

POLS 320: Race and Politics in the United States

Fall 2024

Texas A&M University

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Student hours: Tuesdays 1:30-2:30 or by appointment

Location: Allen 3062

TA: Lindsey Gonzalez

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Student hours: Thursdays 1:30-2:30

Location: Allen 3003-E

Course Objective

In this course, we will examine race and racism and their impacts on American politics. Specifically, we will begin by learning about the foundations of the concepts of race and racism in the United States. In addition to discussing how traditionally underrepresented groups (i.e., Black, Latinx, Asian, Native American) fare in American politics, we will discuss how the changing demographics of the country have impacted the dominance of Whites. We will learn about the role of race in representation, public opinion, and how those things translate into political outcomes. We will also learn how race, class, and geography interact to influence outcomes. We will look specifically into several policy areas, including criminal justice, education, housing, health, and employment. Essentially, we will learn how race informs the fundamental question of politics: Who gets what, when, and how?

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the semester, my goal is that you will all be able to:

- Explain the origins of the concepts of race and racism, and the evolution of race and racism in America
- Explain how systemic racism affects political representation, behavior, and outcomes
- Analyze the current state of key policy debates in US politics and be able to identify potential outcomes of policy changes.

Course structure

The course is divided into four sections. We'll start by discussing the concepts of race and racism, then we'll move to some of their effects on different political outcomes. In the third section, we'll take the knowledge that we've gained so far and turn to policy areas. Finally, we'll conclude the course by discussing relevant current developments.

Readings and other required material

- All readings will be made available through the campus library (e-reserves) and/or Canvas, or will be freely available online.
- There will be a number of podcasts, documentaries, and other media assigned. These will either be available through the library, Canvas, or online.
- If there is a topic you are specifically interested in and would like to read more deeply, you may want to consider purchasing some of the books, but this will not be required for the class.

- Each week, you will be responsible for all *required* content on the schedule. I will also offer “Optional” reading, podcasts, shows, etc. These are not required and will not be a part of any assignments or quizzes, however you are free to use any optional material for your discussion questions. I will expect that you have completed the required material *before* the class for which it is assigned.
- The lectures will be meant to supplement the readings. What this means is that I will not summarize the readings (although I will often ask one of you to get us started by doing so), and I will not lecture directly on the readings, however I do welcome any questions directly about the readings.
- Quizzes will be the first thing that happens and they will begin promptly at the beginning of class, and last between 5-10 minutes. They will be straightforward and if you’ve read/watched/listened to the material, you should have no trouble with them. If you have not, you will probably have a hard time passing them. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped.
- If you miss a lecture for a reason excused under Student Rule 7, please notify me and Lindsey so that we can arrange a time for you to complete any missed quizzes or other work. (See page 18 for more information about Rule 7.) You will have one week from the excused absence to complete any missed work. It is your responsibility to make arrangements with Lindsey for any make-up work.
- In addition to the required material on the syllabus, you should also keep up with current events in US politics, as we will discuss relevant developments in a variety of ongoing debates.
- Non-academic Sources: Make sure you are relying on *credible* sources of information. If you are not sure if a source is credible, feel free to ask me. Some credible sources that you can use include: *NPR*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The*

Wall Street Journal. This is by no means an exhaustive list. Opinion pieces (Op-Eds) are often very interesting and informative, but for the purposes of this class, stick with fact-based journalism.

- Fact checking is always a good idea. These websites (among others) are reliable: www.factcheck.org and www.politifact.com

Lectures

- I hope to keep the “lecturing” to a minimum and rely more on discussion for this class. We will start with reading quizzes, I will usually start us off with some content, and then we will discuss. My expectation is that we all observe the Aggie Core Values in all of our dealings with each other.

