

# Race Relations 920:306:03

## Fall 2015

**Class hours:** TTH 1:40 – 3:00  
**Location:** LSH B269  
**Office:** Davison Hall 132B

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**Office Hours:** TBA

Ethnic and racial groups are not biological categories of people. Instead, both kinds of groups are accurately understood as social constructions. Therefore, the formation of these groups will be a subject of study in this course. Furthermore, since ethnic and racial groups exist within relation to one another, we will also examine the role of power. Power itself is a relational concept. For example, a minority group lacks power in relation to other groups in society. As such, we will not just examine different groups in isolation but focus on racial and ethnic systems and the relationships of different groups. We will further explore how race and ethnicity condition social interactions and institutions that govern our lives and our life chances.

### **Course Objectives:**

- Reinforce sociological concepts using the topic of race and ethnicity
- Debunk biological notions of race and ethnicity
- Explore the historical formations of racial and ethnic groups
- Distinguish the concepts race and ethnicity from one another
- Develop an understanding of racial inequality
- Develop an understanding of how institutions shape social identities
- Apply a sociological imagination to contemporary issues involving race
- Evaluate possible solutions to problems associated with race and ethnicity

**All of the readings are available on Sakai. I have provided links to the films, all of which should be viewed outside of class.**

**Required and Recommended Readings:** You are responsible for all the required readings. The recommended readings are for those who would like additional information. I may refer to recommended readings in lecture. However, I will only test students on information from recommended readings that I have presented in lecture.

**Grading:** 35% midterm (multiple choice and essay)  
5% daily writings  
35% final (multiple choice and essay)  
15% final paper (5 pages)  
10% class participation and class exercises

**Grading Scale:** A 90-100, B+ 86-89, B 80-85, C+ 76-79, C 70-75, D 66-69, F 65 or below.

**Multiple Choice:** Questions that will focus on understanding and application of ideas from the articles. Questions will not test your ability to memorize statistics or definitions but measure your ability to interpret the meaning of the author's argument and/or follow the logic of the question.

**Essays:** Essay writing is not about simply recalling information. Indeed, all of your essays will be open book. Questions will test your ability to apply sociological concepts and to put different articles in conversation with each other. You can do this in two ways: 1. By using the concepts from one article to frame the case in another article OR 2. By explaining how two different articles comprise competing or complimentary paradigms for understanding some social phenomena. Remember that essays should answer "how" questions rather than yes or no questions.

**Daily Writings:** I will provide five minutes at the beginning of class for you to assemble your thoughts on paper. I will collect and grade these papers (I will randomly pick 3 for each student). I am not expecting a polished essay. A paragraph demonstrating your understanding of the material is sufficient. Questions are on the syllabus after each introduction of the readings.

The writing assignments have several functions. First, they help me assess your understanding of the material prior to exams. Second, I find that if students are allowed to think about the material before class it makes for more productive discussions. Third, the questions will help guide your reading and give you an idea of what kind of knowledge I will test (in this way the syllabus can serve as your study guide). Lastly, the writings will help you focus on learning concepts rather than the kind of memorization of disconnected facts that can often accompany expectations of in-class exams.

**Final Paper:** I will assign a 5-page paper due the last week of the semester. This is not a research paper but instead I will ask you to put two or more readings in conversation (very similar to what you are asked to do in Expository Writing).

**Academic Integrity:** Rutgers policy can be found here - [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI\\_Policy\\_9\\_01\\_2011.pdf](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf)

**Absences:** Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Students are automatically excused one absence, after that I will deduct one point per absence from the participation grade.

**Email:** – put "SOC 306" in the subject line. I do not open emails with no subject.

Since many of the themes of this course deal with contemporary social issues, I highly recommend reading a quality newspaper on a daily basis or visiting one of the sites listed below on a regular basis. The theories and ideas from class will be easier to learn if you can recognize the concepts outside of the classroom. I will periodically post news articles on Sakai. If you come across articles that weigh in on course material please bring them to my attention.

