

# How Race & Ethnicity Shape American Social Life Sociology 134

**Social Science 6104**  
**8:50am - 9:40am Mon/Wed/Fri**

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## Discussion Sections

<b>Section 301</b>	<b>Tues 11:00 - 11:50</b>	<b>SOC SCI 6121</b>
<b>Section 302</b>	<b>Tues 12:05 - 12:55</b>	<b>SOC SCI 6121</b>
<b>Section 303</b>	<b>Tues 2:25 - 3:15</b>	<b>SOC SCI 6121</b>
<b>Section 304</b>	<b>Tues 3:30 - 4:20</b>	<b>SOC SCI 6121</b>
<b>Section 305</b>	<b>Tues 4:35 - 5:25</b>	<b>SOC SCI 6121</b>

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The official title of this course is “Problems of American Racial and Ethnic Minorities.” As you can see, I have unofficially renamed the course. Rather than examining problems of specific groups of people, we will be exploring the social structures that shape and are shaped by race, ethnicity, racism, and racial/ethnic inequalities. Through this course, you will learn to apply the “sociological imagination” to social issues relating to race and ethnicity. This means understanding race and ethnicity as social constructs, and learning how race and ethnicity exist within social structures and institutions. This class meets the University of Wisconsin’s Ethnic Studies requirement, which aims to “increase understanding of the culture and contributions of persistently marginalized racial or ethnic groups in the United States, and to equip students to respond constructively to issues connected with our pluralistic society and global community.”

**Talking about race:** Most people have not had much practice talking about race and ethnicity, and some of the topics we will explore are controversial. Participation will likely feel uncomfortable at times - both as a speaker and as a listener - but productive conversation is the goal. It is crucial that we all remember that every person is living with a race and ethnicity (and sex, gender, sexual orientation, class,

size, belief system, nationality, etc.), and each person's individual perspective is relevant to our conversation. Speak up and feel free to disagree with me, with your TA, or with your peers, but always stop and think about how you can phrase your words to respect everyone in the room and their unique experiences. Likewise, push yourself to assume that everyone else in the class is coming from a place of good intentions, of trying to learn and struggle with the concepts of the class. Come with an open mind, respect the different experiences of others, and be prepared to rethink your own assumptions about racial and ethnic relations.

### **COURSE MATERIAL**

All required readings and listening assignments are available on Learn@UW ([learnuw.wisc.edu](http://learnuw.wisc.edu)).

Abridged Powerpoint slides will be uploaded to Learn@UW after each lecture. The Powerpoint slides you see in lecture will be more detailed than those on Learn@UW.

### **LECTURE ETIQUETTE**

Please avoid disruptions such as arriving late, leaving early, or packing up before I finish lecturing. Do not use cell phones, laptops, or tablets to surf the web, check email, or like the latest @cats\_of\_madison post on Instagram – it's distracting to your classmates and to me.

Laptops and tablets will be permitted for taking notes during lecture. However, *I reserve the right to prohibit their use at any time* during the semester if they become a distraction.

### **OFFICE HOURS**

Many students are intimidated by the idea of going into office hours – I know I was as an undergrad. But I encourage you to stop by your TA's or my office hours or make an appointment to meet with one of us. You do not have to be experiencing difficulty or even have profound questions to come to office hours. We are happy to answer questions and discuss ideas stemming from lecture, readings, or current events that relate to the course.

Do not hesitate to contact your TA or me if you need assistance. Head off problems before they turn into emergencies. If you cannot meet with me during my scheduled office hours, send me an email or talk to me after lecture and we can make an appointment to meet at another time.

## EMAIL ETIQUETTE

Due to the large size of this class, please follow the following email etiquette.

1. Compose emails in formal, professional language.
2. If you have a question about the course (e.g., grading policy, exam format, course schedule, etc.) always check the syllabus first.
3. If you can't find what you need there, contact your TA.
4. If your TA can't help you, he will contact me on your behalf or you may contact me directly. You are always welcome to come to my office hours or schedule an appointment to speak with me at another time.

Other than stopping by office hours, email is the best way to contact me. You can expect a response within 24 hours, unless the message is received during or just before a weekend or holiday – in such cases, I will respond by the end of business hours on the next business day.

