

# How did we get here? America's racial history and its impact on social policy

Sarah James, Ph.D.

sarahjame@g.harvard.edu

Thursdays, 12:45-2:45

Racial discord dominates many contemporary explanations for recent political and sociological developments in the United States. The scars of slavery, the Civil War, failed reparations, and resistance to the Civil Rights movement are common knowledge. However, the story of race in America is much more complicated, particularly when examined in conjunction with the haves and have-nots of political power. In the first half of the course, we will move beyond the headlines of recent racial discord by combining works from history, psychology, sociology, and political science to better understand the history of race in America. The second half of the course focuses on key policy areas that reflect contemporary racial attitudes: immigration, education, healthcare, voting rights, statues and symbols, and the carceral state and policing. We will explore how race and racism has influenced the development of policies within each of these policy areas, with an eye to evaluating how such policies can be made more equitable. We will focus our efforts on developing coherent, empirically-backed arguments in response to the following essential questions:

- What is race and racism? When and why did these concepts emerge?
- How has the role of race and racism in American politics changed over time?
- What role has race played in the development of American politics and American political institutions?
- How have different policy areas contributed to or addressed racial inequality?
- How might different policy areas impact racial equality in the future?

Our purpose is two-fold: first, we will engage in respectful, evidence-based, and moving discussion about race, power, and politics to develop answers to our essential questions (see below). Second, we will learn to develop a research question and conduct independent research to produce a seminar-style research paper. This is intended as preparation for writing a senior thesis.

We will begin each class with discussion and application of the readings, followed by a brief break, and conclude each day with a mini lesson on how to conduct research and write coherently for social scientists. This time may also include workshopping and peer review opportunities for students to share challenges and successes and get feedback on their progress.

## ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

There are two types of assignments in this course: reflections on the readings each week and a research style seminar paper. Each category of assignments is worth 50% of the final grade (or a possible 50 points). For the reading reflections, students may decide what combination of short and long reflections they would like to complete such that the total possible points they have earned adds up to 50 (i.e., 10 short reflections or 5 long reflections or 6 short reflections and 2 long reflections). **Reading reflections are due by 8am the day we have class.** Students may also choose how to earn the other 50% from their final paper: through meeting more or fewer incremental deadlines. We will spend a portion of most sessions learning about the different aspects of

| Assignment Type                                     | Options  | Value    |
|---|--|----------|
| Reading reflections                                 | <b>Short reflection</b><br>2-3 sentence summary of each reading AND 2-3 questions or comments about themes or confusions across the readings.  | 5% each  |
|   | <b>In-depth reflection</b><br>3-4 page reflection that identifies key themes from the readings, articulating how the readings either connect or contradict one another and other ideas from the course | 10% each |
| Research Paper<br>(see rubric for grading criteria) | <b>More structured, more feedback</b>  |          |
|   | Final research question (due no later than 10/1/21)  | 5%       |
|   | Outline (due no later than 11/18/21)   | 10 %     |
|   | First draft (due no later than 12/2/21)  | 15 %     |
|   | Final draft (due date dependent on exam schedule)  | 25 %     |
|   | <b>More autonomy, fewer feedback opportunities</b>   |          |
| Final research question (due no later than 10/1/21) | 5%   |          |
| Outline (due no later than 11/18/21)                | 10 %   |          |
| Final draft (due date dependent on exam schedule)   | 35 %   |          |

## A note about participation

I believe that students can contribute in a myriad of ways: writing excellent reflection papers, asking questions of their peers, raising their hand in class, attending office hours, and reaching out to the instructor via email, just to name a few. Contributing to the intellectual dialogue and conversations in our class is a foundational expectation of the course but is not explicitly included in the grading scheme because of how subjective assessing participation can be. I will touch base with students if I am concerned about their engagement in the course, but otherwise trust that students will do their best to contribute to our collective learning when and how they are most excited about doing so.

## STATEMENT OF INCLUSION & BELONGING

One of the goals of this class is to use social science research to ground conversations about race and racism, but this approach does not remove the passion, emotion, and challenge of having such conversations. This is especially true given that we will only be working together for two weeks. Furthermore, we all interpret findings through the lenses of our own experiences, be it ideological, racial, regional, or economic (to name a few). I have done my best to include a diverse set of perspectives; however, I acknowledge that it is possible there may be both overt and covert biases in the material, due to both the lens through which much of political science and journalism is written and through my own biases when choosing materials.