<http://thesocietypages.org/>, <http://www.nytimes.com>, <http://www.theatlantic.com/>,  
<http://www.vox.com>

***September 1<sup>st</sup> (Tuesday) – Introduction***

A sociological analysis of any phenomenon requires a familiarity with the tools (i.e. concepts) that guide such analysis. The class will focus on the core sociological concepts that will appear throughout the course.

**Recommended: Johnson – Privilege, Oppression, and Difference (12-40)**

***September 3<sup>rd</sup> (Thursday) – Social Construction of Race***

There is nothing natural about race. Science has proven that races, except of course, the human race, do not exist. Rather, race is a socially constructed and modern phenomenon. The film and the reading both address the common misconceptions about race and biology.

**Q. Why is it important to understand that race is a social construction rather than accept a biological notion of race?**

**Readings: Roberts – The Invention of Race (3-25)**

**Film: Race: Power of Illusion Part 1 available at**

**<http://www.njvid.net/show.php?pid=njcore:17811>**

***September 8<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday) – Schedule Change --- GO TO MONDAY CLASSES***

***September 10<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) – Class Discussion on Racial Inequality***

I will provide several questions about racial inequality in contemporary America. Students will write down claims and the evidence they would need to support their claims. Students will then form groups of 3-4 to discuss their answers and attempt to reach a consensus. Instructions will be on Sakai.

**Recommended: State of the Dream 2015**

**[State of Black America 2015](#)**

***September 15<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday) – Jim Crow and Sundown Towns***

While slavery and colonialism are proper starting points for a history of race, too many Americans overlook the more recent Jim Crow period. Race relations in the US are not a story of steady progression toward greater equality. Dray and Loewen show how the promise of Reconstruction disappeared during the rise of Jim Crow and the worsening of race relations during the Nadir (1890-1930). Both authors also show how violence played a key role in creating post-Civil War America.

**Q. What are sundown towns and how (and where) were they created? How can we explain the emergence of the KKK during Reconstruction?**

**Readings: Loewen – The Importance of Sundown Towns (3-18)**

**Dray – KuKluxery (77-101)**

**Recommended: Loewen – The Nadir: Incubator of Sundown Towns (24-44)**

***September 17<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) – Lasting Effects of Jim Crow, Sundown Towns***

Most would say that we study history to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. Equally important, however, is understanding that the categories and relationships we often take for granted were created in the past. Later in the course we will discuss the enduring role of past public policies. In the following article, Loewen looks at the lasting effects of violent expulsion and exclusion.

**Q. How do sundown towns matter today?**

**Readings: Loewen – Effects of Sundown Towns on the Social System (358-376)**

***September 22<sup>nd</sup> (Tuesday) – Social Construction of Whiteness***

In most of America, that racial system that arose out of slavery and colonialism was a binary hierarchy of whiteness and blackness. Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century immigration created a challenge to this binary categorization. New social groups would either have to be sorted into these categories or inhabit newly created categories. Brodtkin's article details this process for Jewish immigrants.

**Q. According to Brodtkin what is the 'bootstrap myth' and why can't it fully explain Jewish upward mobility?**

**Reading: Brodtkin – How Did Jews Become White Folks? (55-67)**

***September 24<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) – Race and Ethnicity***

Americans often use the terms race and ethnicity interchangeably, but as these articles note, parsing these terms provides a more accurate picture of race relations. Furthermore, these articles demonstrate that what most people treat as objective categories can change in meaning and scope as social conditions change.

**Q. How does the distinction between race and ethnicity help us better understand race relations? How do social factors shape self-identification?**

**Readings: Waters – Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only? (199-207)**

**Waters – Ethnic and Racial Identities... (795-818)**

***September 29<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday) – Prejudice and Discrimination***

Prejudice and discrimination are often thought of as individual acts and as such, many look to individuals for a solution. The following articles locate these phenomena within their social context.