Except for cases of emergencies, do not ask last-minute questions about an assignment (e.g., do not email us after 5:00PM prior to a scheduled due-date for an assignment).

## Grading

Final grades will be allocated as follows:

93-100%	=	A
89-92.99	=	AB
84-88.99	=	B
78-83.99	=	BC
70-77.99	=	C
60-69.99	=	D
Under 60	=	F

Your final course grade will be based on the following:

Applied Analysis Essay #1	12%
Applied Analysis Essay #2	15%
Applied Analysis Essay #3	15%
Exam #1	15%
Exam #2	15%
Exam #3	15%
Section Participation	8%
Section Attendance	5%
Total	100%

## APPLIED ANALYSIS ESSAYS

You will write **three short essays** (five paragraphs; **800-1000 words**) on course-related topics of your choice. For each essay, you will need to **select a real-world artifact** – a news report, blog post, video, book, article, movie, or TV show – to analyze using a sociology of race/ethnicity framework and concepts from class. This **artifact must be about race/ethnicity in America**. The essays are due on **Sunday, March 4<sup>th</sup>; Sunday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday, May 10<sup>th</sup>**. Each essay should be uploaded to Canvas by 11:59pm on its due date. The first essay is worth 12% of your final grade; the second and third essays are worth 15% each.

### *Guidelines:*

- You must incorporate at least three course readings into your analysis. For the first essay, the three required readings must come from the assigned readings for weeks 1 through 4; for the second essay, weeks 5 through 9; for the third essay, weeks 10 through 14.
- Your first paragraph should contain a description of the artifact and end with **a bolded thesis statement** that communicates your key analytic point(s).
- In each of the three body paragraphs, you should make analytic arguments that support your thesis statement. You should use concepts from our class in your analysis, and you should clearly use evidence from the artifact of choice to support your analysis. You must cite your sources (lecture, required readings, outside sources – note that outside sources other than the reading/movie/news report/etc. are not required), though we do not have any preference of citation style – APA, MLA, ASA, etc. As long as we can tell where you got your information and we can distinguish between your ideas and someone else's ideas, you are doing an adequate job with citation.
- Your concluding paragraph should include a brief synopsis of your argument, and might include other applications of the ideas in your essay, benefits of accepting your argument, and/or limitations of your argument.
- To earn an "A" on these essays, you must demonstrate critical thinking. Simply explaining key concepts is not sufficient; you should clearly demonstrate how the concepts are applicable and useful for an analysis of the artifact you've chosen to analyze.

Your essays will be graded according to the following rubric (20 points total):

*6 points* – Quality of argument (originality, thoughtfulness, critical thinking)

*6 points* – Engagement with and understanding of course material

*4 points* – Substantive evidence (strength of information, how well it supports the argument, quality of topical information)

*4 points* – Writing quality (organization, flow, sentence structure, voice) and technical requirements (cited evidence, proper document naming and upload, word count, bolded thesis statement, appropriate topic)

## EXAMS

There will be three non-cumulative, multiple-choice exams. They will cover material from the readings, lectures, and videos. The exams will be administered during lecture on **Monday, February 19<sup>th</sup>**; **Monday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>**; and **Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>**. The exams are each worth 15% of your final grade. Contrary to what you see online, **there will NOT be an exam on Thursday, May 10<sup>th</sup>**.

Make-up exams will be permitted, at my discretion, only in cases of severe illness, serious family emergencies, or participation in UW athletics, but you must notify me ahead of time. Students who miss an exam without prior approval will receive an F for that exam.

## COURSE POLICIES AND INFORMATION

### Accommodations

Please send the instructor an email by the end of the second week of the course if you are eligible for special arrangements or accommodations for testing, assignments, or other aspects of the course. This may be the case if English is your second language or you experience a physical or psychological condition that makes it difficult for you to complete assignments and/or exams without some modification of those tasks. Accommodations are provided for students who qualify for disability services through the McBurney Center. Their website has detailed instructions about how to qualify: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>. Provide a copy of your accommodations request (VISA) to the instructor by the end of the second week of class. We try to reserve rooms and proctors by the third week in class, so we must know of all accommodations by then.

