

# Race & Ethnicity Syllabus

SOCI 270 – Fall 2025

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*Prejudice is not intrinsic to a particular skin color or racial type, and, indeed, many immigrants never experienced it in their native lands. It is by virtue of moving into a new social environment, marked by different values and prejudices, that physical features become redefined as a handicap.*

- Portes and Zhou (1993: 83)

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**Professor:** Dr. Erick Axxe (he/they)

**Email:** axxe@hendrix.edu

**Office:** Mills 220

**Office phone:** 501.450.1445

**Class time:** MWF 9:10-10AM

**Class location:** Mills 102

**Student hours:** TR 8:30-9:30 am, W 1-2pm, or by appointment

## Course Description

This course examines race and ethnicity through a sociological lens. Sociology offers a unique perspective on these topics because it views race and ethnicity as *socially constructed and maintained*. These constructs stratify society and serve as cornerstones of individual identity, shaping our daily interactions. The course explores the origins of racial and ethnic relations, their historical trends, and their manifestations in modern society. Through readings, discussions, and other assignments, we aim to answer several key questions: Why do race and ethnicity remain salient in the United States? How are racial and ethnic categories defined, and how have their definitions changed? What patterns exist in racial systems, and how can these patterns illuminate contemporary trends?

We are investigating these questions at a pivotal moment in U.S. racial history. As the course will demonstrate, the U.S. racial system has periodically undergone significant shifts. Our society today may be experiencing such a transformation. In these moments, proponents of a racially stratified society often become more vocal in their defense, while opponents find new opportunities to advocate for meaningful social change.

This course meets in person three times a week (see above for specific details). Throughout the semester, students are expected to maintain journal entries, participate in daily polls and occasional quizzes, and complete a cumulative exam. Course materials will be available via Microsoft Teams; the materials will be organized within the “Classwork” channel within Teams.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will:

- Differentiate between race, ethnicity, and nation, and explore how various definitions of these concepts shape society, particularly in fields such as science, philanthropy, medicine, education, and the criminal justice system.
- Analyze patterns within racial systems and apply social theory and historical evidence to understand contemporary racial and ethnic trends.
- Identify one's own position within the United States' racial and ethnic system.

## Classroom Etiquette

Please do your best to support each other and the instructor by giving your full attention and participation during class. Avoid engaging in distracting behaviors. You are strongly encouraged to ask questions and participate in discussions. For productive discussions, it is essential that both students and the professor come prepared by having completed the assigned readings. Differing points of view should be treated with respect. Disagreements are expected, and expressing different viewpoints is encouraged, provided it is done respectfully. Hostile or derogatory comments or behaviors will not be tolerated. **Technology (phone, laptop, tablet, etc.) is not permitted during class time unless otherwise stated.**

## Required Materials and/or Technologies

- Golash-Boza, Tanya Maria. 2018. *Race and Racisms: A Critical Approach*. 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
  - Do not purchase the “brief edition”
  - Please purchase the edition that you can afford—only the statistics are outdated in older editions.
  - Contact Dr. Axxe if you have trouble accessing the textbook.
- All other materials (readings, videos, podcasts, etc.) will be posted on Teams.

[Course Schedule](#) [click link to see, subject to change]

# Grading and Faculty Response

## How Your Grade is Calculated

Assignment Category	Weight
Class participation	10%
Quizzes	40%
Journal responses	40%
Final exam	10%
** Three unexcused absences will lead to a 10 percentage-point reduction in your final grade. After three, each unexcused absence will reduce your final grade by 1 percentage-point.	

## Descriptions of Major Course Assignments

**Class participation:** On days when a reading is assigned, students will complete a short poll (1-2 questions) on major topics covered in the reading. These questions are designed to prepare students for the quizzes. Students are excused from daily participation grades if they follow the appropriate absence procedures. (See below.)

**Quizzes:** There will be four quizzes throughout the semester, covering main concepts from the course and readings. Quizzes will be completed in class using scantrons, which I will provide. Please refer to the course schedule for quiz dates.

**Journal:** You will respond to journal prompts on Teams. Journal responses will be graded on whether they address the week's prompt, engage with the readings, and use appropriate grammar (this includes citation formatting). Responses are (typically) due Fridays at 9 am (before class).

**Final Exam:** A final exam will be administered on *December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 8:30 am*. The exam is cumulative, and questions will revolve around major concepts in the course (as opposed to specific details from select readings).

**Late Assignments:** Please refer to Teams for due dates. Due dates are set to help you stay on pace and to allow timely feedback that will help you complete subsequent assignments. Unexcused, late assignments will receive a maximum of 85% of the original grade. Assignments will not be accepted a week after the original deadline.

**Instructor Feedback and Response Time:**

- **Preferred contact method:** If you have a question, please contact me first through our course's [discussion board Q & A on Teams](#). If your question is specific to you, please email my Hendrix email address (axxe@hendrix.edu). I will reply to emails within 48 hours on days when class is in session at the university.
- **Class announcements:** I will send all important class-wide messages through the [General](#) tab on Teams.
- **Journal responses:** I will check journal responses once per week. Depending on the information I request, I will either incorporate your responses into that week's lecture or read through them to check for comprehension of the material.
- **Grading and feedback:** For assignments submitted before the due date, you can expect feedback and grades within **seven days**. Assignments submitted after the due date may have reduced feedback, and grades may take longer to be posted.

