

Racism and American Government Syllabus for Spring 2022

Department of African American and African Studies (21:014:430)
Department of Political Science (21: 790:463)

Professor James Jones

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 4:00-6:00 PM and by appointment

Tuesdays 2:30-5:20 PM

This course investigates how the United States government has created and maintained a nation organized along racial lines. First, we will study how racism was a crucial element in American political development that shaped how our political system was created and organized. Next, this course focuses on how the federal government has created racial categories and then consequently rewarded and punished individuals based upon these racial classifications. Finally, this course considers if and how racial justice can be achieved within the American political system.

This course begins by reviewing political and race theory to build a definition of race, racism, and the racial state. Identifying race as a social construction, we look at how its invention became a necessary ideological tool to build a democratic republic based upon racial subjugation. With this theoretical foundation, we look at attempts by the government to define race, create a racialized social safety net, and erect a racial caste system through the law and carceral system. Finally, we investigate how to deconstruct the racial state to advance racial justice.

Learning Objectives

Students will gain a critical understanding of the American state and a host of theoretical tools to analyze social inequality. In addition, students will be able to discuss race as a social construction and identify how the government creates and maintains a racial hierarchy. Finally, students will learn how to read and analyze complex scholarly works and write more effectively.

Course Requirements

Participation	25%
Response Memos (3)	25%
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	100%

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Grades and AssignmentsParticipation

1) Discussion leader	5%
a. Lead discussant for one class session. The Discussant develops questions for class discussion.	
2) Class Scribe	5%
a. Scribe takes notes for one class sessions and publishes on Canvas	
3) Attendance + Active Learning Assignments Discussion	15%
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	25 % (of final grade)

Response Memos

Instead of a midterm and final, I will have four memos due throughout the semester. Your lowest memo grade will be dropped from your final grade. Each memo will be 1 to 2 pages. Memos will require students to reflect on the themes/ concepts of the previous weeks, engage with course readings, offer their own analysis, and demonstrate their understanding of the materials. Because memos are short, students are expected to write efficiently AND effectively—these are important skills to learn and practice.

I will provide a prompt for each response memo at least one week before it is due.

Memo 1 due February 22

Memo 3 due April 26

Memo 2 due March 29

Memo 4 Essay due May 10

Memo (3)	25%
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Final grade	100 %
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Final Grades

A = 89.45+

B+ = 89.44-84.45

B = 84.44-79.45

C+ = 79.44-74.45

C = 74.44-69.45

D = 69.44-65.45=D

F = 65.44-Below= F

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Memo Formatting

You will automatically lose 5pts if ALL criteria are not met for written assignments. Please give yourself enough time to make sure that your assignments are in compliance with the formatting expectations before turning in your work. If you have trouble making this format changes on your word processing program, please consult with the college tech services.

- Font: Times New Roman
- Size: 12
- Margins: 1-inch all around
- Left alignment
- Single-spaced
- Consistent in-text references and bibliography (I prefer Chicago citation styles)
- Upload a .docx or .doc

Grading Rubric

A: Outstanding

A-: Outstanding, with one or two areas of improvement

B+: Very good

B: Good

B-: Good overall, with some significant weaknesses

F: Failing: doesn't complete assignment

C+: Satisfactory, with some potential for improvement

C: Satisfactory, but needs significant development

C-: Barely satisfactory

D: Poor: overwhelming flaws

All papers are evaluated for content, grammar, and logic.

For assistance on your writing assignments, please consult the University Writing Center. Tutors can help students: clarify an assignment, generate ideas and writing, review and revise drafts, improve grammar and usage, and strengthen reading and editing skills.

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, for which a student may receive a range of punishments, including failing the course, a permanent record on his or her final transcript, suspension or even expulsion from the University. Please familiarize yourself with the University's definition of plagiarism by reviewing the Rutgers University Policy on Academic Integrity, here: <http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/plagiarism>.

If I suspect any student of plagiarism I will bring it to his/her attention and report it to the administration. We faculty have a professional obligation to report all instances of plagiarism in our classes. Failure to do so promotes inequity among the student body, given that honest students have not had the advantage of using external sources in preparing their work.

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Pandemic Policies

The COVID-19 pandemic has created multiple uncertainties, which demands flexibility and patience from faculty, students, and staff. I encourage you to prioritize your safety and well-being throughout this semester. Recognize that the grind of any academic semester is challenging and under today's circumstances even more so. I encourage you to see the course as a respite from the rest of the world, where you can explore and sharpen your scholarly imagination. For this semester, I will offer a one-week grace period to all students when they submit their assignments. That is, you can submit your assignment up to one-week after the stated deadline without penalty. You do not need to ask for this grace period, it is given. Please use this extra time to produce your best work. Unfortunately, this grace period does not extend to your final memo, which must be turned in on time.

If you are experiencing any type of sickness please do not come to class. You only need to notify me of your absence if you expect to miss more than two consecutive classes. Please report any positive covid diagnosis directly to Student Health Services.

To control the spread of Covid-19, when we are meeting in-person you are required to always wear a face mask.

Zoom

The unpredictability of Covid-19 means that at certain times during the semester our class may have to meet virtually. All virtual classes will occur on Zoom at our normal meeting time. Our dedicated zoom meeting room is accessible via Canvas.

