

# Race Relations 920:306:04

## Spring 2020

**Class hours:** MW 3:20 – 4:40

**Dr. Jeffrey Dowd**

**Location:** Beck Hall 250

**Email:** jdowd@sociology.rutgers.edu

**Office:** Davison Hall (on Douglas Campus) 040 **Office Hours:** T 12:30 – 2:00

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 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**
- **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**

**Course costs:** All of the readings are available through CANVAS. Most films are freely accessible, but some may require a Netflix membership or a rental fee.

**Grading:** 35% midterm (multiple choice and essay)

5% daily writings

5% short quizzes

35% final (multiple choice)

15% final paper (4 pages)

5% class participation and attendance

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

**Multiple Choice:** Questions will focus on understanding and applying ideas from the articles. Questions will not test your ability to memorize statistics or definitions but instead, 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, but instead evidence that you have thought about the material. Questions are on this syllabus and the CANVAS site.

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 4-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 (similar to what you are asked to do in Expository Writing).

**Academic Integrity:** Rutgers policy:

[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 (**note: leaving early, sleeping in class and/or texting does not count as attending**); 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. Students are automatically excused one absence, after that I will deduct one point per absence from the final grade.

**Email:** – Put “SOC 306” in the subject line. I do not open “no subject” emails

I highly recommend regularly visiting the sites listed below. The ideas from class will be easier to learn if you can apply the concepts outside of the classroom. You can also like the sites on facebook. <https://www.wnyc.org/>, <http://www.nytimes.com>, <http://www.theatlantic.com/>, <http://www.vox.com>.

**Required and Recommended Readings:** The recommended readings are for those who would like additional information. I may refer to recommended readings in lecture.

## Course Schedule

### **January 22<sup>ND</sup> (Wednesday) – 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 core sociological concepts that will appear throughout the course.

**Recommended: Johnson – Privilege, Oppression, and Difference (12-40)**  
**Wingfield – Color-blindness is Counterproductive**

### **January 27<sup>th</sup> (Monday) – Social Construction of Race**

There is nothing natural about race. Science has proven that races don't biologically exist. Rather, race is a socially constructed and modern phenomenon. The film and the reading 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>**

**Recommended: Wade – Unemployment Can Change Your Race**  
**The Atlantic Slave Trade: (video)**

### **January 29<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) – Focus Groups on Race in High Schools**

Focus groups are one of the research methods sociologists, and other social scientists, employ to understand how social groups understand some phenomenon. This class will feature student-led focus groups. I will explain this process and we will do a practice one together before breaking up into groups

**Reading: Focus Group Exercise**

**Assignment: Find the racial/ethnic demographics of your high school**

### **February 3<sup>rd</sup> (Monday) – 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)**  
**Conway – The Problem With History Classes**

**February 5<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) – 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. 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)**

**Recommended: White America Is Quietly Self-Segregating**

**Living While Black and the Criminalization of Blackness**

**February 10<sup>th</sup> (Monday) – Social Construction of Whiteness**

In most of America, the 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)**

**Recommended: [Semuels – The Role of Highways in American Poverty](#)**

**[Semuels – How Segregation Persisted in Little Rock](#)**

**February 12<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) – School Segregation**

In *Brown v Board of Education* the Supreme Court ruled that segregated schools were unconstitutional. They noted that separate is inherently unequal. That was in 1955, schools didn't really begin to desegregate until the 1970s. A backlash quickly ensued and school integration plans mostly ended by the late 1980s. Today, American schools are re-segregating.

**Q. Are the parents that contribute to school segregation racists? Why or why not?**

**Podcast: [The Problem We All Live With](#)**

**Reading: [Hannah-Jones – Choosing a School For My Daughter in a Segregated City \(OR\)](#)**

**Podcast: [How the Systemic Segregation of Schools is Maintained By 'Individual Choices'](#)**

**Recommended: [Hannah-Jones – The Re-segregation of Jefferson County](#)**

**[The 50 Most Segregated School Borders in America](#)**

**[The Evidence that White Children Benefit from Integrated Schools](#)**

**February 17<sup>th</sup> (Monday) – 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. (Note: full articles posted, but you only need to read the pages listed).

**Q. How can Blumer and/or Merton help us understand the phenomenon discussed in Bouie's article?**

**Readings: Blumer – Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position (3-4)  
Merton – Discrimination and the American Creed (131-133)  
[Bouie – How Millennials Perpetuate Racism...](#)**

**Recommended: White Threat in a Browning America  
Who's Afraid of a White Minority?**

***February 19<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) – Media Representations and Stereotypes***

A good deal of our information about the world and the people in it is mediated. In other words, other people package and present it to us, often in the form of entertainment.

**Q. Does the form of assimilation that Kao et al. discuss regarding dating markets mean the same thing as cultural citizenship discussed in Ducros et al? Or are these different, but perhaps, overlapping concepts?**

**Readings: Ducros et al. – Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders on TV (13-17)  
Kao et al. – Asian-American Men in Romantic Dating Markets (49-53)**

**Recommended: Walton – Asian Americans in Small-Town America (18-23)**

***February 24<sup>th</sup> (Monday) – Historical Narratives***

Our collective notions of who “we” are heavily dependent upon stories we tell about the past. Those stories help define social groups as well as the contemporary inequalities.

