POL379H: Topics in Comparative Politics: Race and Politics in America

Instructor: Renan Levine renan.levine@utoronto.ca

Online lecture (recorded, BB Collaborate): Tuesdays, 11 am – 1 pm

Office hours: Thursdays, 1 - 2:30 pm

Video watch parties: Thursdays, 9:00 pm

Video discussion: Fridays, 11 am

Syllabus version: 1.1 July 5, 2021

Description

Well-publicized instances of police violence against minorities, the BLM movement, sharp differences by race in COVID mortality rates, and recent American election campaigns reveal a nation divided by race. Extensive scholarship exists to understand both the individual level foundations of prejudice and bias, as well as into structural or systemic factors that intentionally or unintentionally may lead to racist policy outcomes. This seminar will draws from a variety of sources to understand contemporary politics of racial & ethnic identity. Much of the class will focus on white perceptions of Black-Americans, other minority groups, and themselves.

This is a short, condensed class of only six weeks, so rather than digging into American history, our focus will primarily be on recent developments with one set of readings and one movie (or a combination of short films). Since this is an asynchronous course, attendance at the weekly webinar to talk about the readings, or the video discussion on Fridays, is recommended but not required with contributions to an online discussion sufficing for weekly attendance.

Objectives

- Understand how social identities & psychological perspectives influence how we view ourselves and others, and how these differences find political expression.
- Differentiate between individual-level theories of racism and structural theories of the impact of racism that may persist even when people and policies are explicitly not racist; understand the impact of a lingering racial divisions, prejudice, a dominant white identity on contemporary American society.
- Gain insight into recent events, including the elections of Barack Obama and Donald Trump, hatred directed at Asian-Americans during COVID, and the debate over how to teach about race and racism in schools.

Seminars and Discussion

This class is online-asynchronous, although there will be opportunities for students to join "live" discussions and lectures. Students are encouraged to join these opportunities "live."

Readings

There is no textbook for this class although we will read most of one book and students may prefer to order a hard copy of the book rather than peruse it as an e-book or pdf:

Jardina, Ashley. *White Identity Politics* (Cambridge, 2019) http://go.utlib.ca/cat/12224850

The Jardina e-book, and all other reading is available through the library or on-line at no charge to University of Toronto students. If you cannot find a copy of a text by searching the library website or Scholar.Google, please check Quercus or email the professor. There are six movies assigned. Most are available through Kanopy. Kanopy is a streaming service that the University of Toronto library as well as many public libraries, including the Toronto Public Library and at least one library in York, Peel and Durham regions. One movie is available for free via YouTube, and one movie is available through Amazon Prime (at least in Canada). When possible (and technology cooperates), the professor will host online watch parties on Zoom on Thursday nights, for students who wish to "chat" during the film with each other, students who wish to talk about the film immediately after watching them, or do not have access to these streaming services.

In the schedule below, there are some readings that include reviews of other work. These readings should be read like a textbook explaining key ideas. Other readings present experiments or studies, and students can focus on the main point or conclusion of the authors after noting the methodology employed.

Many readings are drawn from newspapers or blogs, and represent a particular argumentative viewpoint. Such readings are assigned to provide insights into those perspectives without (necessarily) constituting an endorsement of those views. You should not assume that the professor endorses any of the views espoused by the authors of these treatises and op-eds, nor that agreeing with their views will improve one's grade. Students are encouraged to read everything critically and skeptically, which is most easily done when you agree with the conclusion of the reading.

Recommended readings are useful background information, but will not appear on any exams.

Assignments

Final Exam = 25% TBA

Short Paper on Identity = 10% due July 16

Survey Data Analysis = 5% due July 23

Presentation (recorded) on the impact of racism, identity conflict, racial divisions, or prejudice on contemporary American society = 15%. Due no later than July 30 so students can get a grade before the registrar's withdrawal deadline (students encouraged to complete and upload a presentation earlier!)

Reflection Journal= 20% due August 6

Participation = 25%

Movie discussion online or forum = 10%. Attending discussion on movie weeks *or* participating in a discussion online is worth 2.5 marks each week (max=4). Discussion must take place within two weeks of the movie.

