

SOCIOLOGY 134: THE SOCIOLOGY OF RACE AND ETHNICITY

SPRING 2021

INSTRUCTOR

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8131 Social Sciences

Office Hours: Friday 9-11 and by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

The tumultuous events of the past several months--in particular the Covid-19 global pandemic and the racial protests spurred by the police killing of George Floyd--commands a special urgency for a class on the realities of race and ethnicity in the United States. This course introduces students to a uniquely sociological perspective on the nature, dynamics, and inequalities of race and ethnicity. Taking a sociological approach requires (in part) that we understand race and ethnicity as socially constructed processes of categorization, meaning, and behavior that shift over time and operate at 1) the structural/institutional level; 2) the cultural/symbolic level; and 3) the interpersonal level. We will explore the ways in which race and ethnicity permeate social life, how race and ethnic hierarchies emerged historically and persist in the present. We will also tackle the difficult—and often controversial—task of defining and deconstructing the concepts of racism, prejudice, discrimination, ideology, privilege, etc. In doing all of the above we will also consider the consequences of race and ethnic hierarchy on the lives of real people, both those who are disadvantaged by, AND those

who benefit from such a social system. Finally, we will consider alternative visions of race and ethnic justice, and the ways we might achieve them.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- TEXT: *Race in America (2e)* by Matthew Desmond and Mustafa Emirbayer (available as an ebook)
- SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS/VIDEOS (posted electronically as pdf files in Canvas)

LEARNING GOALS

To get the most out of this course, you need to open yourself up to being challenged, perhaps even feeling uncomfortable at times; and of course, you need to do the necessary work! If you do, by the end of the semester you will be able to:

- Participate in informed conversations about issues relating to race and ethnicity with a variety of people.
- Articulate sociological perspectives, theories, concepts, and debates relating to race and ethnicity in the U.S. and use these to better understand the world around you.
- Demonstrate an understanding of race and ethnicity as a structural, not just an individual phenomenon.
- Develop a “sociological imagination”—that is, understand how your personal experience intersects with and is shaped by a larger social and historical context.
- Critically assess current issues in the news, politics, and your community using a sociologically-informed race and ethnicity lens.

EMAIL/CONTACT POLICY

Your questions, concerns, and overall well-being as a student in my course are extremely important to me. However, given the size of this class (close to 600!), I must insist that you contact your TA about routine issues or questions about grading, absences, assignments, important dates, etc. If you do email me about routine issues, I will likely reply with a friendly reminder to contact your TA. That said, if you have a particularly sensitive issue that you feel you need discuss with me directly, that is absolutely fine and I'll be happy to talk to you. And don't forget that you also have direct access to me during office hours!

CLASS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Throughout the semester, I will frequently post "Announcements" to the Canvas homepage (for which you will also get an email notification). This is my one way of directly communicating with the entire class and it is your responsibility to read and keep up with them.

ACCOMODATIONS FOR LATE OR MISSING ASSIGNMENTS, ABSENCES, ETC.

Given all the disruptions caused by the ongoing pandemic, we try to be as accommodating as possible for anyone negatively impacted by Covid-19 and its related chaos. Beyond that, we also understand that mistakes happen and you may, for any number of reasons, be late with or forget to turn in an assignment at some point during the semester, miss a discussion section, etc. Below is our general policy regarding these issues:

- If you have an EXCUSABLE reason for requesting an accommodation (including, but not limited to Covid), it is your responsibility to let us know either in advance or otherwise within 48 hours after the date for which you need the accommodation;
- If you have a NONEXCUSABLE reason for requesting an accommodation (for example, you simply forgot to turn an assignment in), you need to let us know no later than 24 hours after the due date of the missed assignment/attendance. We will excuse and accommodate you ONCE throughout the semester with no penalty;
- Accommodations/leniency for unexcused reasons DOES NOT APPLY TO EXAMS

GRADE SCALE

92.5-100: A

87.5-92.4: AB

82.5-87.4: B

77.5-82.4: BC

70-77.4: C

60-69: D

<60: F

GRADING

Your grade for the course will consist of the following components:

- 3 MID-TERM EXAMS (65% of total grade): Exams will be a combination of multiple choice, true/false, and a short answer/essay element.
- WEEKLY TEXTBOOK ACTIVITIES (17.5% of total grade; directly accessible via Canvas):
 - Each week (except week 1 and weeks when you have an exam) you will complete two study activities tied to your TEXTBOOK reading for that week. One activity is called "InQuisitive," the other is a short "video quiz" based on a short documentary clip provided by the textbook. Both activities are accessible directly via Canvas and will be due by Friday midnight.
- DISCUSSION ATTENDANCE (7.5% of total grade)
 - Your TA will give you specific details in their discussion syllabi.
- DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES/ASSIGNMENTS (10% of total grade)
 - Again, your TA will have details in their discussion syllabi.

