

## **Race and American Politics**

PG 304A

Fall 2010

MW 2-3:20

Wyatt 308

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After the election of the first African-American president, we heard the term “post-racial” used more frequently. What is meant by that term? Does it have any utility, in describing our current state or our aspirations? In what way is our current racial terrain different from what has come before? In what ways do racial struggles continue or get transformed? This class will provide leverage understanding these claims of “post-racial” politics by placing them in a broader perspective.

Race is central to American politics, and not just when a black candidate appeals to white voters or when the Supreme Court weighs in on racial preferences; race is embedded in our day-to-day political dialogue, questions, and institutions. Conversely, politics is central to understanding the meaning and the history of race. To gain insight into how race and American politics define one another, we will look at historical and contemporary critical moments. The course is divided into three sections. In the first section of the course we look at theories and historical narratives of race in American politics. In the second section we explore how race impacts political behavior of various actors including voters and elected officials. In the third section of the course, we consider particular public policy dilemmas and the role race plays. (Please see the attached questions at the end of the syllabus for further explanations of these sections.) By the end of this course, students should be able to talk critically about the evolution of the concept of race in America, identify how race shapes our political language, behavior and outcomes, and evaluate contemporary public policy more critically.

To that end you will be asked to complete a take-home midterm and final and a research paper, and, with a group, lead one class session.

All reading can be found on Moodle or in the following books available in the bookstore or through on-line sellers:

Alonso, Gaston et al., *Our Schools Suck: Students Talk Back to a Segregated Nation on the Failures of Urban Education* New York: New York University Press, 2009.

Ifill, Gwen. *The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Obama* New York: Double Day, 2009.

Katznelson, Ira *When Affirmative Action was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth Century America*, New York: W. W. Norton and Co, 2005.

## Grading Summary:

In Class Participation	15%
On line Participation	10%
Take-home midterm	25%
Take-home final	25%
Research Project	20%
Policy Class group work	5%

**In-Class Participation:** It is critical that students come to class having done the reading assigned for that day. *Students are expected to arrive for each class having critically engaged the reading and taken notes on the reading including questions regarding the material. I may ask students to occasionally share from their notes or written questions.* Participation will count for 15% of your final grade. Participation includes active listening, critical questions, as well as analysis of course material. I will record a participation grade for students on a 4 point scale.

0: Absent

1: Was present. Listened attentively and did not disrupt the class.

2: Was present. Contributed, however did not indicate thorough preparation for that day. Course material was not engaged.

3: Was present. Contributed and critically engaged the course material. Demonstrated thorough preparation for that day, both with reading and forethought.

4: Was present. Contributed and critically engaged the course material, *as well as other students' comments.* Demonstrated thorough preparation for that day, both with reading and forethought. *Remained engaged throughout the entire class period.*

Two absences will be excused. The student will simply receive no participation grade for those days. After that, absences for any reason will be averaged into your participation grade. A student missing 5 or more classes may be unenrolled from the course or may fail the class as a result of excessive absences.

**On-line Participation:** In preparation for our in-class discussion, we will engage in an on-line conversation regarding the material. Every student should post either a reply or begin a new discussion thread on moodle regarding the reading for that week. All new discussion threads need to be posted by 10PM the night before class. All replies need to be posted by noon the day of the class.

You will be assigned two class periods for which you will be an online discussion "leader." The days that you are a leader you will need to post a new discussion thread that includes a summary of the reading(s), a statement of the authors' thesis, and critique or discussion question to give others something to sink their teeth into. As a leader you should also follow the discussion and interject when moved.

Online participation will be evaluated as pass/fail and will count for 10% of your final grade. If you participate demonstrating that you have read the material for the day and thought critically about what others were saying you will receive a pass. If you fail to participate responsibly or fail to draw from the reading, you will not receive credit for that day. You will be notified if you have not received credit for a posting.

You have 3 free passes that can be used at anytime (except when you have been assigned as a leader). Those passes can be used in conjunction with an in-class absence but do not have to be used in that manner. You can receive online participation points even if you will not be present in class.

**Take Home Essays:** The midterm essay exam will be distributed in class on October 6<sup>th</sup> and is due by 2PM on October 13<sup>th</sup>. The essay needs to be uploaded to moodle by the due date and time. The final essay exam will be distributed on December 8<sup>th</sup>. Your essay needs to be uploaded to moodle by 4PM on December 15<sup>th</sup> (the time the registrar has scheduled for our final). On both exams, you will be asked to answer one of two essay questions. For each you will need to integrate course material in order to a craft response. Each essay should be between 4 and 6 pages and will count for 25% of your final grade.

