

Race and Public Policy

WWS593a Fall, 2005
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Course Overview

This course explores how race and public policy interact with one another in the United States. Because of the country's particular history of African-American slavery and legalized segregation and discrimination, most of our attention will be paid to how public policy is shaped by the dominant view of African-Americans and how the quality of life of African-Americans as a group can be affected by public policy.

We will start by looking at how race is socially constructed, and how this construction forms the basis of institutional racism in the U.S. Every institution in U.S. society is affected by past and present racism, including the legal system and policy-making bodies. For the majority of the course, we concentrate on policies and inequalities regarding education, housing, and incarceration.

Course Material

There are four books to purchase for this course, as well as a course-pack of assigned readings. The books are:

Shades of Freedom: Racial Politics and the Presumptions of the American Legal Process, Leon Higginbotham, Oxford University Press, 1998.

Diversity Challenged: Evidence on the Impact of Affirmative Action, ed. Gary Orfield with Michael Kurlaender, The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, 2001

American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the American Underclass, Doug Massey & Nancy Denton, Harvard University Press, 1993

Malign Neglect: Race, Crime, and Punishment in America, Michael Tonry, Oxford University Press, 1995

Course Requirements

Class participation

Particularly because this is a half-semester course, students are expected to come to every class. I anticipate that the classes will be half lecture, half discussion, especially since there is a lot to talk about and debate in the study of race and policy. Meaningful class discussion can only happen when you keep up with the readings.

In the first class, we'll assign each student a week for which you'll be responsible for organizing discussion questions around the readings. Depending on the size of the class, two students may share this responsibility for some weeks. You may want to find key passages for discussion, identify reviews of the work (critical or otherwise) and distribute these if you feel they raise valid points about the work, focus on questions that the work looks at, relate the work to practical applications,

and/or relate the work to larger issues and themes. The goal is not to find something “wrong” with the work, but rather to view it with a critical eye by examining the author’s arguments closely.

Commentary papers (2):

You will choose two weeks for which you will write a short commentary paper (2 – 3 pages). These are not for summarizing the reading, but rather for commenting on some aspect of one or all of the readings (for that week) that you found interesting or thought-provoking. It may be related to something which you would like to raise in the discussion (whether you are leading the discussion or not). These are due at the end of the class during which the reading is discussed. I will not grade these, but their completion will be considered when I assign the class participation grade.

Policy analysis paper:

This 15 - 20 page paper will be due the last day of class. (You will need to hand in both a hard copy and an electronic copy.) In this paper, I would like for you to pick a domestic public policy area and analyze how racial dynamics shape the policy and how the policy may affect people differentially because of their race/ethnicity. The policy area does not have to be limited to what we cover in class. Please talk with me before starting on your research. The paper is due the last day of class, October 25th.

Your grade for this class will be evaluated as follows:

Class participation: 30%
Policy paper: 70%

Weekly Schedule

September 20 Racial Construction/Identity

September 27 Race and the Legal System

Carter, “The Black Table, the Empty Seat, and the Tie” pp. 55 – 79
Omi & Winant, “Racial Formation” pp. 53 – 61, 69 – 76
Tatum, “Defining Racism”, pp. 3 - 14
Higginbotham, *Shades of Freedom*, pp. xxiii – 80, 94 – 126, 169 - 182

October 4 Education Policy I – Elementary & High Schools

Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, pp. 22 – 108
Kozol, *Savage Inequalities*, pp. 7 – 39
Morantz, “Desegregation at Risk: Threat and Reaffirmation in Charlotte”,
pp. 179-206
Eaton & Crutcher, “Magnets, Media, and Mirages: Prince George’s County ‘Miracle’
Cure”, pp. 265 – 289
In Orfield (ed), Kurlaender & Yun, “Is Diversity a Compelling Educational Interest?
Evidence from Louisville”, pp. 111 - 137

October 11 Education Policy II -- Affirmative Action & Higher Education

Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*, pp. 143 - 172
Steele, *The Content of Our Character*, pp. 111 - 126
In Orfield (ed), pp. 1 – 80, 143 – 172, 205 – 217, 277 – 292

October 18 Housing Policy – Segregation, Integration, and Deconcentration

Massey & Denton, *American Apartheid*, pp. 17 – 114, 186 - 236

Ellen, *Sharing America's Neighborhoods*, pp. 12 – 34, 152 – 176

Boston Review, Summer 2000, *Moving Out*

October 25 Incarceration

Tonry, *Malign Neglect*, pp. 1 – 124, 181 - 210

Pettit & Western, “Mass Imprisonment and the Life Course”

Pager, “The Mark of a Criminal Record”