

Sociology 134: The Sociology of Race & Ethnicity in the United States

**5206 Sewell Social Sciences Building
11:00AM – 11:50AM Mon/Wed/Fri**

Instructor: Jason Nolen

Office: 7109 Social Sciences Building

Office Hours: Thursdays and Fridays *by appointment* at:
<https://doodle.com/bp/jasonnolen/jason-nolen-office-hours>

Email: janolen@wisc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore 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 constructions, 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 U.S., 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 an ethnicity (and sex, gender, sexual orientation, class, size, ability, belief system, 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 race and ethnicity.

COURSE MATERIAL

All required readings and listening assignments are available on the course's Canvas page, which you can access through MyUW. *You will not be asked to purchase any reading material for this course.*

Powerpoint slides will be uploaded to Canvas prior to each lecture.

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 or check email – 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.

Wearing AirPods or headphones during lecture is prohibited.

Audio- or video-recording lecture without my permission is prohibited. Violation of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course.

OFFICE HOURS

My office hours are Thursdays 2:30 to 4^{PM} and Fridays 1 to 2:30^{PM}, *by appointment*. Meeting times must be reserved at least 24 hours in advance. Use this link to reserve a time to meet with me:

<https://doodle.com/bp/jasonnolen/jason-nolen-office-hours>

If you'd like to meet with me and my designated office hours don't fit your schedule, please talk to me after class or send me an email and we can arrange another time to meet.

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. If you have a question about the course (e.g., grading policy, exam format, course schedule, etc.) always check the syllabus first.
2. If you can't find what you need there, contact your TA.
3. If your TA can't help you, they 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 in 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 deadline 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:

Exam #1	20%
Exam #2	20%
Exam #3	20%
Exam #4	20%
Section Attendance	10%
<u>Section Participation</u>	<u>10%</u>
Total	100%

EXAMS

There will be four non-cumulative exams consisting of multiple choice and short essay questions. They will cover material from the readings, listening assignments,

and lectures. The exams will be administered during lecture on **February 14, March 7, April 11, and May 2** (all Fridays). Each exam is worth 20% of your final grade. Contrary to what you see online, **there will NOT be an exam during the final exam period.**

These exams will be taken electronically on Canvas. As such, you will be required to bring a device (**other than a cellphone**) to class that will allow you to access Canvas. If you are unable to bring a device to class that meets these requirements please let me know prior to the week of the exam.

SECTION ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Refer to your discussion section syllabus – which you will receive from your TA – for information about discussion section attendance and participation requirements, and how those features of your performance will be graded.

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are the answers to frequently asked questions. If you email me to ask one of these questions, I will respond with the corresponding pre-written emails:

I was absent on [date]. Did I miss anything important?

Hi [student name],

As with every other lecture, we did not cover anything important on [date]. Sorry to have wasted your time on the days that you did come to class.

Best,
Jason

Are there extra credit opportunities in this class?

Hi [student name],

There are no extra credit opportunities in this class.

Sincerely,
Jason

Do you curve the grades?

Hi [student name],

This class is graded on a fixed scale. Grades will not be curved.

Regards,
Jason

My overall score is half a percent below the cutoff for an A. Do you round up?

Hi [student name],

I don't round up to the nearest percentage point. Any score below [x.xx]% will result in a grade of [enter grade here] or lower.

Have a great break!

Jason

Is there any additional work I can do to bump my score up to an A?

Hi [student name],

There are no extra credit or extra work opportunities in this class.

Enjoy your summer!

Jason

COURSE POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Accommodations

McBurney Disability Resource Center: Students with disabilities, visible and invisible, should contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center located at 702 W Johnson St #2104, (608) 263-2741. Webpage: www.mcburney.wisc.edu.

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:

<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-misconduct/>

If you have questions as to what constitutes plagiarism, the Writing Center has numerous resources and tutorials online on their website

<https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/quoting-sources/>

Student Resources

University Health Services (UHS) Mental Health Services: To obtain assistance for personal, social, career, and/or study skills problems, please contact the counseling center at University Health Services: 333 East Campus Mall, 7th Floor. (608) 265-5600 (option 2). For 24/7 crisis support, call (608) 265-5600 and select option 9.

Website: <https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/mental-health>

UHS Medical Services: For health issues ranging from the flu to sexual health testing, UHS offers health services for many student needs. They are located on the 5th and 6th floors of 333 East Campus Mall. You can contact them by calling (608) 265-5600 (select option 1).

