

Center for Talented Youth, Johns Hopkins University
Race and Politics (RPOL)
Course Syllabus

Criticisms of the American government's response to the urban victims of Hurricane Katrina, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright controversy, and the continuing debate over immigration policy have all reminded us that, even in a "post Civil-Rights" era, the problem of race is still with us. In this course, students examine the concept of race and how race has shaped and continues to influence American history, politics, and culture.

The course will use a series of historical case studies to grapple with issues of race and politics throughout both time and space. Though the course will examine the experiences of African Americans, it is not a black history or Civil Rights course. Instead, students will examine topics as diverse as European print culture, scientific racism, Jim Crow legislation, Japanese internment, Cherokee Removal, the depiction of the Irish in the nineteenth century, Hispanic immigration, South African apartheid, Barack Obama's candidacy, and the construction of "whiteness," all while thinking about how racial categories are constructed and manipulated in American life.

To do so, students will draw on both primary and secondary sources to trace sophisticated connections between race and politics. Students will also be asked to complete a series of assignments (listed below) to demonstrate their learning and engage with the material. Students will also receive ample feedback before, during, and after the completion of these assignments. These assignments will also enrich and enhance students' critical thinking ability, debating skills, and analytical writing.

N.B. – Please remember that this course deals with highly controversial and sensitive issues, and we are approaching these topics in a spirit of academic detachment and open-mindedness. There are rarely "right" or "wrong" answers to the questions we will be asking, and we emphasize that students can express their thoughts in a cooperative and understanding intellectual environment. Respecting one another's perspective and opinions is a crucial component of that environment, and we expect all students to conduct themselves in a dignified, respectable manner.

Required Texts (available at bookstore):

- James Ciment, *The Atlas of African-American History* (New York: Checkmarks Books, 2007)
- Theda Purdue and Michael D. Green, eds., *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2004).
- Alice Yang Murray, *What Did the Internment of Japanese Americans Mean?* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000).

Assessment:

- **Participation:** Students will be expected to be prepared every day for class, not only having done the required reading but also having questions, thoughts, and general responses for discussion. In fact, we will often have students teaching material to other students. Because the course is so small, EVERYONE WILL PARTICIPATE, and the success of the course depends upon the active participation of the students. This not only means participating often, but offering quality insights and questions to our discussions.
- **Newspaper/Magazine Assignment:** - Every Friday afternoon we will journey to the library to look for newspaper and magazine articles related to current issues dealing with race and politics. You will have one hour to find an article, read it, and take notes on it. On Monday morning you will write a short, handwritten response (a page or so) to the article, summarizing its contents and relating it to the larger themes of the course, and then share that work with the class. This will be an easy, low-key way to both end and begin our weeks and also draw connections between the historical case studies we examine in class and the modern events happening out there in the "real world."
- **In-Class Assignments:** Students will be asked to complete several written assignments in class. These assignments will usually be announced and will most often take the form of a quiz, essay, or "free-write." These

exercises are designed to assess student writing, comprehension of the material, and their depth of thinking about these complex issues.

- Civil Rights Hall of Fame Assignment: Students will also be asked to give an oral nomination of a person to the Civil Rights Hall of Fame. In addition, students will produce an accompanying poster/billboard/advertisement for their individual. There will be ample time for students to conduct research on their nominee, prepare an outline of their speech, and make the poster. More details to follow.

- Final Paper: Students will be asked to submit a final research paper, due during the last week of class. The paper can be on any topic of your choosing, and we will have conferences with each student to help them narrow their topic, think about potential source materials, and consider the wider implications of their research. More details to follow.

N.B. – Please note that all assignments are to be done during regularly scheduled class times. There will be no homework and no outside reading. When we are in class we will work hard, but you will leave your books and assignments (and academic worries) in class when you leave the room.

Course Schedule:

Please note that this schedule is subject to change.

Week 1: Introduction and the Foundations of Race in Early America

Day:	Session:	Questions and Readings:	Activities:
<i>1 – Introductions</i>	Morning	What are we doing here and how can I get as much as I can out of this course? What is race? What is politics?	Group introductions, course overview, pre-assessment, group work on defining race and politics. Discussion of the concept of race.
	Afternoon	How do we read primary and secondary sources and what kinds of primary sources exist? What do we mean when we say that race is a “construction?”	Discussion of primary vs. secondary sources. Screening of Part I of <i>Race: The Power of an Illusion</i> (DVD).
	Evening	Group A read Ciment 1-6, Group B read Ciment 6-15 and Group C read Ciment 15-22. All read Bamshad and Olson, “Does Race Exist” or Kidd, “Race in the Eye of the Beholder” if we have time.	Reading and discussion of African civilizations. Further discussion of the concept of race as a cultural/political/scientific construction.
<i>2 – Europeans, Indians, and Africans</i>	Morning	What were the first impressions that Europeans had of Native Americans? What were their interactions like?	Lecture on the meeting of European, Indian, and African cultures, virtual trip to the Museum of Human Ethnography, ethnography writing assignment. European Guns vs. Indian Arrows exercise.

