

## The History of Race in America

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### Description

The United States' global dominance has long been the envy of the world. But the role of race and racism to native born and newcomer alike has been treated often as aberrational, an unfortunate artifact of the nation's past. This course examines the nature of race and racism at the heart of the American project through a historical lens of wealth creation, labor markets, political culture, social institutions, immigration and civic life. Although race often attaches to people of color, racial identity and ideology have been inescapable constructs for all who reside in this country. Drawing on African American and immigration history, (post) colonial studies, critical race theory, and whiteness studies, students will gain historical knowledge required for leadership in a 21st century, multi-racial democracy. Students who plan to work in non-profits, government agencies and policy circles will also gain new analytical tools to help lead and transform institutions for a browner America and world.

### Topics/ Learning Objectives

With the completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Describe how racism came to be a foundational form of domination, extraction, and exploitation in the United States from the colonial period to the present.
- Discuss how race is a cultural and ideological construct to justify systemic racism in a liberal democracy founded on ideas of freedom from slavery, natural rights, and individual liberty.
- Analyze racial ideology, cultural and academic knowledge production, and the narrative of American exceptionalism as on-going processes of race-making.
- Gain historical and racial literacy in order to pursue public service, policymaking, non-profit and private sector leadership that does not **unintentionally** reproduce forms of racial domination.

This course is designed to provide a foundation of knowledge on a subject area that the vast majority of students (domestic and international) are not formally taught in high school or college. Some students gain awareness and some competency, if they take electives before graduate school or have professional, volunteer and/or lived experience. Nevertheless, students will enter the course at all levels and are expected to respect each other's learning curves. No student is expected to look down upon another or shame them for what they don't know.

## **Discussion, Small Group, and Engagement Norms**

- Given the ideological and politically charged nature of the content in this course, we are mindful that personal beliefs will inevitably collide with some of the content. This is normal when the stakes of what we learn bear on the society we live in and the different ways, we, as individuals, experience the society.
- Thus, I expect every student to engage in the learning process and instructional material as you would any other course, by engaging the course content, the teaching team, and each other with arguments and evidence to support your views.
- Everyone is entitled to express their perspective and interpretation of the material, assuming that these perspectives and interpretations are grounded in evidence. Most of the evidence should come from the materials provided on Canvas or related material cited in the citations/footnotes/bibliographies of your readings. Outside material is acceptable but is subject to vetting by the teaching team to ensure credibility and authenticity. If in doubt, please contact one of us.

## **Required Material**

- Nikole Hannah Jones, et. al. *The 1619Project: A New Origins Story* (One World, 2021).
- Ibram Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (Random House, 2016).
- Erika Lee, *America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States* (Basic Books, 2019).
- *Racism in America: A Reader* (Harvard University Press, 2020). – FREE DOWNLOAD from Harvard Press.
- Claudia Rankin, *The White Card: A Play* (Graywolf Press, 2019).

**All reading assignments should be completed during the week in which they appear on the course schedule below. Read assignments in the order in which they are listed.**

## **Rubric for Assignments**

**You will be graded for the course based on the following criteria:**

**15%** Class Participation (including class activities)

**50%** 10 Weekly Writing Responses 1-2 pages.

**10%** Autobiographical Professional Statement, 2-4 pages.

**25%** Final Research Paper, Essay or Policy Memo, 5-10 pages.

### **Class participation**

You will be expected to participate in large and small group discussions every week. There will be talk and turn opportunities as well as out loud readings and opportunities to role play (as devil's advocate).

