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## Topics in American History: Racial Justice in US History

Spring 2022

Tuesdays 6:00pm-9:00pm  
Room 214a, HLLC Building, 48 New Street

Professor: Dr. Mark Krasovic  
Contact: via Canvas Inbox  
Office Hours: online Monday mornings via  
Bookings or by arrangement

### Course Description

This is a class in the history of an idea – racial justice – and how it has been defined, imagined, pursued, and denied across a broad swath of American history. It invites contemporary and personal reckonings with ideas of justice via close examination of case studies from philosophy and history, as well as local archival research in Newark history.

We will encounter and grapple with different ideas about what constitutes justice and how it's most effectively pursued. How do we define “justice” and how would we know it if we saw it? What is “social justice” as compared to other notions or arenas of justice? What's the difference between reparative, restorative, transitional, and retributive justice and how has each been pursued in specific times and places? Among the episodes we'll consider will be the murder of an Indigenous man on the early American frontier, a lawsuit brought by a woman against the man who kidnapped her and sold her into slavery, a mass movement of formerly enslaved Americans demanding payment for their years of uncompensated labor, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, the aftermath of apartheid in South Africa, and current proposals on the national and state levels to study racial reparations.

This class is offered in partnership with a Mellon Foundation-funded project to create a historically informed, community engaged plan for racial reparations in Newark. Students will learn about that project and have opportunities to engage in its work. The extent of that engagement will be shaped – and possibly limited – by the pandemic. But the final unit of the semester will give you an opportunity to perform original research that may contribute directly to the formation of that local reparations plan.

In short, you will come away from this class with a deeper familiarity and facility with concepts of justice, knowledge of how those concepts have played out across mostly (but not exclusively) American history, and sharpened historical research skills. In turn, you can use each of these outcomes in our current historical moment.

### Learning Objectives

In this course you will have the opportunity to learn and practice these skills:

- Formation and intelligent deployment of language and theories of justice
- Critical and contextual reading of historical episodes
- Locating and collecting primary source evidence
- Critical and contextual analysis of that evidence

***All readings will be distributed via Canvas. There is nothing you need to buy.***

## Some Nuts & Bolts...

*Canvas:* If you haven't work with Canvas before, please take some time to familiarize yourself with it. An online tutorial is available [here](#).

*It is crucial that you check Canvas daily. All assignments and materials and information about the class will be distributed on Canvas via weekly modules. I also recommend that you use Canvas to contact me.*

*Remote Location:* We will – sadly, at least for me – begin remotely via Zoom. A link to our class meetings for the first two weeks will be posted to the relevant weekly modules on Canvas. Visit the modules and click on the links provided to join class.

*In-Person Location:* Thereafter (hopefully), we will meet in-person with masks firmly in place in the HLLC building at 48 New Street, Room 214a. Those of you who do not live in the building will need to stop at the security desk to check in before class. The security personnel at the desk will have the class roster so they will know who to let in.

## Course Requirements

*All reading/viewing and writing assignments will be available in the weekly Canvas modules.*

There will be simple **quizzes** almost every week throughout the semester. These will test your comprehension of the reading/viewing material and will highlight aspects of that material that are particularly important. If you've done the reading and viewing, you won't have a problem with these.

There will be almost weekly **short writing assignments**. I consider these “high-frequency, low-stakes” assignments. That is, the assignments will occur regularly and no single assignment will have a major effect on your final grade. Collectively, though, they will constitute a significant portion of the thinking you do in this class and a significant percentage of your final grade. Some weeks these assignments will be completed in class. Other weeks you will complete them on your own time.

For the **preparedness and participation** grade, students are expected to read the assigned texts before each class session. Simple attendance alone doesn't much help the participation grade, but missing too many classes can seriously hurt it (see class rules below). Students are required to come to class ready with questions or observations about the readings and to take part in the discussion to earn a good participation grade. We will devote much of our class time discussing the sources and their implications for how we might think about justice. This in-depth analysis will compose the participation grade.

There will be a **final research report** assignment, which will take shape over the course of our in-class research workshops and your own independent research. More details to come.

Quizzes	20%
Short Writing Assignments	30%
Final Research Report	25%
Preparedness and participation	25%

*Submitting assignments:*

- All the writing assignments (essays and short writing) must be submitted via Canvas
- All students must put the Rutgers Honors Code Pledge, with their signature, on copies of your short writing and research report assignments. Place your signature after the following phrase: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.”

Grades assess your work in the class. At the college level, this means the final product of your work - what you hand in to me - not the amount of effort you put into it. In other words, students don't get an “A for effort” at the college level.

**Class Rules**

Studying history is often a politically and personally charged pursuit, and we will not shy away from tough questions about power, inequality, race, and class, to name a few. In fact, they may take on specially charged meaning in our current historical moment, and we need not steer our conversations away from making connections between the past and today. But I expect that all of us - myself included - will behave in a manner that assumes and shows respect for others' needs and desires to learn. By all means, disagree with me and with each other. But do so in a civil way that will promote, rather than hinder, learning. *Any behavior that in any way intimidates others from participating in class will be addressed and may count against your participation grade.*

Attendance is required. There will be no make-up opportunities for missed classes. I will take attendance in every class meeting. If you arrive late - which, in this class, will mean more than ten minutes after class begins - I will give you half credit for being in class. This means that two late arrivals will count as one unexcused absence. After two unexcused absences, your overall course grade will be lowered by a partial grade (from B+ to B, for example) for every further unexcused absence. *Any student who misses four or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences will have missed more than a quarter of the class time and will not earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw from the course to avoid an F.*

*Excused vs. Unexcused absences:* The Rutgers-Newark Undergraduate catalog ([http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/nwk-ug\\_current/pg576.html](http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/nwk-ug_current/pg576.html)) states: “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.*

Late assignments will not be accepted except in cases of proven emergency. Unless you have express permission from me, discussed with me *in advance*, and based on an acknowledged

reason, late assignments will have their grades lowered one partial grade every day that they are late.

