

Race, Politics and Policies in the US

Professor: Silvia Borzutzky

Office: Hamburg Hall 2112

Email address: sb6n@andrew.cmu.edu

Office hours: By appointment. Please feel free to email me to request an appointment.

We will schedule a zoom meeting at a mutually convenient time.

TAs: Paige Hannah (Phannah@andrew.cmu.edu) and Mary Yuengert (Myuenger@andrew.cmu.edu).

1.-Course Description and Course Objectives

Race, Politics and Policies will address the politics of segregation and discrimination that have been present in the U.S since its independence. In this course, we will discuss the political foundations of racial segregation and the many policies that have consolidated discrimination and disparities.

Because this is essentially a policy course, we are going to analyze disparities and discrimination in a variety of policy areas including education, health, housing, access to social services and employment. The course will not only analyze existing policies, but also attempt to provide solutions to these problems, including current proposals such as reparations. Pittsburgh will be used as a case study to illustrate local disparities and students will be encouraged to use other cities for their class presentations.

Basic requirements are writing a policy memo, writing a final take-home exam, and doing a group presentation.

2.-Skills: The course emphasizes the development of analytical skills.

Students will develop these analytical skills in different forms:

- a) **Class discussions** which will allow the students to develop the ability to analyze, discuss, and defend different policy positions in an academic environment
- b) **Writing a policy/research memo:** It is critical for all of us to be able to summarize a problem, present possible solutions, and recommend policies/solutions to others. The policy memos allow the students to develop these very important skills. Typically, students are expected to assume the role of a policy maker and provide specific policies to an important policy maker. The policy memos emphasize the use of relevant data, the analysis of the problem, and the policy design.
- c) **Group presentation:** Group presentations are geared to allow the student to develop the ability to work in a project with other students, learn about a specific topic in depth, and prepare a class presentation using either power point or class handouts. To ensure the effectiveness of the presentation the instructor meets with the student about a week before the presentation to set the specific topics and parameters of the presentation. The handout or slides need to be submitted to the

- instructor at least 24hours before the presentation. The instructor will review the slides or handouts to verify the effectiveness of the presentation.
- d) **Final take-home:** One policy memo on a selected topic

Book and Additional Readings: Students must read:

Ibram X. Kendi, *How to be an Anti-Racist*, Random House 2019

All other readings will be posted on Canvas. Links to the readings are listed below.

Requirements

Students are required to attend class, to have read the assigned material, to participate in the class discussions, and to fulfill all the class requirements in a timely manner. The requirements include writing a short policy paper, writing the take home exam, and doing a class presentation.

Assignments should be completed on the due date. Extensions will be granted only for medical reasons or other critical circumstances. The student is expected to document the reason for the extension.

Grading:

Policy/Research memo: 30%

Group Presentation: 30%

Final take home essays: 40%

Policy research memo (about 4 pp.). Topic and guidelines will be distributed on September 13. The assignment will be due on Sept. before 10:00 PM.
Please submit through Canvas

Take Home Exam

Students will have to write a take home exam. The exam will consist of a memo of about 4-5 pp. **The topic will be distributed October 4. The paper will be due on October 14 before 10:00 PM.**

Please submit through Canvas

Presentations

Presentations groups will be formed during the second week of classes.

The instructor will provide a set of presentation topics and form groups according to your preferences.

I will get in touch with the group about 10-12 days before the date of your presentation to discuss the specific structure of your presentation

The length of the group presentations should be about 20 minutes

Students are required to submit a draft of the presentation to the instructor 24 hours before the presentation.

The instructor will review the presentation and provide comments

Presentation topics: Suggestions (a more detailed list will be provided the first day of classes)

- a) Race and socioeconomic issues: wages, wealth, employment
- b) Race and social policies
- c) The role that leaders and social movements have had in the promotion and advancement of rights for African Americans
- d) Policing and Incarceration
- e) Situation of African Americans or other racial minorities in specific cities

Class attendance is required. If attending via zoom, please turn your video camera on

Students who do not attend class will have their grade substantially reduced.

Grade reduction will proceed as follows:

2 unexcused absences= One-point reduction i.e., from A to B

Between 3-4 unexcused absences=two points reduction i.e., from A to C

Over 4 unexcused absences= students will fail the class

Cheating and Plagiarism: In cases of cheating or plagiarism, the instructor will make full use of the College's and the University's procedures and regulations. **Students who plagiarize, will fail the paper and the course.** There will be no exemptions to this rule.

Recording of Lectures University policies establish that "no student may record or tape any classroom activity without the express written consent of the instructor".

Use of Internet Sources: Please use reliable sources. **Wikipedia is not a reliable source.**

Suggestion: Do not use Wikipedia unless you want to fail your exam or paper.