Student Hours

- Dr. Pathakis: Tuesdays 1:30-2:30, or by appointment. Lindsey: Thursdays 1:30-2:30, or by appt.
- You may be used to hearing “Office Hours,” but I want to emphasize that these hours are for you. They are not meant for me to have extra work time in my office, they are meant for students to have access to me. Here are some things you can use student hours for:
 - To discuss class material. Maybe you find something confusing, surprising, interesting, boring, controversial, and want to discuss further. Maybe you don’t see the relevance and want to ask why I assigned it.
 - To discuss a challenge that is interfering with your academic progress.
 - To make sure I know you, so that, one day, when you need letters of recommendation, you won’t feel weird asking.

- Maybe the current racial climate in this country is adding to your daily stress and you want to talk, or you want help finding resources.
- You're a first-generation college student (me too!) and you are having trouble navigating the college culture. Maybe you aren't first-gen and you're having trouble navigating it. Either way, come talk!
- Maybe you aren't sure if Political Science is the right major for you.
- Maybe you have a really good joke.
- My point is, I'm here to help, however I can.

Class Requirements

I have designed this to be a discussion-based course. As such, my emphasis is on providing the proper motivation to engage with the materials. If everyone comes to class prepared, we will have richer discussions and everyone will benefit. I hope the design will incentivize this.

- **Quizzes:** There will be a quiz most weeks, for a total of 10 quizzes. You will not know whether there will be a quiz until the session starts. You will be able to drop your lowest quiz grade. What that means is that if you miss a quiz, you will get a zero, and you can drop that quiz. If you miss a quiz in the beginning of the semester, be aware that you probably won't want to miss another, because you can only drop one. No notes are allowed.
- **Assignments:** Due every Thursday by 10am to the Canvas Discussion, you must submit a 1-3 sentence question/comment based on that week's materials. It can be on any of the materials, required or supplemental/optional. It should show thoughtful reflection on the material. In your submissions for this class, please:

- Avoid jargon
- Write simply
- Aim for clarity

If you're unsure whether you're following these guidelines, think of a thoughtful, curious friend or family member who is not an expert. Could that person understand what you've written? If not, you're not following these guidelines. Here are a few ideas to consider for opening your sentences:

- What implications might X have for....
 - How would you compare X to...
 - I find it interesting/puzzling/frustrating that...
 - I'd like more discussion about...
- Cold calling: During class, I will use cold-calling to get the discussions started and keep them going. I will call names at random (we generate a random list for each class) and if your name is called, you will answer a question, offer your thoughts, etc. This can be intimidating, but let me assure you that my goal is not to catch you off guard or embarrass you. I've used this method for years and students are worried about it, but once they see it in action, they appreciate it.
 - Grading: Cold call responses will be graded 1, 0.5, 0. You can only get a 0 if you are absent, or offer no response. Cold call grades will be added to your assignment grades as a bonus. Cold calls can only help you. Everyone will get cold-called at least twice.
 - * 1 Response shows serious and thoughtful consideration and/or excellent command of the material.
 - * 0.5: Response doesn't show much thought/reflection, but you showed up.

* 0: You were not present or did not respond when you were called.

- Final Project: Groups of 4-5 will conduct a deep-dive into one policy (past or present) and will present a 15-minute policy brief explaining the policy and its consequences.
- Exams: There will be no mid-term or final exams
- Late work policy: No late work will be accepted unless covered by Student Rule 7 and submitted within a week.

Grading

- Final Grade

- **Quizzes: 35%**

- Quizzes will be graded based on the % correct. Lowest score will be dropped.

- **Assignments: 25%**

- Assignments will be graded 3, 2, 1, or 0 points:

- 3: shows thoughtful reading/consumption of material and careful consideration of the main points

- 2: you probably read the material, but did not give it much thought

- 1: not clear that you read the material, but you turned something in

- 0: did not turn in

- Cold call scores will be added to assignment scores.