If you wish to request a scheduling accommodation for religious observances, send an email by the end of the second week of the course stating the specific date(s) for which you request accommodation; campus policy requires that religious observances be accommodated if you make a timely request early in the term. See the university's web page for details: <https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=21698>

### Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. It will be detected and detested. It is truly not worth it. Ignorance of the rules is NOT an excuse.

All work that you submit must be your own and must have been done for this class. This means no recycling of old papers or projects (yours or anyone else's) and absolutely no plagiarism. This means no buying papers online, no cutting and pasting chunks of text from other sources and presenting it as your own writing, and no paraphrasing and presenting it as your own ideas. All work will be submitted in electronic form and checked against plagiarism detection software.

All incidences of plagiarism and academic dishonesty will be reported to the Chair of the Sociology Department as well as the Office of the Dean of Students, and you will receive a failing grade for the course. I expect you to acquaint yourself with the University's policy on academic misconduct, found here:

<http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html>

If you have questions as to what constitutes plagiarism, the Writing Center has numerous resources and tutorials online on their website (<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Documentation.html>).

### **The Writing Center**

It is always useful to develop your academic writing skills as early as possible. The UW Writing Center provides you with a diverse range of resources to help you write as a scholar and with style. The Writing Center is located at 6171 Helen C. White Hall. Their hours are Mon-Thu 9:00am-8:30pm; Fri 9:00am to 3:00pm. For more information, visit their website at [www.writing.wisc.edu](http://www.writing.wisc.edu) or call 263-1192.

### **Questions and Complaints about Grading**

The TAs and I are human, and we do make mistakes in grading. If you have a question about how an assignment was graded, please communicate with us. Note, however, that any time we look back to an assignment to evaluate the grading, your grade may go up or down. Please follow this procedure for grade questions and complaints:

- 1) Wait 24 hours, and review the assignment description – often, students are able to identify why their work was marked down by doing this.
- 2) 24 hours after a grade has been posted, submit to me (not your TA) a one page paper with the following:
  - a. Clearly and specifically describe your question or complaint (hint: this tends to be better received if you can frame this around *learning* rather than your *grade*)
  - b. Justify any complaints with a description of *how* you believe you met the requirements
  - c. Request a meeting. Include several days and times when you can meet with the grader to discuss the issue.
- 3) I will reply to you within 48 hours (except on holidays or weekends, when it will be by the end of the following business day) to confirm the meeting time.
- 4) Meet with the grader.
- 5) In exceptional cases, when I agree that the original grade is in question, I may re-grade your paper. Note, again, that grades may go up or down.

### **Department Learning Objectives**

Beyond the specific substantive and methodological content I will cover in this course, I have designed this course to achieve the following instructional objectives designated as priorities by the Department of sociology:

- Communicate Skillfully: Sociology majors write papers and make oral presentations that build arguments and assess evidence in a clear and effective manner.

- Critical Thinking about Society and Social Processes: Sociology graduates can look beyond the surface of issues to discover the "why" and "how" of social order and structure and consider the underlying social mechanisms that may be creating a situation, identify evidence that may adjudicate between alternate explanations for phenomena, and develop proposed policies or action plans in light of theory and data.

## SEMESTER SCHEDULE

### **Week 1: The Sociology (and History) of Race and Ethnicity in America**

**January 24<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, and 29<sup>th</sup>**

**Reading:** "The Promise of Sociology" – Mills  
 "Racial Formations" – Omi and Winant

**Listening:** "Remembering Jim Crow" (from *American RadioWorks*)

### **Week 2: The Social Construction of Race**

**January 31<sup>th</sup>, February 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Reading:** "Race is a Social Construct, Scientists Argue" – Gannon  
 "Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only?" – Waters  
 "The Census is Still Trying To Find The Best Way to Track Race in America" – Casselman

### **Week 3: Privilege, Prejudice, and Discrimination**

**February 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Reading:** "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" – McIntosh  
 "Explaining White Privilege to a Broke White Person" – Crosley-Corcoran  
 "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life" – Sue  
*Racism without Racists* – Bonilla-Silva, pp. 1-11 and 25-49

### **Week 4: Economics**

**February 14<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup>**

**Reading:** "How Homeownership Became the Engine of American Inequality" – Desmond  
 "Getting a Job in the Inner City" – Newman  
 "In Job Hunt, College Degree Can't Close Racial Gap" – Luo