### **Weekly assignments**

These are intended to give you a structured way to respond to the week's readings. These are short and open ended. **It is critically important that you find what is meaningful to you from the readings, not what you think I'm looking for. What stands out to you, what surprises you, what helps you understand something you've been struggling with, what has changed your mind, what is inconsistent or contradictory about the readings as a whole?** The goal is to help you develop your own voice and fluency with the topics. Occasionally I may prompt you with a specific question or set of questions. **There are ten response papers to be written between 1-2 pages. I expect them to be proofread and coherent. Use parenthetical citations to denote quotes or ideas from the readings.**

### **Autobiographical Professional Statement**

**DUE:** \_\_\_\_\_

This paper will be 2-4 pages. Answer the following questions in your statement:

1. Tell your professional story of why you are in this class, your goals, and your plans for the future.
2. What problem in the U.S. or world do you plan to help tackle?
3. How does understanding race and racism in the U.S. context helps to achieve that goal?

A goal of this assignment is to have a baseline for your final assignment to reconsider how the course content itself may have impacted your views.

Papers will be graded on a 10-point scale.

### **Final Paper**

**DUE:** \_\_\_\_\_

This assignment will be graded on a 25 point scale.

**OPTIONS:**

- A. WRITE A RESEARCH PAPER ON A TOPIC OF YOUR CHOOSING. THE TOPIC MUST HAVE SOME RELATIONSHIP TO ONE OF THE SUBJECT /CONTENT AREAS COVERED IN THE READINGS.
  
- B. WRITE A PERSUASIVE ESSAY TO A REAL PERSON YOU KNOW BASED ON ONE OF THE SUBJECT/CONTENT AREAS COVERED ON THE SYLLABUS. BALDWIN IS A MODEL FOR EXAMPLE. HE WROTE IN A STYLE TO EDUCATE PEOPLE ABOUT RACISM, AS IF THEY WERE HIS LOVED ONES, FRIENDS, OR NEIGHBORS. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO FOLLOW THIS APPROACH. BUT THE LETTER SHOULD BE PERSONAL AND SPECIFIC. YOU SHOULD BE TRYING TO CONVINCED THEM OF SOMETHING THEY LIKELY DISAGREE OR IT IS A TOPIC OF WHICH THEY HAVE LIMITED KNOWLEDGE.
  
- C. WRITE TO A PROSPECTIVE PRIMARY CHALLENGER TO THE PRESIDENT IN THE NEXT ELECTION WITH A BLUEPRINT FOR HOW TO ADDRESS RACISM IN AMERICA (DEFINE IT AS INDIVIDUAL OR STRUCTURAL BASED ON YOUR PERSPECTIVE). PRESENT YOURSELF AS A POTENTIAL SENIOR ADVISOR, NOT A CAMPAIGN STRATEGIST. (DO NOT FOCUS ON HOW TO WIN. FOCUS ON HOW YOU WANT THE PERSON TO LEAD IF THEY SHOULD WIN). TAKE STOCK OF THE PRESIDENT'S CURRENT RECORD ON THIS ISSUE. THIS IS A MORE FORMAL LETTER, STILL PERSUASIVE, BUT YOUR RHETORICAL APPROACH IS PARTLY WHAT YOU WILL BE ASSESSED ON. WHAT EXACTLY WOULD YOU ADVISE THEM TO DO, BASED ON A POLICY AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS. BE CLEAR ABOUT THE RISKS AND BE CLEAR ABOUT THE EXPECTED OUTCOMES, INCLUDING YOUR VISION OVER THE NEAR TERM OF THE NEXT FOUR YEARS OF A NEW ADMINISTRATION AND GENERATIONALLY OVER THE NEXT 25 YEARS.

**GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT**

- You must reference four sources from the syllabus, but no more than one op-ed.
- You may cite at least four additional outside sources (which do not appear on the syllabus). For example, any of the following are appropriate: book, academic journal article, major magazine essay/investigative report (such as Ta-Nehisi Coates or Nikole Hannah Jones), and major report by a non-profit). You should consult the bibliography or endnotes from books on the syllabus as a first step to find additional materials. Pay attention to authorship to ensure your source is creditable.