- **Final project: 40%**

- Group component: 25%

- Individual component: 15%

- Notes on Grading

- If you are unsatisfied with a grade, you must submit, in writing, your complaint, including: what the dispute is (i.e., what was graded incorrectly and why); any supporting evidence that should be considered. If you request a re-grade, your grade may be raised, lowered, or left the same, and will be final. Any grade disputes must be addressed before the final week of the semester. No grade disputes will be accepted after 5pm December 2.
- If you keep up with the required materials, you will have no trouble passing this class.

- **Grading Scale**

The scale is final; it will not be curved or otherwise adjusted.

A = 89.5-100

B = 79.5-89.4

C = 69.5-79.4

D = 59.5-69.4

F = less than 59.5

Other Course Information/Policies

Contacting Dr. Pathakis

I welcome and encourage you to contact me early and often. To facilitate communication and save us all time, please post questions that apply to the operation of the course to Canvas so that others may reference the questions and answers there. If you have a question, chances are others do as well. This is a very comprehensive syllabus, so please look here for answers to your questions before posting.

If you have a question or issue of a personal nature and you need to get in touch with me outside of my scheduled student hours, email me at kpathakis@tamu.edu. If you email me during normal business hours, you can generally expect a reply within 24 hours. I will rarely email you outside of regular business hours and if I do, I do not expect you to respond until normal business hours.

Contacting Lindsey Gonzalez

We are very fortunate to have an excellent TA for this class. Lindsey is available to help you understand the course material, clarify expectations, and be a resource for whatever you need to be successful in this course. You can email her at lpg201@tamu.edu.

Any mistreatment of the teaching team, either verbally, or in writing, is a violation of the Aggie Core Values of Excellence and Respect and will not be tolerated. I expect everyone to communicate about this course with each other and the teaching team with respect and integrity.

Schedule & Required Materials

Based on the progress of the class and current events, I may make changes to the schedule, but I will do so with advance notification.

WEEKS 1-4: What is race? What is racism?

At the end of this section you should understand what race is and what different types of racism are. You should also understand the differences between individual and structural racism and how the two interact.

Week 1: Introduction

- August 20

Discussion about the class

- August 22

Read Syllabus

Bonilla-Silva (2022), Chapter 3, "The New Racism: The US Structure since the 1960s"

In class: Answer questions about syllabus, class activity, discuss chapter 3.

Week 2: History of Race & Racism

- August 27

McClain and Carew (2018), Chapter 1 "America's Dilemmas"

- In class: Discuss expectations for final project

- August 29:

Film: Stamped from the Beginning, available on Netflix

Hannah-Jones et al. (2021), Chapter 1 "Democracy"

Week 3: Individual Racism, what is it, how do we measure it?

- September 3

Hannah-Jones et al. (2021), Chapter 2 "Race"

In class activity: Build a median family budget

- September 5

Bonilla-Silva (2022), Chapter 4: The Central Frames of Color-Blind Racism

Video: Netflix Explained: The Racial Wealth Gap

OPTIONAL: DeSante and Watts Smith (2019), Chapter 3 "New Attitudes or Old Measures?"

Week 4: Structural Racism

FOR THURSDAY DQ: Pick a city you know well and look at the redlining map at Mapping Inequality. Can you see any enduring effects? Here are some stats to look at: home-ownership rates by race, green spaces, business-ownership by race, income, school quality in previously redlined areas compared to never-redlined areas.

- September 10

Grimm & Loke, Chapter 3, "Residential Segregation in the Twenty-First Century and the Role of Housing Policy"

VIDEO: Housing Segregation In Everything

Liberal Hypocrisy is Fueling American Inequality. Here's How. — NYT Opinion

- September 12:

Hannah-Jones et al. (2021), Chapter 7 "Politics"

Video: How Can We Win?

Weeks 5-7: The role of race in US politics: Public Opinion and Representation

By the end of this section, you should understand the major racial divides in public opinion, the different types of representation, and how race and political behavior are related.