Take care of yourself.

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings such as anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is here to help: call 412-268-2922 and visit their website at <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for help getting connected to the support that can help.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you have a disability and have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, I encourage you to discuss your accommodations and needs with me as early in the semester as possible. I will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided as appropriate. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, I encourage you to contact them at access@andrew.cmu.edu.

Writing Support: Feel free to get in touch with the Global Communication Center (GCC) if you need writing support. You can schedule appointments by emailing the gcc-cmu@andrew.cmu.edu

Syllabus:

Please do all the readings before class because this is a very short mini and we have a lot to talk about.

August 30:

Topics: Back to the beginning: Slavery, the 3/5 Compromise, reconstruction, post-civil war segregation (Jim Crow+), the civil rights movement and its accomplishments.

Read: These are all short articles. Please read them for the first class

Nikole Hannah-Jones, “Our founding ideals of liberty and equality.....”

The NYT, Aug 18, 2019

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/black-history-american-democracy.html>

Matthew Desmond, “In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation” The NYT 2019.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/slavery-capitalism.html>

David Waldstreicher, “How the Constitution Was Indeed Pro-Slavery” The Atlantic, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/how-the-constitution-was-indeed-pro-slavery/406288/>

Henry Louis Gates, “How Reconstruction Still Shapes American Racism” Time, April 2 2019, <https://time.com/5562869/reconstruction-history/>

James Baldwin, “A Letter to my Nephew” <https://progressive.org/magazine/letter-nephew/>

Civil Rights Movement, History.com Editors, 2019,

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/civil-rights-movement>

Peter Nabokov, “Indians, Slaves, and Mass Murder: The Hidden History” New York Review of Books, November 2016,

<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/11/24/indians-slaves-and-mass-murder-the-hidden-history/>

September 13

Political Participation: Progress and Attacking Progress: The new voting restrictions

Racial Inequities in Pittsburgh: A Microcosm of what we see across the country,

Read:

How to be an Anti-racist, pp. 3-68

Congressional Research Service, “Membership of the 116th Congress: A Profile”
Updated December 2020
<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R45583.pdf>

Astead Herdon, “The Congressional Black Caucus: Powerful, Diverse and Newly Complicated” The New York Times, Aug, 21 2021

Brennan Center for Justice, “Voting Laws Roundup, July 2021”,
<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-laws-roundup-july-2021>

Junia Howell, et. al. “Pittsburgh Inequality across Gender and Race”, Commissioned by the City of Pittsburgh, 2019
https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/redtail/images/7109_Pittsburgh's_Inequality_Across_Gender_and_Race_09_18_19.pdf

Manisha Sinha, “The case for a third Reconstruction”, New York Review of Books, Feb 202, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2021/02/03/the-case-for-a-third-reconstruction/>

September 20
Discrimination in Housing and Health
Read:
How to be an Anti-racist, pp. 69-121

R. Rothstein, “The Neighborhoods We Will Not Share: Persistent Housing Segregation lies at the root of many of our Society’s Problems. Trump wants to make it worse” The NYT, 2020.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/20/opinion/fair-housing-act-trump.html>

Michela Zonta, Racial Disparities in Home Appreciation, Center for American Progress, 2019,
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2019/07/15/469838/racial-disparities-home-appreciation/>

Jesse C. Baumgartner, et.al., “How the Affordable Care Act Has Narrowed Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Access to Health Care”, 2020, The Commonwealth Fund,
<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/2020/jan/how-ACA-narrowed-racial-ethnic-disparities-access>

Jamila Taylor, “Racism, Inequality, and Health Care for African Americans” The Century Foundation, <https://tcf.org/content/report/racism-inequality-health-care-african-americans/>

Articles on the impact of COVID on both housing, evictions and health disparities will be send to the class.

September 27

Social security, welfare (TANF), employment and wealth

Read:

How to be an Anti-Racist, pp. 122-180

Kathleen Romig, “Social Security: A Vital Protection for African American People of All Ages”, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2019, <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/social-security-a-vital-protection-for-african-american-people-of-all-ages>

Benjamin W. Veghte, Elliot Schreur, and Mikki Waid, “SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE RACIAL GAP IN RETIREMENT WEALTH”, https://www.nasi.org/sites/default/files/research/SS_Brief_48.pdf

Elise Gould, “Black-white wage gaps are worse today than in 2000” Economic Policy Institute, 2020 <https://www.epi.org/blog/black-white-wage-gaps-are-worse-today-than-in-2000/>

“State unemployment by race and ethnicity” Economic Policy Institute, 2019 <https://www.epi.org/indicators/state-unemployment-race-ethnicity/>