We will discuss topics that may generate strong personal and emotional reactions. Our conversations will not always be easy; we will make mistakes in our speaking and our listening; sometimes we will need patience or courage or imagination or any number of qualities in combination to engage our texts, our classmates, and our own ideas and experiences. We will always need respect for others. Thus, an additional aim of our course necessarily will be for us to increase our facility with the sometimes-difficult conversations that arise as we deepen our understandings of multiple perspectives. While our intention may not be to cause discomfort or offense, the impact of what happens throughout the course is not to be ignored and is something that I consider to be very important and deserving of attention. If and when this occurs, there are several ways to address it:

1. Discuss the situation privately with me. I am always open to listening to students' experiences, and want to work with students to find acceptable ways to process and address the issue.
2. Discuss the situation with the class. Starting by asking a question from a position of assuming the best about the speaker's intentions can be a useful strategy for bringing something to the class' attention. Chances are there is at least one other student in the class who had a similar response to the material. Discussion enhances the ability for all class participants to have a fuller understanding of context and impact of course material and class discussions.
3. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue directly with me, I encourage you to speak with one of your resident advisors.

## COURSE SCHEDULE & READINGS

We will read between 80 and 100 pages each week. Be sure to check each citation for any specifics on which chapters or pages to focus on. At the end of each class, I will preview the following week's readings and offer suggestions on what can be skimmed vs. what should be read in detail.

### PART I: SETTING THE STAGE

*What is race and racism? When and why did these concepts emerge?*

*What role have race and racism played in American history?*

*How has the role of race and racism in American politics changed over time?*

### September 2: Political science and its approach to race, racism, and policy

*What is political science?*

*How do political scientists approach the study of race and policy?*

Skill: What is a research question

Abrams, Stacey Y., et al. "E Pluribus Unum: The Fight over Identity Politics." *Foreign Aff.* 98 (2019): 160.

Hochschild, Jennifer. "Race and class in political science." *Mich. J. Race & L.* 11 (2005): 99.

Michener, Jamila. "Policy feedback in a racialized polity." *Policy Studies Journal* 47.2 (2019): 423-450.

### September 9: Defining race and racism

*What is race?*

*How should we define racism?*

Skill: The arc of research (what is the point of research in political science)

Bowser, Benjamin P. "Racism: Origin and theory." *Journal of black studies* 48.6 (2017): 572-590.

Fredrickson, George M. *Racism*. Princeton University Press, 2015. Introduction

Kendi, Ibram X. *How to be an Anti-Racist*. Random House, 2019. Introduction & Ch 1

López, Ian F. Haney. *Racism on trial: The Chicano fight for justice*. Harvard University Press, 2009. Introduction

Roberts, Steven O., and Michael T. Rizzo. "The psychology of American racism." *American Psychologist* (2020).

## **PART II: THE POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

*What role has race played in the development of American politics and American political institutions?*

*Have U.S. racial dynamics in politics changed over time? If so, how?*

### **September 16: Colonization and the origins of racial stratification**

*Who in the US defined race and how did they define it?*

*What are the historical reasons for acknowledging race in American society and politics?*

Skill: Staying organized while researching

Ericson, David F., and David F. Ericson. *Slavery in the American republic: developing the federal government, 1791-1861*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011. Ch 1.

Hirsh, Michael. "How America's Founding Fathers Missed a Chance to Abolish Slavery." *Foreign Affairs*. July 3 2020.

Reséndez, Andrés. *The other slavery: The uncovered story of Indian enslavement in America*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016. Ch 1.

### **September 23: Origins of the contemporary racial order**

*What were the incentives to make policies based on race?*

*How has the definition of white changed over time?*

*What role has race played in the development of American institutions?*

Skill: Effectively finding scholarly sources

Fox, Cybelle. "Three worlds of relief: Race, immigration, and public and private social welfare spending in American cities, 1929." *American Journal of Sociology* 116.2 (2010): 453-502.

Lieberman, Robert C. "Race, institutions, and the administration of social policy." *Social Science History* 19.4 (1995): 511-542.

Muhammad, Khalil Gibran. *The condemnation of Blackness: Race, crime, and the making of modern urban America, with a new preface*. Harvard University Press, 2019. Introduction & Ch 1.

### **September 30: Resistance and Protest Part I (Movements)**

*What tools and strategies have minority groups used to protest racism and discrimination?*

*Under what conditions are protest and resistance effective? Does it vary by group?*

Skill: Components of a research paper

Blackhawk, Maggie, et al. "Congressional Representation by Petition: Assessing the Voices of the Voteless in a Comprehensive New Database, 1789–1949." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (2020).

Blakemore, Erin. "The radical history of the Red Power movement's fight for Native American Sovereignty." *National Geographic*. November 25, 2020.

Hooker, Juliet. "Black Lives Matter and the paradoxes of US Black politics: From democratic sacrifice to democratic repair." *Political Theory* 44.4 (2016): 448-469.

Martinez, Lisa M. "Yes we can: Latino participation in unconventional politics." *Social Forces* 84.1 (2005): 135-155.

Yukich, Grace. "Muslim American activism in the age of Trump." *Sociology of Religion* 79.2 (2018): 220-247.