Week 5: Public Opinion

- September 17

Kinder and Sanders (1996), Chapter 2

In class activity: Group selection

- September 19 **Assignment, turn in pdf of Pew figure to the discussion link for this week by 10am Thursday**

Go to Pew Research, explore the different topic areas. Find something that is race-related and interesting to you. Take a screenshot of a figure, take a few notes. I will ask you to share what you found. I will give an example in class in week 3.

Hajnal (2020), Chapter 4 "Who Wins on Policy?"

Optional: Hajnal (2020), Chapter 1 "What Divides Us? Race, Class, and Political Choice"

Week 6: Voting & Representation

- September 24

Gerrymandering Explained

Has the Voting Rights Act Outlived its Usefulness? In a Word, 'No' (available on Course Reserves or by googling)

Watch: Netflix, Explained: Limited Series, 3 (Whose Vote Counts)

- September 26

Hajnal (2020), Chapter 3 "Which Voters Win Elections?"

Watch: Netflix, Explained: Limited Series, Episodes 1 (The Right to Vote)

Week 7: Voting & Representation (cont.)

- October 1

Hajnal, Lajevardi and Nielson (2017) (Course Reserves);

Watch John Oliver's piece on Voting

Optional: Watch Selma

- October 3

Readings TBD Depending on current events and campaigns

In class: Fact check VP debate with groups

Week 8: No class this week

- October 8: No Class, Fall Break
- October 10: *Ring day, no class, use time to read ahead and/or work on group projects

Weeks 9-14: Policy Debates

By the end of this section, you should have an understanding of the major debates about criminal justice, education, health, housing, and employment. You should also have an understanding of how policy solutions could be crafted, and what their limitations are.

Week 9: How Policy Contributes to Racial Inequality

- October 15

Read:

The Atlantic: Coates, The Case for Reparations

Bruce's Beach follow up piece

John Oliver Housing Discrimination

- October 17

Read:

Bloomberg: The Case against Local Reparations The Economist:

The idea of reparations for slavery is morally appealing but flawed

Week 10: Education

- October 22

Read: The Banality of Racism in Education

Caliendo (2015), Chapter 4: Education

Watch: The Battle for Busing, New York Times

Listen: Code Switch Podcast: A Tale of Two School Districts

- October 24: NO CLASS. Meetings with teaching team. Classroom space will be available if you'd like to use it to work.

Week 11: Health

- October 29: NO CLASS. Meetings with teaching team. Classroom space will be available if you'd like to use it to work.
- October 31:

Kenny (2015). Power, opportunism, racism: human experiments under American slavery. *Endeavour*, 39(1), pp.10-20.

Grimm & Loke, Chapter 5, "Public Policies Designed to Increase Health Equity"

Washington Post, "Years of medical abuse make Black Americans less likely to trust the coronavirus vaccine."

Optional:

Codeswitch podcast from April 11, 2020 "Why The Coronavirus Is Hitting Black Communities Hardest"

Full Frontal with Samantha Bee: The Hell and Horror of Giving Birth While Black

Week 13: Criminal Justice

- November 5: **ELECTION DAY**

How are Americans voting? Discussion. Prepare by going to Pew Research and being ready to discuss how a group of your choosing has voted.

Watch: 13th (available on Netflix)

Alexander (2020), Chapter 1, "The Rebirth of Caste"

- November 7

Alexander (2020), Chapter 4, "The Cruel Hand"

Watch John Oliver's piece on Police Raids

Week 14: Criminal Justice (cont.)/Immigration

- November 12

Alexander (2020), Chapter 3, "The Color of Justice"

Listen: Codeswitch Podcast: Almost 4 million people are on probation or parole.

Here's why that matters.

John Oliver: Prosecutors

Why you should stop saying "all lives matter," explained in 9 different ways

- November 14: Immigration and the Future of Race in US Politics

Grimm & Loke, "Build that Wall?", starts page 113.