**\*\*\*Exam #1 on Monday, February 19<sup>th</sup> in lecture\*\*\***

## **Week 5: Politics**

**February 21<sup>st</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup>**

**Reading:** “Jim Crow 2.0? Why States Consider and Adopt Restrictive Voter Access Policies” – Bentele and O’Brien, pp. 1088-1093 (*stop reading when you get to section entitled “An Empirical Approach”*)  
*Colorblind: The Rise Of Post-Racial Politics and the Retreat from Racial Equality* – Wise, pp. 11-25 and 36-61

## **Week 6: Residential Space**

**February 28<sup>th</sup>, March 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Reading:** “The Creation of Underclass Communities” – Massey and Denton  
“Fences and Neighbors: Segregation in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America” – Farley and Squires  
“Why are there no Supermarkets in my Neighborhood? The Long Search for Fresh Fruit, Produce, and Healthy Food?” – Zenk et al.

**\*\*\*Applied analysis Essay #1 due Sunday, March 4<sup>th</sup> at 11:59PM. Focus on concepts and readings from weeks 1 through 5\*\*\***

## **Week 7: Criminal Justice System**

**March 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Reading:** “Beyond Crime and Punishment: Prisons and Inequality” – Western and Pettit  
*The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* – Alexander  
“America’s Whites-Only Weed Boom” – Lewis

**Listening:** “Object Anyway” (from the podcast series *More Perfect*)

## **Week 8: Immigration**

**March 14<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup>**

**Listening:** “Our Town – Part One” (from the podcast series *This American Life*)  
“Our Town – Part Two” (from the podcast series *This American Life*)



## **Week 9: Education**

**March 21<sup>st</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and April 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Reading:** “Savage Inequalities: Children in America’s Schools” – Kozol

“The Acting White Theory Doesn’t Add Up” – Toldson

“Stop Blaming Black Parents for Underachieving Kids” – Perry

**Listening:** “The Problem We All Live With – Part One” (from the podcast series *This American Life*)

**\*\*\*Exam #2 on Monday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> in lecture\*\*\***

## **Week 10: Art, Pop Culture, and the Media**

**April 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup>**

**Reading:** “Study: TV May Perpetuate Race Bias” – Park

“Racist *Hunger Games* Fans Are Very Disappointed” – Stewart

“Miley Cyrus Brings Her Racism Problem to the VMAs” – Makarechi

**\*\*\*Applied analysis Essay #2 due Sunday, April 8<sup>th</sup> at 11:59PM. Focus on concepts and readings from weeks 6 through 9\*\*\***

## **Week 11: Associations**

**April 11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup>**

**Reading:** “Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks” – McPherson et al., pp. 415-422

“Interracial Friendships in the Transition to College: Do Bird of a Feather Flock Together Once They Leave the Nest?” – Stearns et al.

“Getting a Man or Getting Ahead: A Comparison of White and Black Sororities,” – Berkowitz and Padavic

## **Week 12: Sports**

**April 18<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 23<sup>rd</sup>**

**Reading:** “Gone With the Wind? Sports, Race, and the Modern Athlete” – Zirin

“Anonymous NFL GMs call Colin Kaepernick a ‘traitor’” – Bondy

“Colin Kaepernick’s True Sin” – Serwer

“Dump the ‘Redskins’ Slur!” – Zirin

“The Donald Sterling Controversy Lets Everyone Off Too Easily”  
– Chotiner

### **Week 13: Relationships and the Family**

**April 25<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup>**

**Reading:** “How Your Race Affects the Messages You Get” – Rudder  
“Not Just a Preference” – Rowlson  
“Despite Senator’s Objections, There is Educational Value to Studying  
Grinder Racism” – Juzwiak

### **Week 14: Toward Racial Justice**

**May 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Reading:** “How the New Working Class Can Transform Urban America” – Kelley  
“Policy Steps Toward Closing the Gap” – Lui et al.  
“Guidelines for Being a Strong White Ally” – Kivel

**\*\*\*Exam #3 on Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup> in lecture\*\*\***

**\*\*\*Applied analysis Essay #3 due Thursday, May 10<sup>th</sup> at 11:59PM. Focus on  
concepts and readings from weeks 10 through 14\*\*\***

**\*\*\*Syllabus may change based on class needs as they arise\*\*\***