## NOTE

- The difference between the research paper and the essay is tone and approach. The essay will involve more storytelling and a normative vision. You will support your point of view with evidence from your sources. Your goal is to be creditable and persuasive based on an imagined skeptical audience of readers.
- The research paper will be more objective and pursue a line of inquiry. The research paper seeks to ask an important set of questions whose answers should point towards some recommendation for change. Given that you are not doing original research, mostly you are summarizing a curated body of published research. The fun of this is in what you select (curate) and how you translate the work and make connections between different studies/reports/books.
- Use the course content, analytical frameworks, rhetorical strategies, and historical knowledge you have gained over the semester to make the case for policy/institutional change in whatever setting/sector/organization/agency/industry/nation you choose. All change depends on storytelling from cold hard data to op-eds to investigative reports and persuasive essays. This assignment is about content (what you know, believe, and want to see happen) and less about form. But both of course matter which is why other faculty focus on form.

### Helpful tips:

- When using your own voice, **use Black or African American**. “Negro” should only be used to paraphrase or directly quote a primary source. You can use BIPOC, Brown, Native, Indigenous, Latinx and Hispanic based on your preferences.
- **Keep perspective**. This is an assignment about race and racism.
- Choose a **rhetorical strategy**. Think about your audience. Sharpen your assumptions about what you think they know or don’t know. You are writing to/for real people. Consider their roles, for example. What power do they have to maintain, adjust or substantially change things?
- **Count your sources**

## Readings and Assignment Schedule

### Session 1: Introductions

1. Set the community agreements
2. What do you know about race in America?

No assignments

### Session 2: Theories of National Origins and Racial Formation

1. Discuss colonialism and European settlers
2. Discuss the entanglement of nationalism and racism

Readings: Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Settler Colonialism as Structure: A Framework for Comparative Studies of U.S. Race and Gender Formation," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1:1 (2015): 54-74.

Barbara Fields, "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America," in *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in America* (2012).

Nikhil Singh, "Rethinking Race and Nation," in *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Harvard Press, 2004): 15-43.

Podcast: [Scene on Radio, "Made in America," Season 2, Episode 3, March 16, 2017 \(29:00\)](#)

[Scene on Radio, "On Crazy We Built a Nation," Season 2, Ep. 4, March 30, 2017 \(36:30\).](#)

### Session 3: The Debate Over American Values

1. Discuss the teaching of slavery
2. Discuss the consequences of capitalism
3. Discuss the controversies surrounding the *1619 Project*

Origin Stories Readings:

Fredrick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" July 5, 1852.

Nikole Hannah Jones, "Democracy," *The 1619 Project*

Tiya Miles, "Dispossession," *The 1619Project*

Matthew Desmond, "Capitalism," *The 1619Project*

Jamelle Bouie, "Politics," *The 1619Project*

Alan Greenspan, "The Two Americas" (excerpt) in *Capitalism in America: A History* (Penguin Press, 2018), 73-80.

[Khalil Gibran Muhammad, "Were the Founders Against Slavery All Along?" \*New York Times\*, 10/18/2018](#)

[Sven Beckert and Katherine Stevens, "Harvard and Slavery: Seeking a Forgotten History" \(2011\)](#)

#### Counter-Narrative Readings:

[Colin Friedorsdorf, "The Inclusive Case for 1776, Not 1619," \*The Atlantic\*, 1/6/2020.](#)

[Leslie Harris, "I Helped Fact Check the 1619 Project. The Times Ignored Me," \*Politico\*, 3/6/20.](#)

Robert L. Woodson, Sr., "The Crucial Voice of '1776'" in *Red, White, and Black: Rescuing American History from Revisionists and Race Hustlers* (Emancipation Books, 2021)

[Donald Trump, Executive Order 922, "Combating Race and Sex Sterotyping" September 22, 2020.](#)

[David Theo Golderg, "The War on Critical Race Theory," \*Boston Review\*, May 7, 2021.](#)

#### **Session 4: The Visible Hand of Citizenship – Im(migrant) Selection**

1. Who were considered American citizens?

Readings:

Martha Jones, "Citizenship," *1619Project*.