**Grading Scale**

89.5–100: A

79.5–89.49: B

69.5–79.49: C

59.5–69.49: D

Below 59.49: F

**Why this grading structure?**

The grading breakdown is designed to reflect the different kinds of learning we do in this course. Quizzes and journal responses make up the bulk of your grade because they encourage you to keep up with the readings and practice applying key concepts in writing. Class participation is included because learning about race and ethnicity depends on dialogue, respectful engagement, and the exchange of perspectives. The final exam carries less weight because the course emphasizes consistent effort and reflection throughout the semester rather than a single high-stakes test. The attendance policy underscores that your presence is essential to both your own learning and to building a classroom community.

## Hendrix Resources

**Academic integrity:** Our academic integrity policy may be found in the 2025-26 Catalog in section [D.6.c.Academic Integrity](#). Assignments must reflect your original work. Properly cite any sources used. The use of AI to compose your papers for this class is considered academic dishonesty and will be reported to the Committee on Academic Integrity. Do not use ChatGPT or other interfaces to write a first draft of a paper and then edit it. Do not write a draft and then check an online source for ideas about your structure. These assignments are designed to bring your thoughts and ideas into the course and to develop your writing skills. Using AI to write a paper undermines both goals of the assignments. Oftentimes, students use AI because they feel stress and time pressures. If you're in such a situation, rather than use AI, contact me and ask for an extension.

**Statement on diversity:** Hendrix College values a diverse learning environment as outlined in the College's Statement on Diversity. All members of this community are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the community. If you believe you have been the subject of discrimination, please contact the Dean of Students Office (Donna Eddleman, [Eddleman@hendrix.edu](mailto:Eddleman@hendrix.edu) or the submit a [Title IX report](#). If you have ideas for improving the inclusivity of the classroom experience please feel free to contact Dr. Axxe. For more information on Hendrix non-discrimination policies visit [Hendrix.edu/nondiscrimination](http://Hendrix.edu/nondiscrimination).

**[Title IX Reports of Discrimination Based on Sex, including Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Stalking, Dating Violence, or Gender-Based Harassment.](#)** (Follow link to see details.)

**Health and wellbeing:** Hendrix recognizes that many students face mental and/or physical health challenges. If your health status will impact attendance or assignments, please communicate with me as soon as possible. If you would like to implement academic accommodations, contact Julie Brown in the office of Academic Success ([brownj@hendrix.edu](mailto:brownj@hendrix.edu)). To maintain optimal health, please utilize campus resources like Hendrix Medical Clinic or Counseling Services (501.450.1448). Your health and wellbeing are important.

**Class attendance:** Our attendance policy may be found in the 2025-26 Catalog in section [D.6.e. Class Attendance](#). **If students must be absent from class, they are expected to email Dr. Axxe before class.** Without prior notification, absences are unexcused (barring true emergencies). Students will be excused for absences resulting from observance of religious holidays, cases of illness, and athletic competition, as well as any additional reasons as determined by the classroom teacher (e.g., conference travel, Model UN). Students do not need to present third-party documentation for absences related to physical or mental illness. Misrepresenting reasons for an absence to a classroom teacher is a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy.

**The Writing Center:** The Writing Center is a community of peers ready to assist you with your writing projects, in all genres and fields, and at any stage of development. We work with you in one-on-one meetings that you can book in advance, or you can just drop in at our office in Bailey Library. Virtual appointments are available for medical reasons or by special arrangement. To book appointments and for more information, visit [www.hendrix.edu/writingcenter/](http://www.hendrix.edu/writingcenter/) or contact [pruneda@hendrix.edu](mailto:pruneda@hendrix.edu). We look forward to working with you!

**Hendrix Bailey Library:** Bailey Library's mission is to collaborate and empower all members of our community so that they become their best selves, cherish the scope of human knowledge, and positively contribute to the world. Whether face-to-face or remote, librarians are happy to help locate quality resources supporting research and classroom work and to assist with the critical evaluation of academic

information. Librarians provide individual research assistance by appointment. The library building is open seven days a week, and access to the library's online resources is available 24/7. You can visit the library's website at <https://www.hendrix.edu/baileylibrary/> for more information, to book an appointment, and to access the library's Discovery search, Class Guides, and full-text article databases.

**ADA accommodations:** As your instructor, it is my legal obligation to ensure that all students have equal access to course materials and equal opportunity to perform well in the course. In addition, "It is the policy of Hendrix College to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Students should contact Mr. Blake Draper in the Office of Advising & Academic Success ([AcademicSuccess@hendrix.edu](mailto:AcademicSuccess@hendrix.edu)) to begin the accommodation process. Any student seeking accommodation in relation to a recognized disability should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course."

**Technology:** Much of the technology we interact with is made to be addictive. I suggest you find and use resources that will help you resist distractions. Here's a website with a list of website blockers. Similar software exists for apps on phones and tablets. Technology (phone, laptop, tablet, etc.) is not permitted during class time unless otherwise stated.

## Additional Resources

*Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess.*

- **Local housing shelters and women's shelters:** Research indicates that a number of low-income college students face homelessness or transient/insecure housing accommodations. Affordable Colleges Online's website provides statistics about college homelessness as well a way to locate local services.
- **Food Pantries:** Here's a list of local food pantries.
- **Zotero:** Zotero is a free citation management software.
- **Grammarly:** Grammarly is a free software that checks and suggests fixes to grammatical errors.
- An [inclusive data resource hub](#).