Hajnal (2020), Chapter 5 "Immigration is Reshaping Partisan Politics"

Watch: John Oliver, Immigration Courts

Hajnal (2020), Chapter 6

Week 15: Group Presentations

- November 19:

- November 21:

Week 16: Group Presentations/Class conclusion

- November 26:

References

- Alexander, Michelle. 2020. *The New Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. The New Press.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2022. *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Caliendo, Stephen M. 2015. *Inequality in America: Race, poverty, and fulfilling democracy's promise*. Routledge.
- DeSante, Christopher D and Candis Watts Smith. 2019. *Racial Stasis: The millennial generation and the stagnation of racial attitudes in American politics*. University of Chicago Press.
- Hajnal, Zoltan L. 2020. *Dangerously Divided: How Race and Class Shape Winning and Losing in American Politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hajnal, Zoltan, Nazita Lajevardi and Lindsay Nielson. 2017. "Voter identification laws and the suppression of minority votes." *The Journal of Politics* 79(2):363–379.
- Hannah-Jones, Nikole et al. 2021. *The 1619 Project: A new origin story*. One World.
- Kenny, Stephen C. 2015. "Power, opportunism, racism: human experiments under American slavery." *Endeavour* 39(1):10–20.
- Kinder, Donald R and Lynn M Sanders. 1996. *Divided by Color: Racial politics and democratic ideals*. University of Chicago Press.
- McClain, Paula and Jessica D. Johnson Carew. 2018. *Can we all get along?: Racial and ethnic minorities in American politics*. Routledge.

University Policies

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to Student Rule 7 in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to Student Rule 7 in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

"Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor" (Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1).

"The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence" (Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See Student Rule 24.)

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

"Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" (Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20).

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability

or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Resources in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see University Rule 08.01.01.M1):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University's goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University's Title IX webpage.

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care by utilizing the resources and services available from Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS). Students who need someone to talk to can call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National

Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

COVID-19

Campus Safety Measures

To promote public safety and protect students, faculty, and staff during the coronavirus pandemic, Texas A&M University has adopted policies and practices for the Spring 2021 academic term to limit virus transmission. Students must observe the following practices while participating in face-to-face courses and course-related activities (office hours, help sessions, transitioning to and between classes, study spaces, academic services, etc.):

- **Self-monitoring**—Students should follow CDC recommendations for self-monitoring. Students who have a fever or exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should participate in class remotely if that option is available, and should not participate in face-to-face instruction.
- **Face Coverings**—Face coverings (cloth face covering, surgical mask, etc.) must be properly worn in all non-private spaces including classrooms, teaching laboratories, common spaces such as lobbies and hallways, public study spaces, libraries, academic resource and support offices, and outdoor spaces where 6 feet of physical distancing is difficult to reliably maintain. Description of face coverings and additional guidance are provided in the Face Covering policy and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) available on the Provost website.
- **Physical Distancing**—Physical distancing must be maintained between students, instructors, and others in course and course-related activities.
- **Classroom Ingress/Egress**—Students must follow marked pathways for entering and exiting classrooms and other teaching spaces. Leave classrooms promptly after course activities have concluded. Do not congregate in hallways and maintain 6-foot physical distancing when waiting to enter classrooms and other instructional spaces.
- **To attend a face-to-face class, students must properly wear an approved face covering** If a student refuses to wear a face covering, the instructor should ask the student to leave and join the class remotely. If the student does not leave the class, the faculty member should report that student to the Student Conduct office for sanctions. Additionally, the faculty member may choose to teach that day's class remotely for all students, or dismiss the class in the case of a traditional face to face lecture.

Personal Illness and Quarantine

Students required to quarantine must participate in courses and course-related activities remotely, if that option is available, and must not attend face-to-face course activities. Students should notify their instructors of the quarantine requirement. Students

under quarantine are expected to participate in courses and complete graded work unless they have symptoms that are too severe to participate in course activities.

Students experiencing personal injury or illness that is too severe for the student to attend class qualify for an excused absence (See Student Rule 7, Section 7.2.2.) To receive an excused absence, students must comply with the documentation and notification guidelines outlined in Student Rule 7.