**Q. How does social context influence prejudice? Discrimination?**

**Readings:** Blumer – Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position (3-7)

**Merton – Discrimination and the American Creed (130-137)**

***October 1<sup>st</sup> (Thursday) – Racialized Social Systems***

The following article asserts that while phenomena like prejudice and discrimination are important we must consider the social system the gives these attitudes and behaviors meaning and impact. Bonilla-Silva details the theoretical focus necessary to understand how race functions in a society.

**Q. What does Bonilla-Silva mean when he says that racism is not “a free-floating ideology [but] in fact has its own structural foundation”?**

**Readings:** Bonilla-Silva – Racialized Social System Approach... (33-38)

**Recommended:** Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich – The Sweet Enchantment of Color-Blind Racism in Obamerica (190-206)

***October 6<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday) – Class exercise: Challenging Internet Memes***

Internet posts, often shared on Facebook, have arisen as a prime way of putting forth one’s political views. Controversial memes are rarely productive and often lead to vitriolic debates that produce little beyond mutual anger and discomfort. But, such an outcome is not inevitable. In this class we will discuss and critically engage with a few racially charged memes.

**Reading:** Ryan and Gamson – The Art of Reframing Political Debates (13-18)

***October 8<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) – “The Race Card”***

Ford writes, “...the idea that race is a ‘card’ to be played for selfish advantage has become commonplace.” He also notes that, “Many people have legitimate grievances, but no racist to blame for them. The victims of the injustices will correctly blame racism, but too often they will incorrectly try to find someone to label racist.” The following excerpts expand this argument and point to problems with current struggles against racism. My article questions the use-value of sociological findings in the face of controversy.

**Q. What does Ford mean by “racism without racists”? Why might sociological knowledge be ignored during a racial controversy?**

**Readings:** Ford - Racism without Racists (37-59)

**Dowd – Public and Academic Questions on Race (496-502)**

**Recommended:** Ford – Hailing Trouble (59-72)

**Ford – An American in Paris (72-92)**

### **October 13<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday) – Assimilation and Social Change**

The United States is often referred to as a nation of immigrants. Immigration, however, has always been a controversial issue in America. Fears that new immigrant groups were unassailable, criminal, lazy, or biologically inferior and would, if unchecked, change the country have long animated debates on immigration.

Q. Do immigrants have the right to change their new country? Why or why not? (Don't just say yes or no. You also do not need to take a firm position.)

Lecture: 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Immigration

Audio: Listen to interview about the book *Machine Made* at

<http://www.npr.org/2014/03/05/286218423/the-case-for-tammany-hall-being-on-the-right-side-of-history> OR watch part 2 of the PBS series *The Jewish Americans* – available at Alexander Street Project via Rutgers.

Recommended: Takaki – Emigrants from Erin (139-165)

Brodin – Race Making (53-76)

### **October 15<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) – Assimilation and Resistance**

The term “Native American” signals that such people are not immigrants. Still, Native Americans (or American Indians) were forced to/sought to assimilate into American society. By the 1960s, many American Indians began to openly reject assimilation. The film focuses on the American Indian Movement (AIM), one of the more radical groups, and their protest at Wounded Knee in the early 1970s.

Q. How were assimilation plans for American Indians at odds with ideal notions of assimilation?

Film: Episode 5: Wounded Knee from the PBS series *We Shall Remain* available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/>

Recommended: Crow Dog and Erdoes – Civilize Them With a Stick (308-315)

Snipp – In Search of Indians (71-72)

### **October 20<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday) – US Immigration and Contemporary Assimilation**

Mexican immigration will likely be a prominent issue in the next presidential election. The following articles look at immigrants from Mexico and compares present-day assimilation to previous immigrant groups. The film explores enforcement of the current immigration system during the start of the Obama administration.

Q. How does Mexican immigration differ from earlier immigration from Italy?

Reading: Telles – Mexican Americans and Immigrant Incorporation (29-33)

Rumbaut – Immigrations Complexities (72)

Nadeem et al. – Fifty Years of “New” Immigration (13-21)

Recommended: Pew Research Center – What We Know...

Pew Research Center – Broad Public Support...

Davidson – Do Illegal Immigrants Actually Hurt the US Economy?

