

Race and Ethnic Politics in a Post-Obama Presidency

Tuesday, 6:30PM – 9:30PM, Room TBD
Winter Quarter: January – March, 2018

Instructor: Dr. Demessie
Room: 1
Office Hours: TBD

Email: [TBD](#)
Phone: 202-263-2813

Course Description:

This course will examine the fundamental theories of race and representation as it applies to the lived experiences and quest for freedom, justice, and equality on part of African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans and other groups. Given the racial and ethnic demographic shifts over the past two decades, particular attention will focus on race, representation, and racial discrimination from President Obama to President Trump. Moreover, the election of the first black president has transformed the political landscape in ways that have challenged traditional notions of descriptive and substantive representation, while also bringing to the forefront of political science discourse a serious engagement of race and representation scholarship. Finally, the Trump administration has brought to the forefront the ways in which identity politics and white nationalism operate within the context of political inclusion and racial representation. This course will provide an analysis of the public policy and sociopolitical impact of both presidents as it relates to the racial and ethnic demographic shifts in the American polity.

Key to understanding the evolution of democracy, governance, and political representation as well as the rationale for long standing racial disparities along a host of socioeconomic indicators, is a complex and analytically adept ability to appreciate the science of political mobilization, history, social movements, and political ideologies stemming from a history of slavery, Jim Crow, and civil rights to present day.

Students will walk away from this course armed with the analytical and methodological tools to not only understand the effects of race and representation on various communities, but equipped to propose effective policies and solutions based on a scientific approach to engaging questions on race, representation, and racial disparities. Topics include public opinion, social movements, political parties, legislative behavior, and pertinent policy issues such as criminal justice reform, voting, affirmative action, etc.

Additionally, with the historic election of 2016, this course will pay close attention to current events, and students will hear first-hand from legislative staffers, policymakers, and other guest speakers in this space.

Seminar requirements include class participation, a research paper, and opportunities for publication.

Course Objectives

1. To broaden and deepen students understanding of race and ethnic politics, particularly African American politics, and its subsequent impact on policy, public opinion, and political mobilization, and legislative behavior.
2. To develop the theoretical, analytical and methodological skills to help students think critically and strategically about race and representation in the American polity and the evolution of American democracy given the history of slavery, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Era with an eye towards policy solutions in present day.
3. To engage and apply the theories and analytical skills to real world policy problems and solutions affecting minority communities and African Americans in particular. Students will be encouraged to share their internship experiences with respect to the issue topics discussed in class to the extent it is relatable. Furthermore, students will be provided with opportunities to engage guest speakers working on the topics they will be learning about in an effort to maximize their internship and educational experience. Finally, the publication opportunity with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation will offer the opportunity to analyze or collect quantitative or qualitative data to be shared and disseminated to the broader communities of interest across the country.

Course Instructor Bio

Dr. Menna Demessie is the Vice President of Policy Analysis and Research at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation CBCF's research and programmatic initiatives in the areas of education, environmental sustainability, criminal justice, economic opportunity, voting, and beyond as it affects African Americans and the global black community. In her capacity, Dr. Demessie has spearheaded several partnerships with the White House, Congress, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and other nonprofit stakeholders to advance strategic efforts to influence and inform public policy. After receiving her joint PhD in political science and public policy from the University of Michigan, she went onto to work for Representative Barbara Lee working on federal unemployment legislation, antipoverty initiatives, and foreign affairs.

She received her joint PhD in political science and public policy from the University of Michigan where she conducted the first and only empirical and qualitative study of African congressional caucuses in the U.S. House of Representatives and received the highly competitive Congressional Research Award from the Dirksen Congressional Center. Her research areas include American government and legislative behavior, public opinion, International Relations, and Race and Ethnic Politics. She is a passionate scholar who was one of only five political scientists chosen in 2011 for the prestigious American Political Science Association Congressional Fellowship.

In 2016, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser awarded her with the Community Advocacy Award for her successful efforts mobilizing DC's Ethiopian and African community to lobby the DC City Council as well as in her capacity as National Youth Director for the Society of Ethiopians Established in the Diaspora (SEED) where she has served since 2000. She also spearheaded a major diaspora initiative

that resulted in SEED being selected by USAID for a diaspora partnership under former Secretary Hillary Clinton’s Global Diaspora Initiative.

She has spoken on NPR and other media outlets, presented to several members of Congress on various policy issues, and performs spoken word. She is the founder and managing co-editor of what will be the first ever policy journal launched by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation in 2018. Additionally, she has published on the critical importance of mobilization and representation of black ethnic groups and the need for the U.S. government to recognize the value of working in partnership with Diaspora communities in addressing domestic and international policy.