## October 7: Resistance and Protest Part II (Intergroup dynamics)

*How have racial groups cooperated to protest and resist discrimination?*

*Under what conditions is intergroup cooperation successful?*

Skill: Contextualizing your research (aka structuring literature reviews)

Filler, Nicole. "Intersectional perspectives on Asian Pacific American activism and movement building." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 6.3 (2018): 466-475. SKIM

Han, Hahrie C. *Moved to Action*. Stanford University Press, 2020. Ch 5.

Heaney, Michael T. "Intersectionality at the grassroots." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* (2019): 1-21.

Hussain, Amir. "Muslim Americans assert solidarity with Black Lives Matter, finding unity within a diverse faith group." *The Conversation*. June 30, 2020.

Jefferson, Hakeem, Fabian Neuner & Josh Pasek. "Black Americans support the Floyd protests. Whites are divided. Here's why." *The Washington Post*. June 10, 2020.

Kim, Claire Jean, and Taeku Lee. "Interracial politics: Asian Americans and other communities of color." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 34.3 (2001): 631-637.

Lee, Taeku. "Race, immigration, and the identity-to-politics link." *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 11 (2008): 457-478.

Thompson, Debra & Chloe Thurston (2018) *American Political Development in the Era of Black Lives Matter*, *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 6:1, 116-119

## October 14: Contemporary Electoral Politics

*How should we describe the current role of race in politics?*

*What explains the election of Barack Obama and the subsequent presidential politics?*

Skill: Using evidence in research papers (aka when to use primary and secondary sources)

Barker, David C. & Sam Fulwood III. "Young Black Americans not sold on Biden, the Democrats, or voting." *The Conversation*. August 5, 2020.

Hajnal, Zoltan L., and Taeku Lee. *Why Americans don't join the party*. Princeton University Press, 2011. Ch 4 & 6

Hochschild, Jennifer, and Vesla Weaver. "Is the significance of race declining in the political arena? Yes, and no." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38.8 (2015): 1250-1257.

Reny, Tyler T., and Matt A. Barreto. "Xenophobia in the time of pandemic: othering, anti-Asian attitudes, and COVID-19." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* (2020): 1-24.

"The Latinx Vote in 2020 (Part II): Growing the Pie. *Equis Research*. April 22, 2020.

## PART III: PUBLIC POLICIES

*How has this policy area contributed to or addressed racial inequality?*

*How might this policy area impact racial equality in the future?*

## October 21: Immigration and the changing racial order

*How has immigration policy changed over time and how do these changes reflect changing racial dynamics?*

*How do immigration policies impact the lived experiences of people residing in the United States?*

Skill: Quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing

Cook-Martin, David and David S. Fitzgerald, "How legacies of racism persist in US immigration policy" SSN Key Findings Brief, Scholar Strategy Network, June 2014.

Gonzales, Roberto. "Learning to be illegal: Undocumented youth and shifting legal contexts in the transition to adulthood." *American Sociological Review*, 2011: 602-619

Pierce, Sarah, Jessica Bolter, and Andrew Selee. "U.S. Immigration Policy under Trump: Deep Changes and Lasting Impacts." *Transatlantic Council on Migration: Migration Policy Institute*. July 2018.

Waters, Mary. "Crime and Immigration: New Forms of Exclusion and Discrimination." *Issues of Science and Technology*. Fall 2016.

Wong, Janelle. *Democracy's promise: Immigrants and American civic institutions*. University of Michigan Press, 2008.

"All Presidents Are Deporters in Chief." *New York Times*. July 13, 2019.

Zepeda-Millán, Chris. *Latino mass mobilization: Immigration, racialization, and activism*. Cambridge University Press, 2017. Ch 2.

## October 28: Incarceration and Legality

*What economic, social, and political incentives lead to the rise of the carceral state?*

*What are the social and political consequences of a carceral state that disproportionately targets people of color?*

Skill: Citations

Carlson, Kirsten. "Supreme Court affirms tribal police authority over non-Indians." *The Conversation*. June 3, 2021.

Fortner, Michael Javen. "The Carceral State and the Crucible of Black Politics: An Urban History of the Rockefeller Drug Laws." *Studies in American Political Development* 27.1 (2013): 14-35.

Murakawa, Naomi. "The Origins of the Carceral Crisis: Racial Order as 'Law and Order' in Postwar American Politics," in *Race and American Political Development*, eds. Joseph Lowndes, Julie Novkov, and Dorian Warren (New York: Routledge, 2008): 234-255.

Western, Bruce and Becky Pettit. "[Incarceration and Social Inequality](#)." *Daedalus* 139(3) (Summer 2010): 8-19.