**Research Paper:** You will write a 7-10 page research paper focusing on a question that you select about race and American politics. The paper project will count for 20% of your final grade.

You will need to turn in a topic proposal and annotated bibliography on October 27<sup>th</sup>. (*You are welcome to turn this in earlier if you want more time with your research project.*) You will perform preliminary research identifying at least 6 scholarly sources that address the topic you have chosen. You should write an annotated bibliography. (If you have questions about what an annotated bibliography is this site might be useful: <http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm> .) At this stage you do not need to have a research question formulated but at the end of the bibliography you should brain storm a set of at least 3 research questions that emerged from your reading. This is an important part of the research process and should think about this seriously as you are committing to the research topic you select.

You will turn in a research proposal on November 8<sup>th</sup>. Your research proposal should have a clearly articulated research question and plan of how you intend to go about addressing that question. That plan should include sources that you identify as important to addressing your question. A working hypothesis should also be included. Identify any problems that you think you might encounter as well.

A draft of the paper is due on moodle by 2PM on November 29<sup>th</sup>. (Please note: this is the day after Thanksgiving vacation. I strongly encourage those who want to have a carefree break to turn this in before you go. However, the due date is the 29<sup>th</sup> for those who absolutely need that extra time away from classes.) This should be a paper that you are ready to hand in. This is not a “rough” draft. You should have thoroughly edited research paper, as you will only have one week to incorporate any changes raised by a

conversation with your peers regarding your paper. You will get the benefit of feedback from at least two individuals in class on December 1<sup>st</sup>. The final version of the paper is due on moodle by 2PM December 8th.

Because time frequently seems to move more quickly at the end of the term, I highly encourage you to look ahead and pick a topic that interests you early so you can begin to work on the paper early.

**Policy Class Leadership:**

You will be placed in a one of three groups. Each group will need to meet to discuss what policy issue related to race and American politics they would like to cover. As a group you will need to decide on appropriate readings (40-80 pages per class is the average) and post them on moodle 1 full week prior to the class session you are leading. As a group you will be expected to have done additional research on the topic so that you can provide some initial context for the readings you have selected. Your group will receive a grade and that grade will be worth 5% of your final grade.

Classroom Policies and Procedures:

**Plagiarism** is using someone else's words or ideas without properly giving them credit. Knowing what constitutes plagiarism can be complicated. I strongly encourage you to look at the library's information on the topic at <http://alacarte.pugetsound.edu/subject-guide/6-Academic-Integrity-Puget-Sound>. If after looking through their material you have any questions as to what constitutes plagiarism, please do ask as I take plagiarism very seriously. Incidents of plagiarism will result, *at a minimum*, in a failing grade for the assignment. Additionally, all instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the University.

**Tech in the classroom:** Cell phones and laptops should be turned off and remain in stored throughout the class. Any active use of cell phones during class (e.g. texting, websurfing, making a call) could result in a student being unenrolled from the course.

**Learning Disabilities:** Students with a documented disability that requires academic accommodation should speak with me and Ivey West, the Coordinator of Disabilities Services in the Center for Writing and Learning (Howarth 105, ext. 3395, or email [iwest@ups.edu](mailto:iwest@ups.edu)) as early as possible. Ms. West will assist you in developing a plan to address your academic needs.

### Schedule

(This schedule may, and most likely will, shift as the term proceeds. Changes will be announced in class. If you are absent, it is your obligation to find out if the schedule has shifted.)

Topic		Date	Reading	
The US Census and Politics of Race		August 30	No Reading	
		Sept 1	Nobles; Prewitt	
History and Theory	The Founding and the Refounding	Sept 8	Winant	
		Sept 13	Bell; Lowndes, Novkov and Warren	
		Sept 15	Rogin; Young and Meiser	
		Sept 20	Horton I and II	
	New Deal	Sept 22	Katznelson: Preface, Chapters 1-3	
		Sept 27	Katznelson: Chapters 4-end	
	Civil Rights Movement	Sept 29	Morris chapters 1 and 3	
		Oct 4	Jacqueline Hall Dowd; Lowndes intro and chapter 4	
Contemporary Politics Part I: Elected officials		Oct 6	Ifill (begin reading)	No online participation required
		Oct 11	Ifill (completed)	
		Oct 13	No Reading	Midterm Due
Public Policy Part I: Education		Oct 20	Brown Gunier (additional resources, not required reading: Guajardo; Bell)	
		Oct 25	Alonso et al. Intro –Chapter 2	
		Oct 27	Chapter 3- Conclusion	Research Topic and Bibliography Due
		Nov 1	No Reading	Online participation should be about RPNC.
Contemporary Politics Part II: Political Behavior		Nov 3	Junn and Matto; Chong and Kim	
		Nov 8	Wong, Lien, and Conway; de la Garza et al, De Francesco Soto and Merolla	Research Proposal
		Nov 10	Mendelberg; Kinders	
Public Policy Part II: Immigration		Nov 15	Jung; Calavita	
		Nov 17	Ngai; Feagin;	
		Nov 22	Jacobson; Schuck and Smith	
Public Policy Part III: Your Turn		Nov 29	TBA Group I	Drafts of Paper Due
		Dec 1	Two peer papers as assigned in class	
		Dec 6	TBA Group II	
		Dec 8	TBA Group III	Final Papers Due