Day:	Session:	Questions and Readings:	Activities:
	Afternoon	What were the first forms of Atlantic slavery and what was the transatlantic slave trade like? Group A read Ciment 23-31, Group B read Ciment 31-38, Group C read Ciment 38-44.	Lecture on the transatlantic slave trade, reading from Ciment, and student teach readings to one another.
	Evening	How widespread was American slavery in the eighteenth century and how did it become “institutionalized” through law? Continue reading Ciment and all read 45-49.	Trip to computer lab for slave code Webquest (one hour). One-page summary of slave codes due at the end of the period.
<i>3 – Race and the Founders</i>	Morning	What were the prevailing attitudes about race in the eighteenth century? Read the Declaration of Independence.	Lecture on race and racial thinking in the Revolutionary Era, screening of Olaudah Equiano video, and reading of the Constitution.
	Afternoon	What did the American founders think about “race” and did that thinking find its way into the nation’s founding documents?	Brief lecture on why a Constitution was needed in the first place and in-class essay on whether the founders “should have” done more to ensure racial equality in America.
	Evening	Read assigned secondary and primary sources from Perdue.	Reading, study, and group preparation time for tomorrow’s lesson on Cherokee Removal.
<i>4 – Cherokee Removal and Scientific Racism</i>	Morning	How would we characterize Native American and U.S. relations in the late 18 th and early 19 th centuries? What did “civilization” mean during this period?	Quiz on Cherokee Removal reading assignment, lecture on Native American and U.S. relations, students break into groups to prepare for their debate on Cherokee Removal.
	Afternoon	How did Americans debate the fate of Native Americans and how did Native Americans (the Cherokee, in particular) participate in that debate? What was scientific racism and how did it attempt to create racial categories?	Class debate on Cherokee Removal. Scientific Racism lecture/exercise.
	Evening	What was the nature of Antebellum slavery and how would you characterized the abolitionist movement? Group A read Ciment, 49-59, Group B read Ciment, 59-72, Group C read Ciment, 72-81.	Readings, students teach each other from the readings, and class discussion on abolitionism.

Day:	Session:	Questions and Readings:	Activities:
5 – <i>Slavery and the Law</i>	Morning	How did abolitionists attack slavery and how did southern intellectuals defend it? Selected readings from Frederick Douglass, David Walker, and George Fitzhugh.	Lecture on slavery, abolitionism, expansion, and scientific racism. Reading and debate preparation time. Lyceum debate between David Walker (an abolitionist) and George Fitzhugh (a defender of slavery).
	Afternoon	What’s going on in the realm of race and politics today?	Library time for newspaper/magazine assignment research.

*Sunday Evening Session: *Making the Irish White*. Images of the Irish exercise and documentary on the making of *Gangs of New York*. All read Ciment 81-86 if we have time.

Week 2: Race in Modern America

Day:	Session:	Questions and Readings:	Activities:
6 – <i>Civil War</i>	Morning	What happened this weekend in the realm of race and politics? How did the Election of 1860 spark the Civil War?	Discussion of newspaper or magazine articles. Mock election of 1860. Brief lecture on Civil War.
	Afternoon	How did race affect the Civil War and Emancipation of slaves?	Screening from selections of <i>Glory</i> and discussion of Lincoln as the “Great Emancipator.”
	Evening	Group A read Ciment, 87-105 and Group B read Ciment 105-200.	Reading and preparation time to teach about Reconstruction.
7 – <i>Reconstruction</i>	Morning	What was Reconstruction and how was it a “lost opportunity” for race relations?	Students teach Reconstruction to one another. Reading on the political career of Harold Ford and discussion of Barack Obama in the context of Reconstruction.
	Afternoon	What was the Ku Klux Klan and how did it develop?	Readings and discussion of the Ku Klux Klan and Reconstruction.
	Evening	Group A read Ciment 121-131, Group B read Ciment 131-140.	Reading and study time. Individual conferences to discuss Civil Rights Hall of Fame and final paper projects.