Each unit, "main" discussion question(s) = 10%. In each unit, 1-3 questions will be designated as "main" questions and highlighted on the syllabus. Discussing (at least) one of these topics is worth 2.5 marks per unit (max=4). The "main" discussion questions will remain open for one week after they are covered in class.

Additional participation on forums/attendance = 5%. Five points can be rewarded for additional participation on PeppeR forums (on any question or topic, including posting beyond four movies and "main" discussion questions), for attendance in discussions and webinars beyond the maximum points

above, questions on readings posed on discussion forum in advance of class, and/or subjectively rewarded for high quality participation in discussions, webinars and forums.

Assignment Details

All work will be submitted electronically to Quercus and/or the PeppeR discussion forums (accessible through Quercus). More detailed descriptions of each assignment will be posted on Quercus.

Short Paper on Identity

In a short paper (around 300-800 words), students should answer the following question: How is your identity different than your grandfather/grandmother's (or aunt/uncle from that generation). Speculate, or speak to your ancestor (if possible and you are comfortable doing so) about how they view themselves. This paper will be graded: Complete (85) or Incomplete (0). Students whose work falls short of expectations for a "complete" paper may be asked to re-submit. Students are also encouraged to submit their papers, excerpts from the papers, or summaries of their paper in a dedicated discussion forum for participation credit. Participation credit will also be extended for discussions and responses to others' papers.

Presentation

In *no more* than five minutes, and using *no more* than three Powerpoint slides (or Prezi nodes), students record a presentation on a topic explicating the impact of racial divisions, prejudice and/or stereotypes on contemporary American society. These presentations would typically report on academic scholarship into such effects, or research that claims that while some may perceive some effects as the result of racial divisions or prejudice, the reality may be far more complicated, or even that such perceptions may be false. Examples of possible topics include work on racial differences in criminal sentencing, barriers to employment equity, controversies over policing or university admission practices, and whether protests like BLM might cause a backlash for liberal politicians. The first students to present will be graded more generously for courageously "going first." Exceeding length limits will result in a minimum of a half-grade penalty.

Survey Data Analysis

Students will be responsible for completing a bivariate statistical analysis examining the relationship between right (conservative) ideology and views on race and immigrants from the 2016 American National Election Study. Unless students are already comfortable and familiar with statistical software packages like R, STATA, SAS or SPSS, students will complete the analysis using an easy-to-use on-line tool here: http://sda.berkeley.edu/ Lengthy instructions will enable all students, including anyone without any knowledge of statistics to complete the task. After completing the analysis, students will answer multiple choice questions on Quercus.

Final Exam

A cumulative exam will be multiple choice and contain some short answer/essay questions. Special emphasis will be paid to the questions raised in the last week of the class about education policy in America, and the debate over bias training, racially conscious teaching and critical race theory.

Reflection Journal

In this paper, students will look back at what they learned from at least three lectures, films and/or readings to evaluate what was novel, what was surprising, what was controversial, what was offensive, what was difficult, what lacked insight, or what seemed wrong. Students should reference and/or critique course materials when describing their responses to the class materials, demonstrating their understanding of key concepts by drawing connections, highlighting contradictions, and/or identifying unexplained phenomena. Conclude by looking into what the future might look like.

Grading Policies

Late Assignments

The deadline for all assignments is at 11:59 pm on turnitin.com (via Quercus). All matters of grading, exemptions, and discipline procedures will be handled in accordance with the UTSC Academic Handbook. Late assignments will be penalized 3% per day beginning 72 hours after each deadline for an additional seven days of lateness. After ten calendar days of lateness, the instructor will refuse to accept the work for grading. We will generously grant extensions for work, family, child care, or other non-health reasons prior to the deadline or quiz, so please make sure you, or someone you delegate, contacts the instructor or the TA whenever there may be an issue. Students whose health renders them unable to complete an assignment should also contact the professor before deadlines under non-exceptional circumstances.

See http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/main/faculty/resources/faculty/acaresources for the complete handbook.