## **Guidelines for Participating in Discussion** (from Professor Susan Owen)

Discussions are specialized forms of communication, requiring preparation, skillful participation, and an understanding of basic rules of civic decorum. The most important aspect of discussion is listening – knowing how to track a conversation, how to participate effectively, and how to guide a group toward achieving stated goals. Good discussion skills, like good public presentation skills, take time and effort to develop. The following guidelines should help us begin to develop those skills.

1. Turn taking is crucial.
  - Please signal your interest in contributing to the conversation before entering it.
  - Please do not interrupt people while they are speaking. Please do not talk when others are talking (this includes carrying on conversations with those around you). Why? You cannot *listen* while talking. Whether intended or not, you signal disrespect when you talk while someone else has the floor.
  - Please “get in line” behind those who have signaled an interest in participating. (Pay attention to who has had her or his hand raised ahead of you – insist that they go ahead of you).
  - If an idea has been thoroughly discussed, be willing to let go of your contribution, (this time). Perhaps someone else has already represented your point of view.
  - Note that ten people cannot talk at once, nor can ten people comment on each point (without causing us to lose focus in the discussion). Choose where and when you will contribute. On the other hand, be sure that you *do* contribute.
2. Monitor your participation.
  - Are you dominating the conversation? If so, spend more time listening and tracking the conversation. Think of ways to help others join the conversation.
  - Are you mostly silent? If so, plan strategies for entering into the conversation. You have an obligation to participate. Ask for help if you need to develop skills for participating.
3. Help the group focus the discussion.
  - Listen carefully to the conversation.
  - Make notes to help yourself and the group track the flow of the conversation.
  - When the group gets sidetracked on a tangent or gets stuck on a particular point, be willing to help get us back on target. Have we gotten to a point where we are simply restating entrenched positions?
4. Help others participate.
  - Listen carefully when others speak. Never interrupt. Never speak while others are speaking. If you have a strong response to what is being said, jot down a note to yourself to bring this up when it seems appropriate.
  - Refer to the ideas or points of view of others, when relevant.
  - You may wish to take the discussion in a particular direction – tell us that you want to do so, and why.
  - Invite others to join the conversation – especially those who are quiet. Ask people for their input.

5. Explain the relevance of your contribution.
  - Connect your comments to what has already been said – where do they “fit” in the conversation?
6. Be willing to disagree, but do so respectfully.
  - Always explain the basis of your disagreement. Always listen carefully when others disagree with you, and consider carefully what they are saying. Consider that others may want to comment on the disagreement – you do not always have to defend your position.
  - When in a moment of disagreement, keep track of how much “talk” time you and the other person are taking up. At some point, invite others to join the discussion. We want as many people as possible joining the discussion.

## Guiding Questions for Race and American Politics

This list contains some of the questions we will be focusing on in each section of the course. The list should also provide some insight into the direction the midterm and the final exam might take. These questions are by no means an exhaustive list of the ideas or concerns that we will raise, nor should they serve to limit your exploration of the course material. They are provided simply to help jump start or reorient you to the big themes in each section if you are feeling lost.

### Race Theory and History

- What is race?
- How does race define American politics?
- How does American politics define the concept, the content and the import of race?
- What are some other pathways that race and politics interact?
- What is the relationship between American liberalism and race?
- Why does history matter?

### Electoral Politics

- How does race impact public opinion and political behavior?
- How will changing demographics impact American politics?
- How does race impact the possibilities for elected leaders?
- How/does race problematize democratic representation?

### Public Policy

- What does the history of a policy arena tell us about the contemporary debate? What does it tell us about possible solutions?
- How does race impact our education policy? What would it mean to have a "colorblind" education system? Is that desirable?
- How has race shaped our immigration system? How are the concepts of citizenship and race connected? What role does race play in the contemporary immigration debate? Does this give us leverage on considering different policy proposals?