LECTURES AND DISCUSSION SECTIONS

This is an all-online class that consists of two key formats: twice a week lectures and once a week discussion sections. Lectures are *asynchronous recordings*; no one needs to log in to a video conferencing site (Zoom, BBCollaborate, etc.) at a particular time. However, to simulate a "normal" class as much as possible, I will post the weekly lectures on a Tuesday/Thursday schedule; lectures will normally be posted sometime between 2-4 PM on those days.

Discussion sections are MANDATORY. Because there are six TAs for this course, each with unique approaches and strengths, discussion sections will not be identical to each other. However, your TAs and I are in frequent contact to make sure that general course objectives, content, and expectations are consistently applied across sections.

TYPICAL WEEKLY ROUTINE

To sum everything up, most weeks will follow a typical routine consisting of the following:

- Two recorded lectures (one posted Tuesday afternoon; one on Thursday afternoon)
- One discussion section
- A mandatory reading assignment (partly from your text, and partly from supplemental sources)
- The online textbook activities mentioned above

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

We're all responsible for creating a respectful, scholarly environment in which we grow as critical learners, informed citizens, and compassionate human beings. Each of us has something unique and valuable to contribute, based on our different identities and life experiences, varied college majors, and backgrounds; this diversity is a strength and a resource that we will draw upon to learn from one another. Please join me in creating an inclusive learning environment for students that supports a diversity of perspectives and experiences and honors one another's identities (including race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, age, citizenship status, etc.).

We will be exploring sensitive and challenging material in class, which may evoke strong emotions and opinions as well as disagreement. It is essential that we have a safe and trusting atmosphere in the classroom, in which we can explore uncomfortable topics and diverse perspectives in a thoughtful, deep, and respectful manner. Students are invited to share their personal experiences and beliefs, always reflecting on how they relate to class material.

Part of fostering critical thinking skills is challenging assumptions—those of others and your own. You will get the most out of this class if you open yourself up to being challenged and feeling uncomfortable. You are welcome to disagree with one another (and me!), but let's respectfully challenge each other's argument/comment (not each other, personally). If someone unintentionally says or does something offensive or hurtful, let's assume best intentions rather than demonize them, and use it as a collective learning opportunity to explain why what they said or did was offensive or hurtful.

PRIVACY OF STUDENT RECORDS and the USAGE of AUDIO RECORDED LECTURES

See information about [privacy of student records and the usage of audio-recorded lectures](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

Usage of Audio Recorded Lectures Statement

Lecture materials and recordings for [insert class name] are protected intellectual property at UW-Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

STUDENTS' RULES, [RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, we must prioritize our collective health and safety to keep ourselves, our campus, and our community safe. As a university community, we must work together to prevent the spread of the virus and to promote the collective health and welfare of our campus and surrounding community.

UW-MADISON [FACE COVERING GUIDELINES](#) [\(Links to an external site.\)](#)

While on campus all employees and students are required to [wear appropriate and properly fitting](#) [\(Links to an external site.\)](#) face coverings while present in any campus building unless working alone in a laboratory or office space.

Face Coverings During In-person Instruction Statement (COVID-19)

Individuals are expected to wear a face covering while inside any university building. Face coverings must be [worn correctly](#) [\(Links to an external site.\)](#) (i.e., covering both your mouth and nose) in the building if you are attending class in person. If any student is unable to wear a face-covering, an accommodation may be provided due to disability, medical condition, or other legitimate reason. Students with disabilities or medical conditions who are unable to wear a face covering should contact the [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#)[Links to an external site.](#) or their Access Consultant if they are already affiliated. Students requesting an accommodation unrelated to disability or medical condition, should contact the Dean of Students Office.

Students who choose not to wear a face covering may not attend in-person classes, unless they are approved for an accommodation or exemption. All other students not wearing a face covering will be asked to put one on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear face coverings appropriately or adhere to other stated requirements will be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards](#)[Links to an external site.](#) and will not be allowed to return to the classroom until they agree to comply with the face covering policy. An instructor may cancel or suspend a course in-person meeting if a person is in the classroom without an approved face covering in position over their nose and mouth and refuses to immediately comply.