Appeals

Any student who believes that any work has been unfairly graded may ask the instructor to re-evaluate his or her work. Grading appeals should be submitted via email with a cover letter explaining the basis of the appeal to the instructor.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Please familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm). It is the rule book for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules. A list of potential offences can be found here:
https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/instructors-and-staff/tips-templates/AI-statement-and-checklist.docx

The above link also includes a checklist that you should consult before you submit written work in any class to avoid any plagiarism issues. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense with a severe penalty. It is essential that you understand what plagiarism is and that you do not commit it. Please see

for more information and tips on how to avoid plagiarism.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site. Submissions made to Quercus will be checked by turnitin.com

This is a class that you will have opportunities to collaborate with other students. It is important that all students acknowledge, and identify, any and all collaborators when they submit such work, even if the work is not formally submitted on behalf of more than one student.

The final exam is open book; however, students may not communicate with each other during the exam. When there are often multiple sittings of exams, students should avoid all communications with other students from whenever students start taking the test until an hour or two after the test window closes to ensure that no one is given an unfair advantage.

Other

Accessibility Needs

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility and I wholeheartedly share that commitment by ensuring that every student should have an fair chance to excel in this course. I strive to create and maintain an inclusive environment and promise to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations to persons who require them. Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. I invite you to discuss any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials with me and/or staffers at Accessibility Services. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services at 416-978-8060 or accessibility.services@utoronto.ca. Appointments and drop-in sessions for accessibility advisors and learning strategists are available. For more information, please visit http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/as

Family Care & Involvement

During these challenging periods of quarantine, I know that many often face unexpected child- and elder- care challenges. If you have children of any age, or responsibility to care for children, you should know that when circumstances require their presence, they are welcome to be present during any live webinars or office hours. I know that for many of us, finding quiet, private space for class may be impossible. Videos may be kept off at all times (at most, you may need to show me your screen). Please encourage any family member who may be interested in politics, scientific research, or just some cheap entertainment to listen to lectures. I will be happy to respond to any questions they might have, just please remember that everyone's work in this class must reflect their own efforts. If they are not interested, but present, just remember to keep yourself muted. ☺

Religious Accommodations

As a student at the University of Toronto, you are part of a diverse community that welcomes and includes students and faculty from a wide range of cultural and religious traditions. For my part, I will

make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations, or other compulsory activities on religious holy days not captured by statutory holidays. Further to University Policy, if you anticipate being absent from class or missing a major course activity (such as a test or in-class assignment) due to a religious observance, please let me know as early in the course as possible, and with sufficient notice, so that we can work together to make alternate arrangements.

Contact

The instructor will be available via Quercus email, U of T email, Microsoft Teams and Whatsapp at 6477213456. Please include POL379 in the subject line of all emails, and as a preface to all Whatsapp messages. Be forewarned, the instructor is often occupied (or pre-occupied) with his children in the morning and at dinner time, and attempts to unplug during the Jewish Sabbath from Friday evening through Saturday evening (if not all weekend). During the week, the instructor will try to respond to emails within 48 hours. Students are encouraged to use the Quercus (PeppeR) discussion forums for class questions. Please do not hesitate to request a time for a face-to-face or phone chat, including after 9 pm on weeknights. This is especially true for questions involving a statistics program or task that is not quite working out since many computer issues are best resolved that way rather than back-and-forth emails or messages.

Course Schedule

1. ### Identity

    Select poems (we will read during the live webinar):

    Amichai, Y. *The Diameter of the Bomb* https://allpoetry.com/The-Diameter-Of-The-Bomb

    Aresti, G. *My Father's House* http://basquepoetry.eus/?i=poemak-en&b=1427

    Zayyad (or Ziad), T. *On the Trunk of an Olive Tree* https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/on-the-trunk-of-an-olive-tree-2/

    Wheatley, Phillis. *On Being Brought from Africa to America* https://archive.vcu.edu/english/engweb/webtexts/Wheatley/brought.html

    Lee, Aubrie "The Hardest Part of Being Disabled Is Being Ignored" https://rootedinrights.org/the-hardest-part-of-being-disabled-is-being-ignored/

    McClain, Paula D., & Carew, Jessica D.J. (2018). "'Can We All Get Along?' Racial and Ethnic Minorities in American Politics (7th ed.). Routledge. Skim part Ch. 2, pp. 27-42 for demographic information & read part Ch. 3, pp. 76-91 for information on ideology and identity. Recommended pp. 146-150 for interest group information. https://www-taylorfrancis-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/books/get-along-paula-mcclain-jessica-johnson-carew/10.4324/9780429495533?context=ubx&refId=44db1cfb-19b6-494f-b08d-f8fe719929fb