Virtual classes require the same level of participation from every student. You should come to our virtual classroom prepared, which means that you have completed all the readings and are ready to engage in discussion. Although you are not required to have your camera on during our virtual sessions, I would be very appreciative if you could turn your camera on when speaking.

Participation

An important goal for this course is for students to not only become better critical thinkers and consumers of knowledge, but to become better citizens by analyzing class readings and engaging in class discussion. Students are expected to closely follow current events on the local, state, and national levels. Each class will include a discussion that links theoretical and empirical scholarship to what is currently happening in the real world.

For each class, students must post one discussion question to Canvas based upon their analysis of that session's readings. In addition, for each session, one student must volunteer to help lead class discussion.

This course will be run like an intimate seminar and feature a lot of discussion. To this end, maintaining an academic, respectful, and honest classroom environment is a collective effort. I am relying on you to please:

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- Be respectful of others' ideas, arguments, and cultures.
- Do not interrupt each other. You do not have to raise your hand to speak, but please allow the current speaker to complete their thoughts before sharing.

Canvas

All class communication will be through Canvas. **This syllabus is subject to revision and an updated version will be posted to the course site.** Please check the site regularly for notification. All assignments must be submitted through Canvas.

Email Policy

You may email me any time/day, but please do not expect an immediate response. I try to respond to emails within 12 hours. I only reply to emails Monday-Friday (so, I might not respond to emails received on Friday until the next Monday). In your email subject line, include the name of the course (i.e., SOCI 255). In the body of your email, please use a proper address (e.g., Dear Prof. Jones) and signature.

Office Hours

"Office hours" are times reserved outside of our usual class meetings for students to discuss and/or ask questions about the course materials and concepts with me 1:1. While you are not *required* to attend office hours, I strongly encourage students to see me *at least once* during the semester even if you do not have a specific question (I will start the conversation. It will not be awkward, I promise).

For Spring 2022 all office hours appointments will be on Zoom.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is required. There will be no make-up opportunities for missed classes.

Excused vs. Unexcused absences: The Rutgers-Newark Undergraduate catalog The recognized grounds for absence are illness requiring medical attention, curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty, personal obligations claimed by the student and recognized as valid, recognized religious holidays, and severe inclement weather causing dangerous traveling conditions." If you plan to claim a religious holiday as an excused absence, you must inform me of this fact within the first two weeks of class.

Disability Services and Accommodations

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

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<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. For more information please contact Kate Torres at (973)353-5375 or in the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219 or by contacting odsnewark@rutgers.edu.

Required Texts

Ira Katznelson (2005) *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold Story of Racial Inequality in Twentieth Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton), \$15. ISBN: 9780393329516.

Course Materials

All required books are available at Barnes and Nobles Rutgers- Newark (42 Halsey Street). All other required readings are available via the Canvas site.

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Course Schedule

This schedule indicates the themes and readings of each week and any assignments due. This schedule is tentative and may change to reflect our progress as a class.

Each week's assigned readings must be completed before class. Please be prepared to discuss the assigned readings in class/online.

1/18: First Day of Class Racism, politics, and our current moment

Representative Cori Bush. [This is the America that Black people know](#)

1/25: Race and Political Theory

Mills, Charles. 1997. The Racial Contract. Pp. 1-40

Read Presidential Executive Orders from Donald Trump and Joe Biden

2/1: The Social Construction of Race and State

Fields, Barbara J. 1990. Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America. *New Left Review* (May--June).

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. 1994. Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s. Chapter 4

2/8: Race and the Early Republic

Kimberley Johnson. 2015. "The Color Line and the State: Race and American Political Development," *Oxford Handbook of American Political Development*, eds. Richard Valelly, Suzanne Mettler, and Robert Lieberman.

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. 1994. Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s. Chapter 5

2/15: The Census and the Racial Order

Lee, Jennifer and Frank Bean. What Is This Person's Race? The Census and the Construction of Racial Categories

Strmic-Pawl, Hephzibah V., Brandon A. Jackson, and Steve Garner. Race Counts: Racial and Ethnic Data on the U.S. Census and the Implications for Tracking

2/22: The Legal Construction of Race

Lopez, Ian Haney. 2006. *White by Law: The legal construction of race*. Chapter 2 and 4.
Memo 1 Due

3/1: Defining Whiteness

Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. 2015. Settler Colonialism as Structure: A Framework for Comparative Studies of U.S. Race and Gender Formation. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*. Vol. 1(1) 54-74.

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3/8: Rewarding Whiteness

Katznelson, Ira. 2005 *When Affirmative Action Was White*. Chapter 2 and 3.

3/15 Spring Break

3/22: Rewarding Whiteness

Katznelson, Ira. 2005 *When Affirmative Action Was White*. Chapter 4 and 5.

*3/22 Last Day to Withdraw from a Course

3/29: Punishing Non-Whites: Segregation

Massey, Douglas and Nancy Denton. 1993. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* Chapter 2-4

Memo 2 Due

4/5 Punishing Non-Whites: Segregation and Wealth Tax

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2014. "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, Excerpts from Dorothy Brown's *The Whiteness of Wealth*

4/12: Punishing Non-Whites: Segregation, Education, and Wealth

Readings TBD

4/19: Punishing Non-Whites

Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow*

4/26: Last Day of Class

Angela Davis. 2003. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Excerpts
Vision for Black Lives Policy Demands Booklet

Memo 3 Due

5/10: Memo 4 Due