Jhacova Williams and Valerie Wilson, “Black workers endure persistent racial disparities in employment outcomes” 2019 Economic Policy Institute, <https://www.epi.org/publication/labor-day-2019-racial-disparities-in-employment/>

Carl Rommer, “Black and Hispanic men could face disproportionate job loss due to transportation automation”, Economic Policy Institute, 2019 <https://www.epi.org/blog/transportation-automation-job-loss/>

Z. Parolin, “Welfare Money Is Paying for a Lot of Things besides Welfare: Instead of giving cash assistance to poor families, states are widening the racial divide”. The Atlantic, June 13, 2019 <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/06/through-welfare-states-are-widening-racial-divide/591559/>

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “Despite Recent TANF Benefit Boosts, Black Families Left Behind” 2018, <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/despite-recent-tanf-benefit-boosts-black-families-left-behind>

Allison Sinanan, “The African American Female Experience as a TANF Recipient in New Jersey”
http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_2_No_24_Special_Issue_December_2012/1.pdf

If you want to listen to podcasts on these topics go to <https://www.epi.org/research/race-and-ethnicity/>

Valerie Wilson, “Black Women face a Persistent pay gap, Including in Essential Occupations During the Pandemic” Economic Policy Institute, Aug 2021,
<https://www.epi.org/blog/black-women-face-a-persistent-pay-gap-including-in-essential-occupations-during-the-pandemic/>

October 4
Education, Policing, Prisons and the new Jim Crow
Read:
How to be an Anti-racist, pp. 181-228

Inimai Chettiar and Priya Raghavan eds., Foreword by NAACP President Derrick Johnson, “Ending Mass Incarceration: Ideas from today’s Leaders”, Brennan Center for Justice, Read pp. 1-32; 37-56 and 61-81
https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/Report_EndingMassIncarceration_2.pdf

“Report to the United Nations on Racial Disparities in the U.S. Criminal Justice System”, The Sentencing Project, 2018,
<https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/un-report-on-racial-disparities/>

Connor Maxwell and Danyelle Solomon, “Mass Incarceration, Stress, and Black Infant Mortality: Case Study in Structural Racism” 2018,
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2018/06/05/451647/mass-incarceration-stress-black-infant-mortality/>

Tom Robbins, “How a Coalition of NY Activists Revealed Police Department Secrets, The New Yorker, July 17, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-local-correspondents/how-a-coalition-of-new-york-activists-revealed-police-department-secrets>

Michael Shank, “How Police Became Paramilitaries”, NY Review of Books,
<https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2020/06/03/how-police-became-paramilitaries/>

Jill Lepore, “The Invention of the Police”, The New Yorker, July 7, 2020,
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/07/20/the-invention-of-the-police>

David Cole, “Less Punishment, More Justice”, The New York Review of Books, July 23, 2020, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2020/07/23/less-punishment-more-justice/>

PLACE-BASED COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS: AN ANALYSIS OF MERIT AID AND UNIVERSAL PROGRAMS

<https://crsp.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/Pgh%20Promise%20Report%20April%202011.pdf>

T.J. Bartik, et.al., “The effects of the Kalamazoo Promise Scholarship on college enrollment, persistence, and completion” The Brookings Institution, 2015
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-effects-of-the-kalamazoo-promise-scholarship-on-college-enrollment-persistence-and-completion/>

Emma Garcia, “Schools are still segregated, and black children are paying a price”, Economic Policy Institute, 2018
<https://www.epi.org/publication/schools-are-still-segregated-and-black-children-are-paying-a-price/>

October 11

How to achieve change: Black Lives Matter from 2016- 2020

Are reparations a solution? How to confront racism?

Read:

Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations” The Atlantic, June 2014,
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Jelani Cobb, “The Matter of Black Lives” The New Yorker, March 2016
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/03/14/where-is-black-lives-matter-headed>

Ellen Barry, “Seven Lessons (and Warnings) from those who marched with Dr. King”, The NYT, July 17, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/17/us/george-floyd-protests.html>

Isaac Chotiner, “How to Confront a Racist National History”, The New Yorker, July 6, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/how-to-confront-a-racist-national-history>

Michelle Alexander, “America: This is your Chance” The NYT, July 8, 2020
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/08/opinion/george-floyd-protests-race.html>

Keeanga Yamahtta Taylor, “Until Black Women are free, none of us will be free” The New Yorker,
<https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/until-black-women-are-free-none-of-us-will-be-free>

Additional Information

Anti-Racist resources:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BRIF2_zhNe86SGgHa6-VIBO-QgirlTwCTugSfKie5Fs/preview?pru=AAABcn_yp9Q*kYuacSRr8qbCLbcpZtRDIQ