    Recommended: Iceberg Identity Activity https://adl.org/sites/default/files/The-Identity-Iceberg-WEB-Student/story.html
    Fearon, James. "What is Identity (as we now use that term)?" https://web.stanford.edu/group/fearon-research/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/What-is-Identity-as-we-now-use-the-word-.pdf

Film: Little White Lie (Kanopy or Prime)

Central Questions: *Can we ignore or erase some social identities? Why do some identities – individual, group or national – matter in politics, but not others?*

What are alternatives to "identity politics"? When/where is "identity politics" a bad thing? If people organized on the basis of economic or social class, and not by identity, what political divisions would you expect? How close does that match reality (hint: Trump did very well among whites without university degrees and among people in rural areas and small towns – and states with few residents living in big cities)?

Recommended: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/11/us/how-white-evangelical-christians-fused-with-trump-extremism.html
Race: Power of Illustion, Episode 1 (Kanopy)

2. Prejudice & Racism: Individual-level Studies

Jardina, Ch. 1 -3 & 5

Cramer, Katherine. "Understanding the Role of Racism in Contemporary US Public Opinion." *Annual Review of Political Science* 23 (May 11, 2020): 153–69. doi:10.1146/annurev-polisci-060418-042842.

Crawford, Jarret T., and Mark J. Brandt. "Who is prejudiced, and toward whom? The big five traits and generalized prejudice." Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 45, no. 10 (2019): 1455-1467.

Wright, Joshua D., Zachary Goldberg, Irene Cheung, and Victoria M. Esses. "Clarifying the meaning of symbolic racism." (2021). https://psyarxiv.com/5et3b/

Films: Dear White People (Amazon Prime) & A Night at the Garden (short film): https://anightatthegarden.com

Central Questions: *Do you think that ignorance is connected to prejudice? Can reducing ignorance combat prejudice? How? Persuade me...*

How is symbolic racism (or racial resentment and similar concepts) different than traditional racism? Would you expect people who score high on such measures consider themselves to be free of prejudice?

July 16: Short Identity Paper Due

3. History: Structural and Systemic Issues (?)

The lecture this week will provide a brief primer on demographics in the US, American politics, and the history of race in the USA. As background, watch Race: Power of Illusion Parts II & III

https://utoronto.kanopy.com/video/race-power-illusion-0?pos=2 This is distinct from the film we will watch & discuss on Thursday.

Aspen Institute "11 Terms You Should Know to Better Understand Structural Racism," July 11, 2016. https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/structural-racism-definition/

Purdue University Writing Guide: Critical Race Theory (especially see definition of key terms) https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_literature/literary_theory_and_schools_of_criticism/critical_race_theory.html

McArdle, Megan. "Opinion: How to explain systemic racism to non-liberals like me." *Washington Post* July 14, 2020 https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/in-the-covid-19-world-systemic-racism-is-deadly/2020/07/14/aabe1672-c601-11ea-b037-f9711f89ee46_story.html

Recommended (especially for comparative perspective): Thompson, Debra E. *The Schematic State* (Cambridge, 2016), Ch. 4 https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma9911069 02939906196

Recommended for perspective on the controversy over Critical Race Theory: https://www.newyorker.com/news/annals-of-inquiry/how-a-conservative-activist-invented-the-conflict-over-critical-race-theory or, if you prefer the podcast version: https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/political-scene/the-new-culture-wars-over-american-history

Film: Young Lakota (Kanopy)

Central Questions: Why is there so much debate in the United States over "systemic" or "structural" racism? In other words, why is systemic racism obvious to some people but something denied by others?

Is there an ethical or legal role for policies that are not color-blind?

July 23: Survey Data Analysis due.

4. Obama and Trump

Buyuker, B., D'Urso, A., Filindra, A., & Kaplan, N. (2020). Race politics research and the American presidency: Thinking about white attitudes, identities, and vote choice in the Trump era and beyond. *The Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics*, 1-42.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "The first white president." *The Atlantic* (October 2017): 74-87.