Ibram Kendi, Chapters 19, 20, 21 (on Reconstruction and Redemption)

Erica Lee, "Introduction"; "Chapter 3: The Chinese are No More"; "Chapter 4: The Inferior Races of Europe" in *America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States* (Basic Books, 2019).

Vivek Bald, "Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America," *Racism in America: A Reader* (Harvard 2020).

Scene on Radio, "Citizen Thind," Season 2, Ep. 10, 6/14/2017.

Podcast: NPR, "[Becoming America](#)," *Throughline*, 2/13/2020

**Session 5: Science, Criminalization, Terror, And Racial Sorting**

1. Discuss American values
2. Discuss racial criminalization
3. Discuss the intersectionality of racism and sexism for Black women

Readings:

Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Compromise Speech," September 18, 1895.

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/39/>

Josephine J. Turpin Washington, "Anglo Saxon Supremacy," *New York Age*, no. 48 (August 23, 1890).

Mary Church Terrell, "Peonage in the United States: The Convict Lease System and the Chain Gangs," *The Nineteenth Century and After: A Monthly Review* 57 (July – December 1907).

W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Study of the Negro Problems," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 11 (1898).



Patricia Hill Collins, “Black Feminist Epistemology,” in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Routledge, 2000).

Khalil Gibran Muhammad, “Saving the Nation: The Racial Data Revolution and the Negro Problem,” and “Writing Crime into Race: Racial Criminalization and the Dawn of Jim Crow,” in *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Harvard, 2010).

Kendi, Chapters 23 “Black Judases,” “Chapter 24, “Great White Hopes.”

[Pamela Newkirk, “The Man Who Was Caged in a Zoo,” \*The Guardian\*, June 3, 2015.](#)

Crystal Feimster, “Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching,” in *Racism in America: A Reader* (Harvard Press, 2020).

Monica Martinez, “The Injustice Never Leaves You,” in *Racism in America: A Reader*.

Christina Firpo and Margaret Jacobs, “Taking Children, Ruling Colonies: Child Removal and Colonial Subjugation in Australia, Canada, French Indochina, and the United States, 1870-1950 (December 2018): 529-562.

### **Session 6: Pt.1 Damage Imagery and Erasure in the Liberal Imagination**

1. Discuss DuBois' views on Whiteness
2. Discuss the criminalization of Blackness
3. Discuss race and education

#### Readings:

W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Souls of White Folks,” *The Independent* 69 (August 10, 1910): 339–342.

Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Chapter 3 “Incriminating Culture: Racial Criminalization in the Progressive Era” in *The Condemnation of Blackness*. (Harvard 2010)

Noliwe Rooks, “Introduction” and Chapter 2: “White Philanthropy, Black Education,” in *Cutting School* (New Press, 2020).

Clif Stratton, “Hawaiian Cosmopolitans and the American Pacific,” in *Education for*

*Empire: American Schools Race and the Paths of Good Citizenship*” (Univ of California Press, 2016).

Ellen Wu, “Chinatown Offers Us a Lesson,” in *The Color of Success: Asian Americans...the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, 2015).

Video: [Adam Ruins Everything-How America Created the Model Minority Myth](#)

Independent Lens, “Dawnland” November 2018.

