers Smith, *The Unsteady March*, intro and chapters 3-4

Sep 20

Klinkner and Smith, chs. 5-6

Sep 22

Klinkner and Smith, chs. 7-8

Sep 27

Manning Marable, ch. 5-7, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*

Sep 29

Klinkner and Smith, ch. 9 and conclusion

**Public opinion** – What is the nature of public opinion? Where do people get their ideas (if they have them) about politics?

Oct 4

Philip Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," 1964.

Oct 6 Melissa Harris-Lacewell, *Barbershops, Bibles and BET*, chs. 1-2 and 4.

Oct 11 Harris-Lacewell, chs. 5-7.

**Political System** — In this section, we examine various parts of the political system. We begin with political parties, Congress, and the presidency, move on to social movements, and finish with city governments. The central aim of the section is to think about the obstacles (many) and opportunities (if any) in the political system for Black advance. We will also think about the issue of whether African American elites have been coopted by incorporation into the political system.

**Political Parties** – to what extent can Blacks advance their interests through the party and electoral systems of the U.S.?

Oct 13 Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances*, chs. 1-3

Oct 16-17 **Fall break!**

Oct 18 Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances*, chs. 4-7

**Congress** – To what extent do Black lawmakers represent and secure the interests of their constituents in Congress? To what extent do they instead shape the interests of their constituents?

Oct 20 Katherine Tate, chs. 1-4, *Concordance: Black Lawmaking in Congress...*

Oct 25 Tate, *Concordance*, finish

**Presidency** – Ordinary citizens, activists, and political commentators often talk as if the president can change public views, spur Congress into action and, generally, effect change. The reading explores whether this is in fact true.

Oct 27 Frederick Harris, “Wink, Nod, Vote,” in *The Price of the Ticket*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 2012.

Jack Balkin, “Obama hoped to be a transformational president. He failed.” *Vox*, Jan. 19, 2017.

Julia Azari, “Trump’s presidency signals the end of the Reagan era,” *Vox*, December 1, 2016.

Nov 1 Jacobs and King, “Varieties of Obamaism: Structure, Agency, and the Obama Presidency,” in *Perspectives on Politics*, V.8:3, September 2010.

Haines, Mendelberg, and Butler, “‘I’m Not the President of Black America’: Rhetorical versus Policy Representation,” v. 17:4, December 2019.

**Social Movements** – Why is it that some groups of people with common interests (emancipation, for example) actually organize and pursue them while other groups of people with common interests do not? What caused the rise and decline of the Civil Rights movement? What are the obstacles to organizing and effectiveness of #BLM?

Nov 3 Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-*

- 1970, chs. 1-4
- Nov 8 McAdam, chs. 5-6
- Nov 10 McAdam, chs. 7-9
- Nov 15 Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, chs. 6-7, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books), 2016.
- Adolf Reed, "How Racial Disparity Does Not Help Make Sense of Patterns of Police Violence," Non-site.org, September 16, 2016, <https://nonsite.org/how-racial-disparity-does-not-help-make-sense-of-patterns-of-police-violence/>
- City Government** – Constraints on city government. Since the 60s Black politicians have gained political power in many of the nation's cities. What, if any, good does this do for Black people (and which Black people)? What sorts of policies do they pursue and why?
- Nov 17 Chs. 6-7, Dreier et al., *Place Matters*
- Nov 22 Mary Patillo, intro, chs. 1-2, *Black on the Block*
- Thanksgiving break!**
- Nov 29 chs. 3-5, *Black on the Block*
- Dec 1 chs. 6-7, and conclusion, *Black on the Block*
- Dec 6 Adolf Reed, Jr., "The Black Urban Regime: Structural Origins & Constraints," pp. 79-119, *Stirrings in the Jug*.
- Dec 8 Andra Gillespie, Part 1, *The New Black Politician: Cory Booker, Newark, and Post-Racial America*
- Dec 13 Part 2, *The New Black Politician*