

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

**POLISCI 210: Race and American Politics**

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**Course Description**

This course explores the complex intersections of race, ethnicity, and immigration, focusing on their historical and contemporary impacts on American political life. A central question addressed in the course is whether W.E.B. Du Bois' concept of the "color line" remains a significant issue in the evolving landscape of the twenty-first century. Students will engage with both foundational and contemporary scholarship, employing a variety of methodological approaches. The course will examine the definitions and boundaries of race and ethnicity, and it will also address key political science topics through the lens of race, including voting, representation, partisanship, identity formation, prejudice, and stereotypes, backlash against demographic changes, and social and protest movements in the United States.

**Course Learning Objectives**

1. Learn and remember basic terminology about race, ethnicity, and group membership
2. Understand the "color line" and its impact on the political sphere
3. Remember basic facts about historical trends and recent patterns in how race and ethnicity have been defined and re-defined
4. Understand the ways that racial stereotypes are mobilized to advance US politics and policy
5. Understand and evaluate policies that affect racial groups' participation, representation, and equality in the United States
6. Understand the formation of different identities, their representation, partisanship, and mobilization

**Course Requirements**

*To pass the class ALL assignments must be completed.* You will be evaluated on the following requirements.

**Weekly Response Papers**

The semester consists of fifteen weeks, and each student is expected to submit a response paper on the resources covered in any four weeks of their choice. Each response paper should be 600-750 words and address the question based on all the course materials assigned for that particular week, with questions available under the readings for each week. Papers will be assessed based on the clarity of the argument or position taken, coverage of all the resources for that week, and the ability to see connections, agreements, or disagreements between the resources. Submissions are due by 11:59 pm on Sundays and should be emailed as MS Word or Google Doc files to [fcetin@umass.edu](mailto:fcetin@umass.edu). Late submissions are accepted, with a penalty of two points for every six hours past the deadline. This assignment is crucial for your development in the class, as it

encourages critical thinking and deeper engagement with the course readings. It also allows you to articulate the main arguments of the course texts in your own words. You will likely see an improvement in the quality of your essays as you complete more assignments. This assignment accounts for  $4 \times 10 = 40\%$  of your final grade.

### **Weekly Online Discussions**

Each week, I will post a question on the discussion board on the course's Canvas page. You are expected to post your own response to the prompt (1 point) and then engage substantively with the entries of two of your peers (0.5 points each). Your engagement should expand on their responses and go beyond simply agreeing or disagreeing. You are required to participate in this weekly discussion for at least ten weeks of your choice. If you complete this assignment for more than ten weeks, your lowest grades will be dropped accordingly. The deadline for the weekly discussion entries and engagements is 11:59 pm on the following Tuesday. For example, the deadline for Week 4's discussion is 11:59 pm on Tuesday of Week 5. This assignment constitutes  $10 \times 2 = 20\%$  of your final grade.

### **Midterm and Final**

The midterm and final exams will consist of two sections. In the first section, you will be asked to define and discuss the significance of several analytical concepts selected from the readings. The number of concepts you need to address will be specified later. In the second section, you will choose one of three essay questions, each covering at least two weeks of the semester, and write a 600-800 word essay. The exam dates will be announced as the semester progresses, but the midterm will be held in Week 8 and the final in Week 15. The exams are not cumulative; the midterm will cover content from Weeks 1 to 7, and the final will cover content from Weeks 9 to 15. Together, the midterm and final exams will constitute 40% of your final grade.

### **Grading Scale**

Percentage Totals	Grade	Credit Points
93 – 100%	A	4.0
90 – 92%	A-	3.7
87 – 89%	B+	3.3
83 – 86%	B	3.0
80 – 82%	B-	2.7
77 – 79%	C+	2.3
73 – 76%	C	2.0
70 – 72%	C-	1.7
67 – 69%	D+	1.3
63 – 66%	D	1.0
60 – 62%	D-	0.7
59% or below	F	0
Incomplete	INC	0

## Course Policies

### Academic Honesty

Plagiarism or cheating of ANY kind will not be tolerated. I will strictly enforce all University policies regarding academic honesty, which can be found online at [http://www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/). Please email me with any questions about citations or sources.

### Code of Conduct

This course will engage with contentious and passionate debates within the American government. To ensure productive discussions and fully benefit from our collective insights, it is essential that students maintain civility at all times. This means using respectful language, acknowledging differences in backgrounds and opinions, and valuing each other's unique perspectives. Any form of disrespect or rudeness will not be tolerated, as creating a supportive learning environment is crucial for the open exchange of diverse viewpoints.

### Penalty for Late Work

Timely submission of all assignments is expected. For each day an assignment is late, a penalty of 1/3 of a letter grade will be applied. For example, an assignment graded as an A will drop to an A- if submitted one day late, to a B+ if two days late, and to a B if three days late, and so on. Adhering to submission deadlines is crucial to ensure fairness and maintain the integrity of the grading system.

## Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

**All the readings will be posted on the course page on Canvas.**

### Week 1: Introduction

Review syllabus and course requirements

#### **Read:**

Rogers Smith, 2004. "The Puzzling Place of Race in American Political Science."  
Peter Kivisto and Paul Croll, 2012, "Defining the Subject" in *Race and Ethnicity: The Basics*

#### **Watch:**

Skin Deep (12-minutes) <http://www.irisfilms.org/films/skin-deep/> (interviews with students from different races and backgrounds)

### Week 2: Defining Race

**Response Paper Question: What is race? Why is it important?**

#### **Read:**

W.E.B. DuBois, "Forethought" and "Of Our Spiritual Striving" in *Souls of Black Folk*.  
K. Anthony Appiah, 1996, "Race, Culture, and Identity." In *Color Consciousness: Political Morality of Race*, eds. K. Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann,

Michael Omi and Howard Winant, 1986, "The Theory of Racial Formation" in *Racial Formation in the United States*,  
Ian Haney Lopez, 1994, "The Social Construction of Race"

### **Week 3: Defining Ethnicity**

**Response Paper Question:** *What is ethnicity? Is ethnicity different from race? Why or why not?*

#### **Read:**

Max Weber, 1918, "Ethnic Groups" in *Economy and Society*  
Matthew Jacobs, 1994, *Whiteness of A Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, Chapter Introduction

### **Week 4: Defining the Boundaries of Racial/Ethnic Groups**

**Response Paper Question:** *How have different racial groups been historically defined in the United States? What type of instruments, tools, and criteria have been used in these definitions?*

#### **Read:**

Matthew Jacobs, 1994, *Whiteness of A Different Color*, Chapter 3  
James Davis, 2001, *Who is Black: One Nation's Definition*, Chapter 1  
Clara Rodriguez, 2000, *Changing Race*, pp 65-105  
Jeffrey Jacoby, 2021, "Love across the Color Line," Boston Globe  
Sharon Lee, 1992, "Racial Classification in US Censuses: 1890-1990" (Recommended)  
Nicholas DeGenova, 2006, *Racial Transformations: Latinos and Asians in the Remaking of America*, Introduction (Recommended)  
Carol Anderson, August 29, 2014, "Ferguson isn't about black rage against cops. It's white rage against progress." : [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ferguson-wasnt-black-rage-against-cops-it-was-white-rage-against-progress/2014/08/29/3055e3f4-2d75-11e4-bb9b-997ae96fad33\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ferguson-wasnt-black-rage-against-cops-it-was-white-rage-against-progress/2014/08/29/3055e3f4-2d75-11e4-bb9b-997ae96fad33_story.html) (Recommended)

### **Week 5: Transcending Group Boundaries**

**Response Paper Question:** *How have different groups transcended racial/ethnic boundaries? Give two examples and explain the process*

#### **Read:**

Richard Alba, 1990, "Transformation of Ethnicity in Americans of European Ancestries," in *Ethnic Identity: Transformation of White America*, pp 1-36  
Matthew Jacobs, 1994, *Whiteness of A Different Color*, Chapter 2  
Noel Ignatiev, 1994, *How the Irish Became White*, Introduction

### **Week 6: Citizenship and Voting Rights**

**Response Paper Questions:** *What are the barriers to equal electoral participation of African Americans today? Are the claimed democratic status of the United States and the absence of equal political citizenship reconcilable? What are your suggestions for addressing existing political inequalities?*

**Read:**

Reed Jr., Adolph (2015) "The Strange Carrier of the Voting Rights Act: Selman in Facts and Fiction." (Recommended)

Fatih Cetin, 2024, *Regime Contention and Racial Enfranchisement in the US: From the Progressive Era to the Voting Rights Act of 1965*, Chapter 6

Vasla Weaver and Amy Lerman, 2010, "Political Consequences of the Carceral State." 817-833

Carol Anderson, 2016, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*, Chapter 5

**Week 7: Race and Representation**

***Response Paper Question: What are the policy preferences of different racial minority groups? How are they different from the preferences of the White majority? Which representation paradigm (descriptive or substantive) better represents the preferences of minority groups? Why?***

**Read:**

Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes'"

Christine Leveaux Sharpe and James Garand, 2001, "Race, Roll Calls and Redistricting: The Impact of Race-Based Redistricting on Congressional Roll-Call"

Marisa Abarjano and Keith Poole, 2011, "Assessing Ethnic and Racial Diversity of American Public Opinion" in *Who Get Represented?* eds by Peter K. Enns and Christian Wlezien