### **Session 7: Pt.2 Cultural and Human Capital as Racial Currency**

1. Discuss Culture and appropriation
2. Discuss depiction of Black people in the media
3. Discuss disparities in healthcare

Readings [Wil Haygood, “Why Won’t Blackface Go Away?: It’s Part of America’s Cultural Legacy.” \*New York Times\*, 2/7/2019.](#)

[Khalil Gibran Muhammad, “When Will Hollywood Confront Its Blackface Legacy,” \*Los Angeles Times\*, 2/24/2019.](#)

[Marina Bolotnikova, “Native Modern: Philip J. Deloria Studies American Indians and the Contradictions that Made America,” \*Harvard Magazine\*, January-February, 2019.](#)

[Jeneen Interlandi, “Why Doesn’t the US Have Universal Healthcare? The Answer Has Everything to Do With Race,” \*1619Project\*, August 14, 2019.](#)

Podcasts: [Wesley Morris, “The Birth of American Music.” 1619Podcast](#)

[“Reproducing Racism” \*Reveal\* podcast, May 23, 2020.](#)

### **Session 8: Reconstructing American Democracy**

1. Discuss reconstruction in America

Readings: Langston Hughes, *Let America Be America Again* (1935) [poem found online \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Nikhil Singh, Chapter 2: [“Reconstructing Democracy”](#) in *Black is a Country*:

*Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy.* (2004)

Nikhil Singh, Chapter 4: “ [Americanizing the Negro](#),” in *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy.* (2004)

Marible Morey, “ [Introduction](#),” in *White Philanthropy: Carnegie Corporation: An American Dilemma and the Making of a White World Order.*” (2021)

William L. Patterson, “[The Opening Statement](#)” in *We Charge Genocide*, 1-29 (1951).

Rachel Swarns, “[Words of Obama’s Father Still Waiting to be Read by His Son](#)” *New York Times*, 6/18/2016

Ellen Berry, “[How Kamala Harris’s Immigrant Parents Found a Home, and Each Other in a Black Study Group.](#)” *New York Times*, 9/13/2020.

### **Session 9: Black Metropolis and the Limits of Postwar Liberalism**

1. Discuss the Black ghetto
2. Discuss White lower class and Affirmative Action
3. Discuss James Baldwin’s thoughts

#### Readings:

St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, in *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City (1945)* “Of Things to Come,” 760-767 and “Appendix: Black Metropolis 1961,” and “Postscript 1969,” 807-836.

James Baldwin, “Autobiographical Notes,” “Everybody’s Protest Novel,” “Many Thousands Gone,” in *Notes of a Native Son* (1955).

James Baldwin, “Fifth Avenue, Uptown: A Letter from Harlem,” in *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961).

James Baldwin, “My Dungeon Shook,” in *The Fire Next Time* (1963).

James Baldwin, “Introduction to *Notes of a Native Son, 1984*,” in *Notes of a Native Son*

(1984).

Lerone Bennett, Jr., “The White Problem in America,” in *The White Problem in America* (Johnson Publishing, 1966).

Era Bell Thompson, “Some of My Best Friends are White,” in *The White Problem in America*

Claudia Rankin, *The White Card: A Play* (2019).

**Video** [James Baldwin vs. William F. Buckley, The Cambridge Union Debate \(1965\)](#)—(58m)

### **Session 10: Social Movements and Backlash**

1. Discuss social movements and their leaders (ie: MLK, Malcom X, Ella Baker, Black Panther Party)
2. Discuss the different approaches. Were they effective?
3. Discuss the White Backlash

Video: Raoul Peck, *I am Not Your Negro* (Netflix).

Readings:

Kendi, “The Act of Civil Rights”; “Black Power”; “Law and Order” and “Reagan’s Drugs” in *Stamped from the Beginning*, pp. 381-439.

Martin Luther King, Jr., “Chapter 3: Racism and the White Backlash,” in *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*”

Peniel E. Joseph, “Chapter 2: Malcolm X, Harlem and American Democracy,” in *Dark Days, Bright Nights: From Black Power to Barack Obama* (Basic Books, 2009).

Barbara Ransby, “Chapter 8: Mentoring a New Generation of Activists: The Birth of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, 1960-1961,” in *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (UNC, 2003).

Donna Murch, “Men With Guns,” and “Survival Pending Revolution,” in *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, CA* (UNC, 2010).

