Dr. Clarissa Peterson

The Politics of Race

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**The Politics of Race**

**Course Description**

This course will explore the centrality and significance of race in the modern American political system. Race continues to endure as a factor of powerful divisiveness, having unfortunate and persistent influence upon American politics and society. Its relevance and role in shaping contemporary American politics are apparent in Presidential electoral politics, in urban politics, in the political and social attitudes of Americans, and in the contemporary debates about the welfare system and the scope and function of the federal government. We will investigate the role that race has played in each of these areas so that you can better understand the current context of race in America.

**COURSE GOALS:**

1) Understand race in the American political context

2) Familiarize students with political science research

3) Provide students with the tools to have educated conversations about race in America

**Student Evaluations**

**1) CURRENT EVENTS:** Students are expected to stay informed about current events. This can be accomplished by reading the *New York Times*, the *Recorder,* or some other news source*.*  Each week we will devote class time and/or assignments to the information learned from current events. I may also ask that you turn in reactions to some of the news stories.

## Worth 5%

**2)** **LITERATURE REVIEW:** The paper should cover one of the topics covered in class. Although you are using the topics in this syllabus, you must use more than the sources listed in the syllabus. You must review 4 **additional scholarly** sources. The reference librarian will be able to help you with this. You may use the Internet, but it may not count as one of the 4 additional sources. If you would like to count an internet source as one of your 4 sources, please consult with me. This literature review will begin with a *research question* and end with a *thesis*.

## Worth 30%

**3) one In-Class Presentation:**

In these presentations, you will be expected to lead and facilitate discussion for the beginning of the class period. Two or three students will work together in preparing the presentation for the class period that will involve the presentation of two to three big questions or issues raised by the readings. You may include other sources in addition to class readings. The group **must** provide me with at least an outline of your presentation and the questions that will be addressed no later than Tuesday. We will use these questions for discussion and debate throughout the class period. I will provide you with a schedule of the presentations, after you have indicated your preferences. Please look at the syllabus and your schedules to identify your preferences ASAP. ***Unless I have reason to believe that both members of the group did not do their share of the work, both students will receive the same grade.***

**Worth 20%**

4**) PARTICIPATION and MISCELLANEOUS**: Although I will not take attendance everyday, you are expected to be present for all class sessions. Moreover, you are expected to participate in class discussions. This is primarily a discussion class on African American politics. Although I am the professor, I expect you to participate in discussions with each other about the material. I will facilitate and monitor the discussions, and will limit my lecturing to the more difficult topics. I will also provide you with some basic framework of the material covered in class. I want you to understand what scholars are saying about race in America and to question the uninformed statements that people often make about African Americans.

In addition, you should come away with an appreciation for opinions and thoughts that are different from your own, but be able to separate what appears to be truth from the truth that evidence supports. In order for these objectives to be realized, you must be active participants in the class. Of course, if you are not in class, you cannot participate. Although I will not take attendance every class period, I will penalize those who continually miss class sessions and/or do not participate in class discussions. Please consult the last page of this syllabus for more information on the participation grade.

I may give pop quizzes over the semester. These quizzes are open notes, but not open book. If you type your notes, you will NOT be able to print them out when you get to class. Any type written notes must be reviewed by me before you use the notes in class. If 2 students have the same typed notes (because they are sharing them), neither student will be allowed to use those notes for the quiz. You cannot makeup quizzes when you are absent.

This grade will also include any assignments that I might give in class or out of class.

# Worth 10%

**5)** **EXAMS:** One Exam will be given in this course. The exam may be oral and given on the last day of class (optional) or when the university has determined on the academic calendar.

**Worth 30%**

\*No late papers will be accepted for full credit If you find that one of your papers will be late, you must let me know as far in advance as possible. Late papers will be penalized. The grade will be reduced by a half letter every day that the paper is late. For example, if your paper is due on Thursday, but you hand the paper in on Friday, the BEST grade that you can get is an A-. If you find that one of your other papers will be late, you must let me know as far in advance as possible.

\* All assignments are to be submitted on Moodle and it is your responsibility to make sure that your assignments are turned in on time, and to demonstrate it when necessary. Please do not touch any file that you have submitted BEFORE you receive the graded assignment back. If your completed your work on time, but it was not saved to Moodle for some reason, you must bring the unmodified electronic file to me so that I can print it and record the completion time and date.

\*I expect all students to be respectful of your classmates and your professor. This means that you should not be speaking while others are speaking or say things that are offensive to other students (such as calling them stupid).

\*If you have any problems with the course, you should see me as soon as possible. Do not wait until the end of the semester to voice your concerns about the class. Often it is too late in the semester to have an impact on the way the class is running.

\*I reserve the right to modify the schedule from time to time to accommodate the unanticipated things that may come up during the semester.

\*While I hope that all can feel comfortable in the class, please be aware that we will often discuss difficult material. Because we are all adults, we should be able to address this material in a mature way.

\* **You are not to use your laptop during class unless I ask you to bring it with you.**

**Grade Breakdown**

Paper 30%

Tests 30%

Presentations 20%

Participation 15%

Current Events 5%

Class Resources

1) Bush, Melanie. 2004 *Breaking the Code of Good Intentions: Everyday Forms of Whiteness.* Publisher: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

2) Hancock, Angie-Marie. *The Politics of Disgust:* New York University Press

3) McClain, Paula and Joseph Stewart. 2013. *Can We All Get Along: Racial and Ethnic Minorities in American Politics,* Fourth Edition

4) Williams, Linda Faye. 2003. *The Constraint* *of Race: Legacies of White Skin Privilege in America*

Other resources will be assigned during the semester. Many will be placed on reserve and students will be expected to locate others online or in the library.

**Preliminary Course Outline**

August 25 Away at a conference

Sept 3 Introduction to course

September 5-24 **Race and politics in the US*?***

McClain and Stewart

Bush

*Detailed scheduled*

*September 5 Bush Chapters 1-2*

*September 10 M&S Chapters 1-2*

*September 12 Bush Chapter 3, M&S Chapter 3*

*September 17 Bush Chapter 5, M&S Chapter 5*

*September 19 finish Bush*

*September 24 finish M&S*

*Additional readings may be added later*

Sept 26-Oct 10 **Whiteness, Power, and the American Polity**

Rothenberg

Oct 15-Oct 31 ***Public Policy***

Williams

October 22-24 Fall Break

October 29 Exam 1

\*I will not review any theses or research questions after November 19.

***November 26 Research Paper due!***

Nov 28 Thanksgiving Break

Dec 3-12 **The Media** **and Public Policy**

Hancock 1-4

Hancock 5-7

Final Exam

**Criteria for Discussion Grade:**

You get an F for discussion if you miss lots of classes, rarely speak when you are there, and show no evidence of having done the reading.

You get a D for discussion if you come irregularly and rarely show signs of having done or thought much about the readings.

You get a C for discussion if you come to class regularly, but rarely speak, or if you are active in discussion but irregular in attendance, or if you participate in discussion in a way that shows little evidence of having done or thought much about the readings.

You get a B for discussion if you are always in class and take a thoughtful part in our discussions: participate actively and well, engaging in texts, themes, and others with some depth: and occasionally take leadership for the direction of the discussion

You get an A for discussion if you are always in class: show evidence of having read and thought about the reading with some depth: listen well to others: help focus our discussions with thoughtful comments and questions about the broader implications and comparative possibilities of the readings: and generally offer creative, imaginative ways of engaging the texts, the themes, and other students.

Adapted from Peter Frederick