**Q. What is the difference between how Hyman implicitly defines racism and how Bonilla-Silva defines racism?**

**Reading: Hyman - The Confederacy was a Con Job on Whites**

**Bonilla-Silva – Racialized Social System Approach... (selected quotes)**

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

***February 26<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) – “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: DiAngelo – How White People Handle Diversity in the Workplace**

**Ford – Hailing Trouble (59-72), An American in Paris (72-92)**

**March 2<sup>nd</sup> (Monday) – 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/Film: [Listen to interview of the author of \*Machine Made\*](#) OR watch part 2 PBS series *The Jewish Americans***

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

**Alba – Sacco and Vanzetti and the Immigrant Threat**

**Monday 4<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) – US Contemporary Immigration and the Undocumented**

Mexican immigration will likely be a prominent issue in the upcoming elections. Pew Research Center estimates that there are over 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, a large portion of them from Mexico. Most of these people are long-term residents having been here over 5 years (and many well over a decade). The book discuss how and why they got here as well as the impact of militarizing the border.

**Q. What is circular migration? What is the impact of strong border enforcement on this process?**

**Reading: Minian - excerpt from *Undocumented Lives* (1-13)**

**Alexander – None of Us Deserve Citizenship**

**Recommended: Minian - *Undocumented Lives* (Chapter 7)**

**Tran – Social Mobility Among Second-Generation Latinos (28-33)**

**Kim and Yellow Horse – Undocumented Asians, Left in the Shadows (70-71)**

**March 9<sup>th</sup> (Monday) – The US-Mexico Border**

Many Americans seem unaware that there is already a rather extensive wall along the border, that a heavily militarized border between two states which are at peace was, until recently, quite rare, and that the “border” and its impact extend far beyond the narrow line between Mexico and the United States. The following readings detail the violence of a militarized border between the US and Mexico.

**Q. Where does the Jones see the source of violence?**

**Readings: Jones - excerpt from *Violent Borders***

**The Case for Abolishing ICE and the DEA**

**Recommended: The Pernicious Myth of “Open Borders”**

**Pew Research Center – Americans Broadly Support Legal Status**

**March 11<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) – Midterm Exam**

**Spring Break March 14<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>**

**March 23<sup>rd</sup> (Monday) - 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, attempts to marginalize and treat a group as anti-American involve a distorted picture of the level of homogeneity within groups.

**Q. What are some problems with locating blame for violent extremism within religion?**

**Readings: Kennedy – The “Un-Mosquing” of American Muslims**

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

**Recommended: Read – Muslims in America (39-43)**

**Bayoumi - How Does it Feel to Be a Problem?**

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

**March 25<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) – Europe and Refugees**

Since 2015, a large number of migrants from outside of the European Union have been at the center of much controversy. 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 a recent financial crises and the ongoing refugee crisis.

**Q. What function do you think some of the myths about the refugee crisis serve? What does “liminal lives” mean?**

**Readings: Paynter – Liminal Lives of Europe’s Transit Migrants (41-45)**

**Five Myths About the Refugee Crisis**

**Recommended: Beaman - excerpt from *Citizen Outsider***

**Laybourn – Being a Transnational Korean Adoptee (31-35)**

**March 30<sup>th</sup> (Monday) – Genocide**

The most extreme form of any form of groupism results in genocide. Genocide is often the result of populism. In other words, majority-rule systems, often associated with democracy, have been fertile ground for some of the worst crimes in history. Here we will consider how thinking about the Holocaust can inform our understanding of contemporary societies.

**Q. How do you think a majority of people can engage in or, at least, support mass murder?**

**Reading: Bauman - excerpt from *Modernity and the Holocaust***

**Gessen – The Unimaginable Reality of America’s Concentration Camps**

**Recommended:**

### ***April 1<sup>st</sup> (Wednesday) – Borders***

As mentioned earlier, militarized borders between nations at peace are recent phenomena. In the ongoing debate about immigration, we rarely question the existence of borders, but there may be good reason to do so. The following articles question borders in general.

**Q. Considering what you have read, do you think the United States should have secure borders or could we adopt an open borders policy? Try to make a case that, at least, pushes against your initial reaction *and* is in conversation with one of the readings.**

**Readings: The Case for Getting Rid of Borders Completely**

**Jones - Excerpt from *Violent Borders***

**Recommended: Fox News Wants You to be Very Afraid...**

### ***April 6<sup>th</sup> (Monday) – Mass Incarceration***

For over 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 non-poor or that those in prison are innocent.

**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 Amazon Prime (\$2-4 w/o membership)**

**Readings: Western – Mass Imprisonment (11-33)**

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

**Alexander – Excerpts from *The New Jim Crow***

### ***April 8<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) – 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: Rios - The Labeling Hype (43-73)**

**[Podcast: Cops See It Differently Part I and II](#)**

**Western – Lifetimes of Violence (63-82)**

### ***April 13<sup>th</sup> (Monday) - 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: [Jones – Why So Many Minority Millennials Can't Get Ahead](#)**

***April 15<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) – Reparations [Assignment: Paper Proposal Due]***

Many people view the call for Reparations 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**

***April 20<sup>th</sup> (Monday) – White Privilege and White Poverty***

Many ask, if some white people are poor, 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 preserve 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)**

**DiAngelo – excerpt from *White Fragility***

***April 22<sup>nd</sup> (Wednesday) – “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 largely accept this reality. However, despite a new tolerance, whom we marry 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)**

***April 27<sup>th</sup> (Monday) – 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?**

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

**A Racist Attack Shows How Whiteness Evolves (NYTimes)**

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

**Zhao and Qui – Asian Myths (338-344)**

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

***April 29<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) – 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)**

**[Tyson – Can Honest History Allow For Hope](#)**

**Film: Freedom Summer (available online)**

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

**McAdam – Excerpt from *Freedom Summer***

***May 4<sup>th</sup> (Monday) – Individualism and Systems of Privilege/ Final Exam Review***

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)**

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

**Final Exam: TBA (check here: <https://finalexams.rutgers.edu/>)**

**Final Paper Due at the Final Exam**