### **Session 11: Economics, Housing and Reparations**

1. Identify some differences between Black and White homeownership, rates of police brutality,
2. Discuss thoughts on reparations

Podcasts: NPR, [The Original ‘Welfare Queen’](#), June 5, 2019 (32 min).  
NYT 1619Project, [Episodes 5](#) and [Episode 5, Part 2](#).

Readings:

Thomas Sugrue, “Chapter 12: ‘The Black Man’s Land’” in *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (Random House, 2008), **pp. 422-448**.

TaNehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic* (June 2014).

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, “Conclusion: Predatory Inclusion,” in *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (UNC Press, 2020).

<https://heinonline-org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/HOL/Page?handle=hein.beal%2Frefpthwbs0001&collection=tera>

Mehra Baradaran—“The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap” in *Racism in America* (Harvard, 2020).

<https://muse-jhu-edu.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/book/73567>

Dana M. Peterson and Catherine L. Mann, “Closing the Racial Inequality Gaps: The Economic Cost of Black Inequality in the US,” September 2020.

<https://ir.citi.com/%2FPRxPvgNWu319AU1ajGf%2BsKbjJjBJSaTOSdw2DF4xynPwFB8a2jV1FaA3Idy7vY59bOtN2lxVQM%3D>

William Darity and Kirsten Mullen: “Chapter 2: Myths of Racial Equality” and “Chapter 13: A Program of Black Reparations,” in *From Here to Equality*:

*Reparations for Black Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (UNC Press, 2020).

### **Session 12: Education as Structural Racism**

1. Discuss Kenneth and Mamie Clarke's research findings
2. What were the effects of segregation for the education of black students?
3. Discuss "educational gerrymandering"

Readings:

Kenneth Clarke, "Chapter 6: Ghetto Schools: Separate and Unequal," *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (Harper and Row Publishers, 1965): 111-153.

Nikole Hannah Jones, "Choosing a School for My Daughter in a Segregated City," *New York Times Magazine*, June 9, 2016.

Noliwe Rooks, Chapters 4 "How the North Wasn't One," Chapter 7: "Age of Resistance," and Coda: "Trickle Up Education" in *Cutting School* (New Press, 2017).

Rucker C. Johnson, Chapter 7: "How Charlotte Briefly Got it Right," in *Children of the Dream: Why School Integration Works* (Basic Books, 2019).

Heather McGhee, "Chapter 7: Living Apart," in *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* (2021)

**Multimedia:** Matt Delmont on busing.  
<http://whybusingfailed.com/anvc/why-busing-failed/introduction> (Skim all 12 essays and review multimedia material).

**Podcast:** [Nice White Parents, Serial/NYT Podcast](#)

### **Session 13: More or Less Democracy?**

1. Identify ways legislation leads to less democracy
2. Identify mechanisms that lead to more democracy.

Readings:

[Alex Keyssar, "How Has the Electoral College Survived This Long." New York Times, 8/3/2020.](#)

Avidit Acharya, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen, "The Political Legacy of American Slavery," *The Journal of Politics* 78:3.

Khalil Gibran Muhammad, "The Descent of Democracy," *Boston Review*

Erika Lee, "Conclusion," in *America for Americans*.

Keeanga Yamatta-Taylor, "[Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, and the Limits of Representation](#)," *New Yorker*, 8/24/20

Khalil Gibran Muhammad, [No Racial Barrier Left to Break \(Except All of Them\)](#), *New York Times*, 1/14/17.

Michael Powell, "Liberals Envisioned a Multiracial Coalition. Voters of Color Had Other Ideas," *New York Times*, 11/16/2020.

Video: Moyers & Company, "[Lest We Forget: The Big Lie Behind the Rise of Trump](#)," 1/25/2017. (23m)

New York Times, "[Day of Rage: How Trump Supporters Took the U.S. Capitol](#)," 6/30/21. (40m)