Day:	Session:	Questions and Readings:	Activities:
8 – <i>Jim Crow and American Imperialism</i>	Morning	What was Jim Crow, did segregation dismantle the gains made by Reconstruction, and how did African Americans respond?	Trip to computer lab after break for a Webquest on black codes (one hour). Screening and discussion of <i>Birth of a Nation</i> , students take literacy tests, and brief talk on the “strange career” of Jim Crow. Also, brief virtual debate between W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington.
	Afternoon	Did race play a role in American overseas expansion in the late 19 th and early 20 th centuries?	Brief reading and lecture on American expansion in the late 19 th century and “Rorschach” exercise on images of “others” during American expansion.
	Evening	What was the nature of Japanese internment? Read selected assignments from Yang Murray. All read Ciment 140-150 if we have time.	Read assigned chapters from Yang Murray and prepare to teach them to the rest of the class.
9 – <i>World War II</i>	Morning	Was race a factor in World War II? What was the nature and impact of Japanese internment? What is the difference between race and nationhood?	Lecture on race in World War II. Students break into groups to prepare teaching the Yang Murray Text. Students teach the Yang Murray text and we will do a quick overview of the Sadler chapter on World War II. Essay on race vs. nation in the internment of Japanese Americans.
	Afternoon	How did these racial questions appear in the popular culture of World War II? How can we best understand the thinking of all people involved in the momentous struggle of world war?	Screening of Japanese internment videos, discussion of race and images in popular culture.
	Evening	In what ways did the New Deal and World War II pave the way for the modern Civil Rights Movement? All read Ciment 151-172.	Reading and studying time. Possible screening of <i>Eyes on the Prize</i> (the <i>Brown</i> case).

Day:	Session:	Questions and Readings:	Activities:
10 – Civil Rights Part I.	Morning	How did the Civil Rights movement get started and what were the key moments in the first years of the movement? What role did the Cold War have in the development of the Civil Rights movement? Who were the key people involved in the Civil Rights Movement?	Readings and discussion of the Civil Rights Movement, screening of “Eye of the Storm” on the psychology of difference. Trip to computer lab to begin researching Civil Rights Hall of Fame Nominees (two hours).
	Afternoon	What’s going on in the realm of race and politics today?	Library time for newspaper/magazine assignment research.

*Sunday Evening Session: Read Ciment 172-188 and screening of *Eyes on the Prize* (Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam).

Week 3: Contemporary America, Global Problems

Day:	Session:	Questions and Readings:	Activities:
11 – Civil Rights Part II.	Morning	What happened this weekend in the realm of race and politics? Who did you choose for the Civil Rights Hall of Fame and what contribution did they make to the development of race and politics in America?	Lecture on the Civil Rights movement, and students prepare their Civil Rights Hall of Fame Nomination posters. Trip to computer lab for preliminary research on research projects (one hour).
	Afternoon	How did the Civil Rights movement splinter, and was non-violent resistance or aggressive militancy the best strategy for gaining civil rights?	Presentations of the Nominations to the Civil Rights Hall of Fame, listening to Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I have a dream’ speech.” In-class essay in the merits of non-violent vs. violent tactics in the Civil Rights movement.
	Evening	How do you effectively research and write a good research paper?	Discussion of research and writing techniques and time to research papers (two hours).
12 – Comparisons with South Africa and Australia	Morning	How have the experiences of other countries with race and politics compared with those of Americans?	Lecture and discussion on South African Apartheid and Australian aboriginal movement; screening of “The Truth and Reconciliation Commission.”
	Afternoon	Was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission a good idea? What is the power of apology? Should reparations be paid for racial injustices?	Essay on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Day:	Session:	Questions and Readings:	Activities:
	Evening	How do you finish up researching a good paper?	Trip to computer laboratory for final research time (two hours).
13 – U.S. Immigration Today.	Morning	Read selections from Robert Suro, <i>Remembering the American Dream</i> (3 Groups will read sections I, II, and III). How have Americans historically constructed their immigration policy? What kind of immigration policy should the United States have?	Lecture on American immigration policy. Group time to prepare teaching the Suro text, and students teach Suro text to the rest of the class. Students then break up to draft a new immigration bill to be submitted to the US Congress.
	Afternoon	Finishing our research papers.	Finish research papers in computer lab (two hours).
	Evening	Group A read Ciment 189-203; Group B read Ciment, 203-214. All begin reading Eric Michael Dyson’s introduction to <i>Come Hell or High Water</i> .	Reading time and discussion if time allows.
14 – Affirmative Action, Katrina, and Today’s Racial Problems.	Morning	What is the status of race in the post-1960’s era? Is Affirmative Action a sound policy? What is “white privilege?”	Brief lecture on modern racial problems. Discussion and debate over the <i>Bakke vs. University of California</i> Case and the <i>Michigan</i> Affirmative Action case. Discussion of the construction of whiteness and the myth of reverse racism.
	Afternoon	How has Hurricane Katrina re-exposed the problems of race and politics in American society? Finish reading from Dyson’s <i>Come Hell or High Water</i> .	Brief discussion of Hurricane Katrina and virtual interview with Michael Eric Dyson regarding the federal government’s response to the hurricane.
	Evening	What have you learned so far this semester? Group A read Ciment 214-227; Group B read Ciment 227-240.	Post-assessment, readings, and final course comments.
15 – Course Conclusion	Morning	How did you answer the question posed for your final paper topics? What were the most compelling, interesting, and important things you learned in this course? What is the future of race and politics in the United States and the world?	Discussion of final papers and how they reflect what you’ve learned. Open discussion of the future of American race and politics.