Grading Standards and Measurement

Individual assignments in this course will be worth various points but converted to a 100 point scale such that an A=100-93%, A-=92-90%, B+=89-87, B=86-83, B-=82-80, etc. You should understand that only excellent work will earn an A. If the work is good, it will earn a B, and satisfactory work will earn a C. You will earn Ds and Fs if your work is less than satisfactory or of poor quality. If you fail to complete the work, you will earn a 0 for the assignment. Incompletes will be allowed only under the most exceptional circumstances.

Final course grades will be proportioned as follows:

Participation-----	25%
Research Outline (2-3 pgs.)-----	15%
Floor Presentation of Final Paper-----	15%
Final Research Paper (15-20 pgs)-----	45%

Check with your university on requirements for length of research paper

According to general university policies, final course grades earned in this class will be worth the following points: A=4.0, A-=3.7, B+=3.3, B=3.0, B-=2.7, C+=2.3, C=2.0, C-=1.7, D=1.0, F=0.

Participation (25%): Your participation grade depends on your attendance and participation and will be based on Q&A and class discussion. Everyone’s opinion should be respected whether you agree or disagree with a comment. Additionally, your grade will *never* depend on whether you agree with the professor or not. Instead, your participation will be based on your knowledge and facilitation of the readings, understanding of the issues discussed in the class, and the ability to clearly articulate your thoughts and ideas. Short quizzes on readings may be included at instructor’s discretion.

Research Outline (15%): Students will produce a research outline (2-4 pages) for their research paper. The components will include a working title, research question, argument, background summary and significance, data sources to be consulted, and methodology for making the argument.

Final Research Paper (45%): Students will write a research paper (15-20 pgs) on a policy topic or subject matter as it relates to African Americans or a race or ethnic-based minority. The paper should propose a policy solution to addressing the disproportionate and negative effects or racial

disparities given a particular issue or set of issues explored by the student.

Floor Presentation of Paper (15%): Students will make 8-10 minute formal presentations on their research paper focusing on their research question, methodology, results and policy recommendations. Students are encouraged to be persuasive, analytical, and creative in advocating for their policy or programmatic solution and may adopt the persona of a lobbyist attempting to convince Congress of the need to adopt your policy proposal.

Course Rules and Regulations

Tardiness: Students are expected to be in class *on time*. If you are unable to attend class, make sure to discuss the reason with me before class time. Otherwise, the following penalties are in order: 1 unexcused absence = 5% overall grade reduction, 2 unexcused absences= 10% overall grade reduction, 3 unexcused absences = failing grade.

Policy on Weather Emergencies

In the event of a weather emergency, UCDC follows the federal government's decisions about delays and closures.

Policy on Academic Misconduct

UCDC has a zero-tolerance policy for cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of dishonesty. Students should refer to their home campus Student Code of Conduct for the regulations that apply to them. The burden is on each student to know what behaviors constitute cheating and plagiarism. Ignorance of these behaviors is not an adequate defense. Academic integrity requires you to be responsible students with your research, writing, and scholarship. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and you are encouraged to talk with me if you need clarification on citations with regard to writing assignments.

Statement on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence

The following language is the current UC Policy on Sexual Harassment and the process by which sexual misconduct is reported at UCDC. I have hyperlinked the Statement to the policy here. The link is <http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4000385/SHSV>.

The University of California is committed to creating and maintaining a community where all individuals who participate in University programs and activities can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Every member of the community should be aware that the University prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence, and that such behavior violates both law and University policy. The University will respond promptly and effectively to reports of sexual harassment and sexual violence, and will take appropriate action to prevent, to correct, and when necessary, to discipline behavior that violates this policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence.

Students who wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct should contact UCDC's Counseling Services at UCDCCounseling@gmail.com. To report sexual misconduct to ask questions about UCDC policies and procedures regarding sexual misconduct, please contact the UCDC Title IX administrator, Josh Brimmeier (202-974-6214 or josh.brimmeier@ucdc.edu). Because the University of California is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, the confidentiality of reported misconduct cannot be guaranteed.

Statement on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The following language is the UC Policy on Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability. We have hyperlinked the Statement to the policy here. The link is <http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2710534/PACAOS-140>. In compliance with the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Public Law 93- 112) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336), University of California policy prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of disability in its programs, services, and activities.

If you require accommodation for class, please let me know at our first meeting (if not earlier) so the necessary arrangements can be made.

Course Communication Tools (Email and Blackboard)

All readings will be made available electronically.