## ***October 22<sup>nd</sup> (Thursday) – Midterm Exam***

### ***October 27<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday) - Religion and Nationalism***

We live in the era of the nation-state. As such, how we define the nation, and particularly who belongs as a member of that nation are hotly contested within states. Throughout American history different groups have been cast as intrinsically anti-American. Typically, such attempts also involve a distorted picture of the level of homogeneity within groups. Read's article reveals the actual demographics of Muslims in America. The next two articles look at recent controversies over Mosque building in America and Islamic extremism.

Q. How do the cultural values of Muslim Americans compare to those of Christian Americans? What are some problems with locating blame for violent extremism within religion?

Readings: Read – Muslims in America (39-43)

Mohamed and O'Brien – Ground Zero of Misunderstanding (62-64)

Aslan – Bill Maher Isn't the Only One Who Misunderstands Religion

Recommended: Bayoumi - How Does it Feel to Be a Problem?

### ***October 29<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) – Cross-National Comparison***

While few areas of the globe have not grappled with issues of belongingness, here we will focus on controversies concerning national identity and Islam in Europe. These questions have become acute due to the political and economic integration of the European Union as well as anxiety associated with the financial crises.

Q. How and why does "Islamophobia" differ from Europe to the United States?

Readings: Hockenos – Europe's Rising Islamophobia (1-6)

Younge – Europe's Homegrown Terrorists (1-4)

Dixon - Turkey, Islam, and the EU (42-46)

### ***November 3<sup>rd</sup> (Tuesday) – Mass Incarceration***

Over the last thirty years the United States has undergone an unprecedented and unparalleled experiment in mass incarceration. The United States now imprisons more of its citizens than any country on Earth. Mass Incarceration, in Western's words, is not random but "flows along the contours of social inequality." Western, however, does not contend that the poor commit less crime than the more well off or that those in prison are innocent. Still, the author critiques mass incarceration.

Q. Beyond the overrepresentation of the poor and minorities in prisons, what does Western find about the relationship between mass incarceration and inequality in the United States?

Film: *The House I Live In* available on Netflix

Readings: Western – Mass Imprisonment (11-33)

Recommended: Abramsky – End of the War on Crime? (11-17)

Western – Inequality, Crime, and the Prison Boom (34-51)

Alexander – Excerpts from *The New Jim Crow*



***November 5<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) - Criminal Justice and Gender and Class***

Rios's ethnographic study focuses on young black and Latino males in high-crime areas of Oakland, Ca. In the following excerpt he examines how particular forms of manhood and strategies for asserting manhood stem from social orders.

**Q.** How might we employ Rios's insights to respond to the assertion that so-called "black on black crime" means we should shift focus away from racism and the criminal justice system?

**Readings:** Rios – Proving Manhood (124-141)

**Recommended:** Peart – Why is the NYPD After Me?

Rios - The Labeling Hype (43-73)

Williams – OK, Fine. Let's Talk about "black on black" violence

***November 10<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday) – Wealth and Race***

The following readings explore the racial wealth gap and its effects on the relative outcomes for black and white families. The racial wealth gap has expanded recently, partly as a result of the "Great Recession." Indeed, Shapiro points out that the wealth gap can expand without any racial intent.

**Q.** How do past practices condition different wealth for different racial groups?

**Readings:** Shapiro - Cost of Being Black (42-59)

Shapiro et al. – The Racial Wealth Gap Increases Fourfold

**Recommended:** Powell - Black in Memphis Lose Decades of Economic Gains (1-7)

***November 12<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) - Reparations***

Years ago the notion of Reparations was considered inconceivable. Many people still view this as at best, highly unrealistic, and at worst, as deeply unjust. Still, the call for reparations has not gone away.

**Q.** What concepts from the course do you think are key to understanding either the case for reparations or the political possibilities regarding reparations?

**Reading:** Coates – The Case for Reparations

Wilkerson – When Will the North Face Its Racism?