Website: www.uhs.wisc.edu/medical

UHS Violence Prevention: Violence can affect university students before they reach campus and throughout their time at college. UHS Violence Prevention services exist to prevent violence as well as to support survivors of sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking. Please contact them to learn more about their services or to make an appointment.

Location: 8th Floor of 333 East Campus Mall

Website: www.uhs.wisc.edu/prevention/violence-prevention/about-us/

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.

Location: 6171 Helen C. White Hall

Website: writing.wisc.edu

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.

Sociology 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

January 22: Course Overview

No assigned readings

January 24: Introduction to Sociology

Reading:

"The Promise of Sociology" – Mills

January 27 and 29: Introduction to The Sociology of Race and Ethnicity in the United States

Reading:

"Why are States Banning Critical Race Theory?" – Ray and Gibbons

Listening:

"Remembering Jim Crow" – *American RadioWorks*

January 31; February 3 and 5: The Social Construction of Race

Reading:

"Are You There, Race? It's Me, DNA" – Jarry

"Racial Formations" – Omi and Winant

"The Measure of Humanity" – Wilkerson

"Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only?" – Waters

"When it Comes to the Census, Arab Americans are an Invisible Minority" – Fayyad

February 7, 10, and 12: Privilege, Prejudice, and Discrimination

Reading:

"The Strange Enigma of Race in Contemporary America" – Bonilla-Silva

"White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" – McIntosh

"Explaining White Privilege to a Broke White Person" – Crosley-Corcoran

"Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life" – Sue

*****Exam #1 on Friday, February 14 in lecture*****

February 17 and 19: Economics

Reading:

"How Homeownership Became the Engine of American Inequality" – Desmond

"Most People Believe They Don't See Color..." – Sah

February 21, 24, and 26: Politics

Reading:

"Racial Politics and the Middle Class" – Haney López, pp. 1-5

"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"*)

"Voting Groups Condemn Spindell Email about Lower 2022 Turnout among Black, Hispanic Voters in Milwaukee" – Verhuizen

February 28; March 3 and 5: Residential Space

Reading:

"The Creation of Underclass Communities" – Massey and Denton

"Fences and Neighbors: Segregation in 21st 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.

*****Exam #2 on Friday, March 7 in lecture*****

March 10 and 12: Criminal Justice System – Part 1

Reading:

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness (introduction) –

Alexander

“Enfranchisement and Incarceration after the 1965 Voting Rights Act” – Eubank and Fresh

March 14 and 17: Criminal Justice System – Part 2

Reading:

“America’s Whites-Only Weed Boom” – Lewis

Listening:

“Object Anyway” – *More Perfect*

March 19: Education – Part 1

Reading:

“The Failure of Desegregation” – Cobb

Listening:

“The Problem We All Live With – Part One” – *This American Life*

*****Note: no lecture on Friday, March 21*****

*****Spring Break: March 22 to 30*****

March 31: Education – Part 2

Reading:

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

April 2 and 4: Affirmative Action

Reading:

“‘I Had a Friend Who Had Worse Scores Than Me and They Got Into a Better College’: The Legal and Systemic Realities of Selective College Admissions Processes” – Poon et al.

“Affirmative Action Ruling Hits Just as UW-Madison Improves Diversity” – Huynh

April 7 and 9: Immigration

Reading: “Does the U.S. Really Have an Immigration Crisis?” – Castañeda (interview)

Listening:

“Our Town – Part One” – *This American Life*

“Our Town – Part Two” – *This American Life*

*****Exam #3 on Friday, April 11 in lecture*****

April 14 and 16: Associations

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

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

April 18 and 21: Health

Reading:

“From Race-Based to Race-Conscious Medicine: How Anti-Racist Uprisings Call Us to Act” – Cerdena et al.

“COVID-19 Racism and Mental Health in Chinese American Families” – Cheah et al.

April 23: The Family

Reading:

“Monticello Plantation” – Smith

“Structural Racism, Family Structure, and Black-White Inequality: The Differential Impact of the Legacy of Slavery on Poverty Among Single Mother And Married Parent Households” – Baker and O’Connell

April 25: Dating

Reading:

“How Your Race Affects the Messages You Get” – Rudder

“Do You Hide Your True Self While Dating?” – Holt

April 28 and 30: Art, Pop Culture, and the Media

Reading:

“More Evidence TV Doesn't Reflect Real Life Diversity” – Deggans

“The Evolution of Black Representation on Television” – Harwood

*****Exam #4 on Friday, May 2 in lecture*****

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