Policy on Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism):

Rutgers University treats cheating and plagiarism as serious offenses. Cheating is both a moral and an ethical offense. It violates both your own integrity and the ethics of group commitment: when you cut corners and cheat, you undermine those students who took the time to work on the assignment honestly. As a standard minimum penalty, students who are suspected of cheating or plagiarism are reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Pending investigation, further penalties can include failure of the course, disciplinary probation, and a formal warning that further cheating will be grounds for expulsion from the University.

All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge. To receive credit, every assignment must have your signature under the following phrase: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.

You may only use the texts assigned in this syllabus to complete the work in this class. If I find that you have used other people’s ideas (ex: Wikipedia, Amazon reviews, book jacket descriptions, etc.), I will not accept the assignment because I will not be able to consider it your own work. You will get a failing grade (0 points) for that assignment and will not be able to make it up.

## Class Schedule

### Introductions to Justice

January 18 (online): Introduction to the Class and Justice Theory

January 25 (online): Source-Reading Workshop

February 1: Murder on the Early American Frontier

Readings: selection from Nicole Eustace, *Covered with Night: A Story of Murder and Indigenous Justice in Early America*

February 8: Truth & Reconciliation in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Reading & Viewing: selections from Facing History & Ourselves, *Confronting Apartheid* (reading) and *Long Night's Journey Into Day* (film viewing)

February 15: The Just Futures Project in Newark

Readings: selection from Darity & Mullen, *From Here to Equality*; and dossier on HR40 & NJS322

### Historical Episodes & Sources, Part I: Slavery

February 22: Local Histories of Slavery

Readings: Berlin and Harris, "Uncovering, Discovering, and Recovering: Digging in New York's Slave Past Beyond the African Burial Ground" from *Slavery in New York*

March 1: Henrietta Wood & the American Courts

Readings: selection from W. Caleb McDaniel, *Sweet Taste of Liberty: A True Story of Slavery and Restitution in America*

March 8: Reparations as Mass Movement

Readings: selection from Mary Frances Berry, *My Face Is Black Is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-Slave Reparations*

March 15: **SPRING BREAK / NO CLASS**

### Historical Episodes & Sources, Part II: Segregation

March 22: Local Histories of Segregation

Readings: Rothstein, "If San Francisco, Then Everywhere?" from *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*

March 29: Reagan & Reparations for Japanese Americans in the 1980s

Readings: TBD

April 5: Local Reparations Efforts

Readings: dossier on Tulsa and Evanston

### **Researching Newark History**

April 12: In-Class Research Workshop #1

April 19: In-Class Research Workshop #2

***DUE: Research Proposal, Thursday, April 21***

April 26: In-Class Research Workshop #3

***DUE: Final Research Report, Date TBD***

### **Accommodation and Support Statement**

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

**For Individuals with Disabilities:** The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to disability. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [ods.rutgers.edu](https://ods.rutgers.edu). Contact ODS at (973)353-5375 or via email at [ods@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:ods@newark.rutgers.edu).

**For Individuals who are Pregnant:** The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-1906 or via email at [TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu).

**For Absence Verification:** The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (e.g., illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to [University Policy 10.2.7](#) for information about expectations and responsibilities. The Office of the Dean of Students can be contacted by calling (973) 353-5063 or emailing [deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu).

**For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries:** The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (e.g., broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

**For English as a Second Language (ESL):** The Program in American Language Studies (PALS) can support students experiencing difficulty in courses due to English as a Second Language (ESL) and can be reached by emailing [PALS@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:PALS@newark.rutgers.edu) to discuss potential supports.

**For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment:** The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing [TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu). Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: [tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm](https://tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm). For more information, students should refer to the University's Student Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Related Misconduct located at <http://compliance.rutgers.edu/title-ix/about-title-ix/title-ix-policies/>.

**For support related to interpersonal violence:** The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance can provide any student with confidential support. The office is a **confidential resource**

and does *not* have an obligation to report information to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing [run.vpva@rutgers.edu](mailto:run.vpva@rutgers.edu). There is also a confidential text-based line available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support.

**For Crisis and Concerns:** The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a support plan to address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Students, faculty and staff may contact the CARE Team by using the following link: [tinyurl.com/RUNCARE](http://tinyurl.com/RUNCARE) or emailing [careteam@rutgers.edu](mailto:careteam@rutgers.edu).

**For Stress, Worry, or Concerns about Well-being:** The Counseling Center has confidential therapists available to support students. Students should reach out to the Counseling Center to schedule an appointment: [counseling@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:counseling@newark.rutgers.edu) or (973) 353-5805. If you are not quite ready to make an appointment with a therapist but are interested in self-help, check out *TAO at Rutgers-Newark* for an easy, web-based approach to self-care and support: <https://tinyurl.com/RUN-TAO>.

**For emergencies,** call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) by calling (973) 353-5111.