**Week 8: Midterm**

**Week 9: Race and Partisanship**

***Response Paper Question: Do different factors shape the partisanship dynamics for different groups? Why or why not? Pick two racial groups and discuss their patterns of partisanship along with the crucial factors affecting them.***

**Read:**

Zoltan Hajnal and Taeku Le, 2001, *Why Americans Do Not Join the Parties: Race, Immigration, and Failure to Engage the Electorate*, Chapter 2

Michael Alvarez and Lisa Garcia Bedolla, 2003, "Foundations of Latino Partisanship"

Alexander Kuo, Neil Malhotra, and Cecilia Hyunjung Mo, 2017, "Social Exclusion and Political Identity: The Case of Asian American Partisanship"

Claudine Gay, 2014, "Knowledge Matters: Policy Cross-Pressures and Black Partisanship"

Efren O. Perez, 2015, "Xenophobic Rhetoric and its Political Effects on Immigrants and Their Coethnics"

**Week 10: Identity Formation for Minorities**

***Response Paper Question: What effects the dynamics for identity formation of minority groups? Pick two racial groups and compare the processes of identity-creation.***

**Read:**

Tajfel Henri and John C. Turner, 1986, "Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior"  
Michael Dawson, 1994, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African American Politics*, Chapter 3

Christina Beltran, 2010, *Trouble with Unity: Latino Politics and Creation of Identity*, Introduction and Conclusion

Pei-Te Lien, Margaret Conway, and Janelle Wong, 2010, *The Politics of Asian Americans*, Chapter 2

Natalie Masuoka and Jane Junn, 2013, *Politics of Belonging: Race, Public Opinion, and Immigration*, Chapter 4 (Recommended)

**Week 11: Whiteness and White Identity Politics**

**Response Paper Question:** *Did whiteness emerge as a political identity group in recent years/decades or was it always an active identity? Elaborate and explain by discussing alternative approaches and clearly developing your own argument.*

**Read:**

Robin DiAngelo, 2018, *White Fragility*, Chapter 4

George Lipsitz, 1995, "Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the Whiteness Problem in American Studies"

Avidit Acharya, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen, 2016, "Political Legacy of American Slavery"

Ashley Jardina, 2019, *White Identity Politics*, Chapter 1

Larry M. Bartels, 2020, "Ethnic Antagonism Erodes Republicans' Commitment to Democracy"

**Week 12: Racial Resentment and Stereotypes**

**Response Paper Question:** *What are the different types of racial prejudice? Describe each type and discuss their varying roots, expressions, and implications.*

**Read:**

Take this test on implicit bias: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

Donald Kinder and David Sears, 1981, "Prejudice and Politics: Symbolic Racism versus Racial Threats to the Good Life"

Martin Gilens, 1999, *Why Americans Hate Welfare*, Chapter 5

Donald Kinder and Tali Mendelberg, 1995, "Cracks in American Apartheid: Political Impact of Prejudice Among Desegregated Whites"

Leonie Huddy and Stanley Feldman, 2009, "On Assessing the Political Effects of Racial Prejudice"

Robin DiAngelo, 2018, *White Fragility*, Chapter 4

George Lipsitz, 1995, "Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the Whiteness Problem in American Studies"

Avidit Acharya, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen, 2016, "Political Legacy of American Slavery"

Ashley Jardina, 2019, *White Identity Politics*, Chapters 5-6

### **Week 13: Backlash Against Changing Demographics**

***Response Paper Question: What are the reactions toward changing demographics in the United States? What informs these reactions?***

#### **Read:**

Samuel Huntington, 2004, "The Hispanic Challenge"

Maureen Craig and Jennifer Richeson, 2014, "On the Precipice of a Majority-Minority America: Perceived Status Threat from Racial Demographic Change Effect White American's Political Ideology"

Marisa Abrajano and Zoltan Hajnal, 2017, *White Backlash: Immigration, Race, and American Politics*, Chapter 1

### **Week 14: Protest Politics and Black Lives Matter**

***Response Paper Question: Why did the minority social movements recently emerge? What are their political implications? Focus on one movement and elaborately explain***

#### **Read:**

Christin Wolbrecht et al., 2005, *Politics of Democratic Inclusion*, Chapter 5

Taylor Keeanga-Yamahta, 2016, *From #Black Lives Matter to Black Liberation*, Chapter 6

Chris Zepeda-Milan, 2017, *Latino Mass Mobilization: Immigration, Racialization, and Activism*, Chapter 2

Vanessa Williamson, Kris-Stella Trump, and Katherine Levine Einstein, 2018, "Black Lives Matter: Evidence that Police-Caused Death Predict Protest Activity"

Jeremy Sawyer and Anup Gopma, 2018, "Implicit and Explicit Attitudes Changed During Black Lives Matter"

### **Week 15: Final Exam**