**Recommended:** Coates – Fear of a Black President

***November 17<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday) – Racial Segregation***

Racial segregation conjures up images of the American South in the 1950s and 1960s. However, US society is still highly segregated by race in housing, education, and employment - nationwide. Many deny that segregation has little to do with racism and/or opine that segregation is the result of individual preferences of both blacks and whites to 'self-segregate'. The following articles examine such claims.

**Q.** In what ways, might the term "self-segregation" be misleading?

**Readings:** Jones – Self Segregation: Why It's So Hard for Whites To Understand

Tatum – 'Why Are All the Black Kids...' (213-222)

**Recommended:** The Making of Ferguson



***November 19<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) – White Privilege and White Poverty***

If some white people are poor, the thinking goes, how can there be white privilege? There are several answers: 1. White privilege is about a relationship to other groups and whites are *more likely* to have greater opportunities, 2. Whites may be disadvantaged because they are poor or female but not because they are white, and 3. Poor whites occupy a marginal space within the frame of whiteness thus preserving a privileged status for most whites.

**Q.** Moss explores point number 3. How does the term “white trash” function to preserve a privileged status of whiteness that most whites can still access?

**Reading:** Moss – Color of Class (19-42)

**Recommended:** Moss – Encounters (43-54)

***November 24<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday) – “Intermarriage” and “Mixed-Race Persons”***

The legal fiction of separate biological races was always tenuous. Even at the height of racial segregation so-called “race-mixing” took place. Love, marriage, and procreation always manage to permeate the porous boundaries of race. Today, Americans acknowledge and largely accept this reality. However, despite a new tolerance, whom we marry and have children with and the meanings of these unions still follow social patterns conditioned by racial structures.

**Q.** How might the “remaking of race” redraw some racial lines and perhaps erase others? What kind of social patterns does intermarriage follow?

**Readings:** Lee and Bean – Beyond Black and White (26-33)

Qian – Breaking the Last Taboo (33-37)

Steinbugler – Loving Across Racial Divides (32-37)

[Thanksgiving Recess – November 26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>]

***December 1<sup>st</sup> (Tuesday) – Self-Identity and Racial Formation***

Asian-American identity is a rather new phenomenon. It demonstrates both assimilation and racial formation. The articles focus on the agency of a group, while acknowledging the role of social forces in constructing the opportunities for self-definition and conditioning the choices we make about who we are.

**Q.** What social changes gave rise to Asian-American self-identification? What does Zhou’s question say about race in America?

**Readings:** Espiritu – Asian-American Panethnicity (87-93)

Zhou – Are Asian Americans Becoming White? (29-37)

**Recommended:** Friedman – Lions, Tigers, and Bear Moms (70-71)

Zhao and Qui – Asian Myths (338-344)

***December 3<sup>rd</sup> (Thursday) – Social Movements Past and Present***

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s is one of the most well-known and revered social movements in American history. The stories we tell about this movement often depict a more coherent, more unified, and more certain movement than actually existed. Social movements seem simpler with the passage of time but simple narratives can distort our understanding of how social change happens.

**Q. How do the actual experiences of Rosa Parks and the story of Freedom Summer complicate simple renderings of the Civil Rights Movement?**

**Reading: Schudson – Telling Stories about Rosa Parks (22-27)**

**Film: Freedom Summer available at**

**<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/freedomsummer/>**

**Recommended: Piven and Cloward – Excerpts from Poor People's Movements**

**McAdam – Excerpt from Freedom Summer**

***December 8<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday) – Writing Workshop and Peer Review***

**Assignment: Rough Draft of Paper Due**

***December 10<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) – Individualism and Systems of Privilege***

We often have difficulty seeing systems of privilege because we tend to view society as simply a collection of individuals. As such, we often miss the larger social forces that govern our everyday interactions and life outcomes. In this last class, we will consider ongoing efforts to create social change and our own position within the social systems activists seek to change.

**Recommended: Johnson - What It All Has to Do With Us (76-89)**

**Thomas – Medicalizing Racism (24-29)**

**Johnson - What Can We Do? (125-153)**