Week 1: Course Introduction and Overview: A Theoretical Approach to Understanding Race and Representation

Walton, Hanes Jr. and Robert Smith, *American Politics and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom*. Chp 1: "Universal Freedom Declared, Universal Freedom Denied: Racism, Slavery, and the Ideology of White Supremacy in the Founding of the Republic" **p.1-14**, and Ch 2: "Federalism and the Limits of Universal Freedom," **p.18-34**.

Walton, Hanes. *African American Power and Politics: The Political Context Variable*, Chapter 1, "Definition," **pp. 1-32**, "African American Race Relations Politics: The Failure of Empirical Methodology," **pp.52-70**.

Week 2: PART I: Race and Racial Discrimination in a Multicultural America

Takaki, Ronald. *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural American*. Chapter 12: "The Borderland of Chicano America," p. 311-339.

Price, Melanye. *The Race Whisperer: Barack Obama and the Political Uses of Race*, Chapter 1: "Barack Obama and Black Blame," p.35-70.

Week 3: Part II: Race and Racial Discrimination in a Multicultural America

Burns, Crosby. Center for American Progress. "The Costly Business of Discrimination: The Economic Costs of Discrimination and the Financial Benefits of Gay and Transgender Equality in the Workplace." P.1- 38.

Wu, Frank. *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*. Chapter 2: "The Model Minority: Asian American "Success" as a Race Relations Failure," p.44-77.

Arab American Institute. "Hate Crimes," Issue Brief, p.1-2

Week 4: The American Voter, Voting Rights, and the 2016 Elections
Outline for Research Paper Due

Campbell, Angus et. al, *The American Voter: Unabridged Edition*, Chapter 1, "Setting," and Chapter 2, "Theoretical Orientation," p. 3-37.

Bell, Aaron. Center for Latin American and Latino Studies. "The Role of the Latino Vote in the 2016 Elections," Center for Latin American. P. 1-19.

Walton, Hanes Jr. and Robert Smith. *American Politics and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom*, Chp. 10, "Voting Behavior and Elections," **p. 151-165.**

Berman, Ari. *Give Us the Ballot*, Chapter 10: "After Shelby," **p. 286 – 314.**

Week 5: Racial Group Interest, the U.S. Congress, and the Congressional Black Caucus

Singh, Robert. *The Congressional Black Caucus: Racial Politics in the U.S. Congress*, Chapter 3: The CBC: Caucus Origins and Organization," p. 51-72.

Walton, Hanes Jr. and Robert Smith. *American Politics and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom*. Chp 11: "The Congress and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom" **p.168-188.**

Clayton, Dewey M, *The Presidential Campaign of Barack Obama*, Chapter 2, "Descriptive and Substantive Representation, **p. 25-45** and Chapter 6: "The Campaign for the White House," **p. 104-133.**

Clayton, Dewey M, *The Presidential Campaign of Barack Obama*, Chapter 3, "Obama's Winning Coalition, **p. 46-63.**

Week 6: Policy Matters of Consequence from Obama to Trump

Cohen, Cathy J and Matthew D. Luttig, and Jon C. Rogowski. Generation Forward. "Obama vs. Trump in the Minds of Millennials," p. 1-40.

Mathew, Dayna Bowen and Richard V. Reeves, and Edward Rodrigue. Brookings Institution, "Health, Housing, and Racial Justice: An Agenda for the Trump Administration," p. 4-41.

Alexander, Michelle, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, Chp 1: "The Rebirth of Caste," pp.20-58 and Ch 2: The Lockdown, pp.59-96.

Week 7: Policymaking and Presidential Powers

Davidson, Roger H. and Walter J. Oleszek and Frances E. Lee, *Congress and Its Members: Thirteenth Edition*, Chapter 10: "Congress and the Presidency," p.281-312.

Walton, Hanes Jr. and Robert Smith. *American Politics and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom*. Chp 12: "The Presidency and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom" p.185-201.

Week 8: Politics and Public Opinion

Hutchings, Vincent. Public Opinion and Democratic Accountability. Chapter 1: "Issue Importance, Political Context, and Democratic Responsiveness," p. 1-17.

Dawson, Michael, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies*, Chp. 1: "The Contours of Black Political Thought, pp.1-44 and Ch. 2: "Black Ideologies and Black Public Opinion," pp. 44-84.

Clayton, Dewey M, *The Presidential Campaign of Barack Obama*, Chp. 4, "Demographic Groups that Supported Obama" p. 67-88.

Week 9: Racial Justice and Equity in a Post-Obama Era under Trump

Price, Melanye. The Race Whisperer: Barack Obama and the Political Uses of Race," "Conclusion," p.153-171.

Week 10: FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Final Research Papers Due Friday, March 16, 2017 at 11:49PM

In addition to the readings listed for each topic, additional materials may be provided in advance of class. This syllabus is subject to modification by the instructor.