Jardina, Ch. 8

Mason, Liliana., Wronski Julie, and Kane, John V. (2021) "Activating Animus: The Uniquely Social Roots of Trump Support," American Political Science Review. Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–9. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/activating-animus-the-uniquely-social-roots-of-trump-support/D96C71C353D065F62A3F19B504FA757

Williamson, Vanessa, Theda Skocpol, and John Coggin. "The Tea Party and the remaking of Republican conservatism." Perspectives on Politics (2011): 25-43.

Recommended: Hopkins, Daniel J., and Samantha Washington. "The Rise of Trump, The Fall of Prejudice? Tracking White Americans' Racial Attitudes Via A Panel Survey, 2008–2018." *Public Opinion Quarterly* (2020).

Film: "America's Great Divide: From Obama to Trump (PBS Frontline)," Ep. 1 (Kanopy)

Central Questions: *What was different about the reaction to Obama's presidency? Can one easily separate economic angst and anxiety from race-related populism and resentment?*

Was Trump elected because of prejudice – against women (or a woman), Black-Americans, foreigners, Muslims, etc? Or, was Trump elected because of Clinton was so disliked and distrusted?

What changed about prejudice during the Obama and Trump years? Could they have taken small steps as president to reduce hate and prejudice?

July 30: Presentation due on PeppeR.

5. Beyond White & Black

Jardina, Ch. 6

Cohen, Jeffrey E. "From antisemitism to philosemitism? Trends in American attitudes toward Jews from 1964 to 2016." *Religions* 9, no. 4 (2018): 107.

Dunwoody, Philip T., and Sam G. McFarland. "Support for Anti-Muslim Policies: The Role of Political Traits and Threat Perception." *Political Psychology* (2017).

Lin, Monica H., Virginia SY Kwan, Anna Cheung, and Susan T. Fiske. "Stereotype content model explains prejudice for an envied outgroup: Scale of anti-Asian American stereotypes." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 31, no. 1 (2005): 34-47.

Arora, Maneesh, and Hannah June Kim. "Stopping the Hate: Political Condemnations of Anti-Asian Rhetoric during the COVID-19 Crisis." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 23, no. 3 (2020): 387-405.

Film: Gook (Kanopy)

Central questions: *what does the notion of "model immigrant" or "model minority" teach us about prejudice (the good stereotypes and the bad)? In what ways do such images help or harm members of those groups - and members of not-model groups?*

How does cultural threat affect views of minorities? How is this threat distinct from political or economic threat?

August 6: Reflection Journal Due.

6. Can education policy take the USA forward?

Collins, Cory "What is White Privilege, Really?" *Teaching Tolerance* (2018)
https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2018/what-is-white-privilege-really

Carson, Ben. "Opinion: Ben Carson: Moving our focus from equality to equity won't defeat racism. It's another kind of racism." *Washington Post* April 18, 2021
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/04/18/ben-carson-equity-equality-racism/

Dixon, John, Kevin Durrheim, and Manuela Thomae. "The Principle-Implementation Gap in Attitudes Towards Racial Equality (and How to Close It)." *Political Psychology* 38, no. S1 (2017): 91-126.

Lukianoff, Greg, Adam Goldstein, Bonnie Snyder and Ryne Weiss. "13 important points in the campus & K-12 'critical race theory' debate." The Fire.org. June 28, 2021.
https://www.thefire.org/13-important-points-in-the-campus-k-12-critical-race-theory-debate/?utm_source=Google+

Rufo, Christopher. "Critical Race Theory Would Not Solve Racial Inequality: It Would Deepen It." Heritage Foundation, March 23, 2021. https://www.heritage.org/progressivism/report/critical-race-theory-would-not-solve-racial-inequality-it-would-deepen-it For recommended background, see New Yorker article and/or podcast from unit #3)

Recommended: Education Week Spotlight on Critical Race Theory, June 2021 (Browse magazine-like publication on Quercus or https://fs24.formsite.com/edweek/images/THIS_ONE_6-10_CriticalRaceTheory.pdf)

Film: Divided States: Hellertown, PA (kanopy or https://vimeopro.com/bennewman/ben-newman/video/263892673)

Central Questions: *People support actions to address racism more in principle than in practice. Does this surprise you? What is the root of such attitudes? How might this help realize a more equal, equitable North America?*

What can be done (or should have been done) in Hellertown?

Which of Collins' suggestions for combating white privilege would be easiest? Most feasible? Can you suggest more practical ideas?