QUARANTINE OR ISOLATION DUE TO COVID-19

Student should continually monitor themselves for COVID-19 [symptoms](#)[Links to an external site.](#) and get [tested](#)[Links to an external site.](#) for the virus if they have symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Student should reach out to instructors as soon as possible if they become ill or need to isolate or quarantine, in order to make alternate plans for how to proceed with the course. Students are strongly encouraged to communicate with their instructor concerning their illness and the anticipated extent of their absence from the course (either in-person or remote). The instructor will work with the student to provide alternative ways to complete the course work.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/>

[Links to an external site.](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

McBurney Disability Resource Center syllabus statement:

"The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA."

<http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php>

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Institutional statement on diversity:

"Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and

opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community

for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.” <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>

WEEKLY TOPICS AND READINGS

WEEK 1 (Jan. 25-29): Course Introduction

- Harris and McClure, "How and Why We Need to Discuss Race in the United States"
- New York Times, "In a Homecoming Video Meant to Unite Campus, Almost Everyone was White"
- Waldman, "The White Fragility that Prevents White Americans from Confronting Racism" (The New Yorker)

WEEK 2 (Feb. 1-5): Structures and Symbols: A Sociological Approach to Race and Ethnicity

- TEXT, Chapter 1, pp. 3-6 (stop at "American Racism in the 21st Century"); 16-19 (start at "A Biological Reality?"); 26-36 (start at "Race is a Social Reality")
- Buffington, "Blacks are Naturally Good Athletes: The Myth of a Biological Basis for Race"
- Podcast: Racial Categories in Brazil (NPR)

WEEK 3 (Feb. 8-12): The Historical Formation of Race and Ethnic Categories

- Text, Chapter 2, pp. 47-54 (stop at "the Horrors of Slavery"); 59-72 (start at "From Emancipation to Jim Crow," end at "Racial Discourses of Modernity")
- Omi and Winant, "Racial Formations"

WEEK 4 (Feb. 15-19): Racism and Related Concepts

- Text, Chapter 1, pp. 6-16 (start at "American Racism in the 21st Century"); 20-26 (end at "Race is a Social Reality")
- Thornhill, "Silencing the Myth of a Colorblind Society"
- Rice, "The Three Degrees of Racism in the U.S." (The Atlantic)

WEEK 5 (Feb. 22-26): EXAM WEEK

WEEK 6 (March 1-5): Race and Ethnic-Based Social Movements

- Text, Chapter 3, pp. 81-97
- Black Lives Matter, "Celebrating Four Years of Organizing to Protect Black Lives" (stop at page titled "Where We've Been, Where We Are: a Snapshot")
- Crane-Murdoch, "Standing Rock: A New Moment for Native American Rights" (The New Yorker)

WEEK 7 (March 8-12): Economics, Wealth, and Employment

- Text, Chapter 4, pp. 117-26; 137-41
- Ioanide, "The Myth of Meritocracy"
- Jones, "Why So Many Minority Millennials Can't Get Ahead" (The Atlantic)

WEEK 8 (March 15-19): Housing and Residential Segregation

- Text, Chapter 5, pp. 153-72
- Ellis, "Minneapolis Had This Coming" (The Atlantic)

WEEK 9 (March 22-26): Education

- Text, Chapter 7, pp. 225-34; 239-41
- Kohli and Quartz, "Modern Day Segregation in Public Schools" (The Atlantic)
- Ochoa, "I'm Watching Your Group"

WEEK 10 (March 29-April 2): EXAM WEEK

WEEK 11 (April 5-9): Crime and Punishment

- Text, Chapter 6, pp. 187-203 (stop at "Crime")
- Ray, "If Only He Hadn't Worn the Hoodie: Race, Selective Perception, and Stereotype Maintenance"
- VIDEO: Watch first half of 13th (Netflix)

WEEK 12 (April 12-16):

Crime and Punishment (cont'd)

- Text, Chapter 6, pp. 211-20 (stop at "do prisons make us safer?")
- Finish Watching 13th

Race, Ethnicity, and Health Disparities

- Mouzon, "Confronting Myths about Ethnoracial Health Disparities"
- Gravlee, "Racism, not Genetics Explains why Black American are Dying of Covid-19 (Scientific American)"

WEEK 13 (April 19-23): Affirmative Action

- Poon, "The Legal and Social Realities of the College Admissions Process"
- Supreme Court of the United States, Grutter v. Bollinger (2003)
- Wong, "Asian Americans and the Future of Affirmative Action" (The Atlantic)

WEEK 14 (April 26-30): TBA

FINAL EXAM: WEDNESDAY, MAY 5