Weaver, Vesla, "How Mass Imprisonment Burdens the United States with a Distrustful Civic Underclass" SSN Key Findings Brief, Scholar Strategy Network, October 2012

## November 4: Education

*What is the role for education and educational access in changing unequal racial outcomes?*

*Is changing the educational system the starting point for radical change or is it a reflection of change in other policy areas?*

Skill: Tackling student questions or issues

Darling-Hammond, Linda. "Race, inequality and educational accountability: The irony of 'No Child Left Behind'." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 10.3 (2007): 245-260.

Jack, Anthony Abraham. *The privileged poor*. Harvard University Press, 2019. Chapters TBD

Jiménez, Tomás and Adam Horowitz, "When White Is Just Alright: How Immigrants Redefine Achievement and Reconfigure the Ethnoracial Hierarchy," *American Sociological Review* 2013: 849-871

Reed, Douglas S. "Harlan's Dissent: Citizenship, Education, and the Color-Conscious Constitution." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 7.1 (2021): 148-165.

## November 11: Voting Rights

*Is voting a right or a responsibility?*

*Should governments monitor who votes or encourage people to vote?*

Skill: Writers' workshop

Barreto, Matt A., Gary M. Segura, and Nathan D. Woods. "The mobilizing effect of majority–minority districts on Latino turnout." *American Political Science Review* 98.1 (2004): 65-75.

Highton, Benjamin. "Voter identification laws and turnout in the United States." *Annual Review of Political Science* 20 (2017): 149-167.

Michener, Jamila. "Race, Poverty, and the Redistribution of Voting Rights." *Poverty & Public Policy* 8.2 (2016): 106-128.

Newkirk, Vann R. II. "How *Shelby v. Holder* Broke America." *The Atlantic*. July 20, 2018.

Schuit, Sophie, and Jon C. Rogowski. "Race, representation, and the voting rights act." *American Journal of Political Science* 61.3 (2017): 513-526.

## November 18: Student choice 1

Skill: Deep dive on introductions & conclusions

## December 2: Student choice 2 & Wrap Up

Skill: Writers' workshop

### Options for student choice:

#### Climate Change and Climate Justice

*How has (and will) climate change affect social, political and economic outcomes for different racial groups?*

*In what ways is climate change similar or different from the other public policy areas of concern for racial justice activists?*

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "The politics of climate change is more than the politics of capitalism." *Theory, Culture & Society* 34.2-3 (2017): 25-37.

"EPA Annual Environmental Justice Progress Report FY 2020." *Environmental Protection Agency*. 2020. Executive Summary.

Flavelle, Christopher. "As Warming Fuels Disaster, Relief Often Favors White People." *The New York Times*. June 7, 2021.

Hale, Stephen. "The new politics of climate change: why we are failing and how we will succeed." *Environmental Politics* 19.2 (2010): 255-275.

Marris, Emma. "Inevitable Planetary Doom Has Been Exaggerated." *The Atlantic*. February 1, 2021.

#### Healthcare

*How does the American healthcare system work and why is it designed the way it is?*

*What are the social, economic, and political impacts of having access to healthcare?*

Campbell, Andrea Louise. *Trapped in America's Safety Net: One Family's Struggle*. University of Chicago Press, 2014. Ch 1 & 4

Oliver, Thomas R. "The politics of public health policy." *Annual Review of Public Health* 27 (2006): 195-233.

Michener, Jamila. *Fragmented democracy: Medicaid, federalism, and unequal politics*. Cambridge University Press, 2018. Chapters TBD

Michener, Jamila D. "Politics, Pandemic, and Racial Justice Through the Lens of Medicaid." (2021): 643-646.

Tesler, Michael. 2012. "The Spillover of Racialization into Health Care: How President Obama Polarized Public Opinion by Racial Attitudes and Race." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(3): 690-704.

#### Statues and symbols

*How should Americans acknowledge and celebrate their history given past expressions of racism?*

*What drives public opinion regarding monuments? How should public serving institutions decide what historical figures to display and honor?*

Blight, David W. "Yes Freedman's Memorial Uses Racist Imagery, but Don't Tear it down." *The Washington Post*. June 25, 2020.

Brophy, Alfred L. "Why the case for the removal of Confederate Memorials isn't so clear cut." *The Conversation*. April 25, 2017.

Carr-Peterson, Jordan & Christian R. Grose. "What persuades Southerners to take down Confederate symbols? Hearing it's good for business." *The Washington Post*. July 2, 2020.

Johnson, Tyler, Kathleen Tipler, and Tyler Camarillo. "Monumental decisions: How direct democracy shapes attitudes in the conflict over confederate memorials." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 52.4 (2019): 620-624.

Tesler, Michael. "Democrats increasingly think the Confederate flag is racist. Republicans don't." *The Washington Post*. July 9, 2015.

Yin, Victoria. "Indigenous activists demand removal of Iowa monuments, restructuring of historical narrative." *Des Moines Register*. July 5, 2020.