

USA401H1S: Topics in American Studies: Understanding Prejudice and Discrimination in America

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Tuesdays, 12:00 – 2:00 pm, OI 4420

Syllabus, Version 1.1 January 21, 2018

Description

How do stereotypes shape American views of minorities, especially African-Americans? Why did those stereotypes form? How extensively do they persist? To answer these questions, this interdisciplinary seminar will read from popular writing that influenced American perceptions of minorities, from the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* to one of the most commonly assigned books in American schools today, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. We will also read literature from psychology and political science on racism and prejudice and their expressions in the political sphere before concluding with a brief look at some social and political implications of an America divided by race and/or ethnicity.

The course is divided into three units: 1) Legal and Historical Context; 2) Understanding Prejudice and Racism; 3) Applications & Implications

Objectives

- Explore the role prominent writing, both fiction and non-fiction, have played in structuring American society.
- Differentiate between different perspectives on prejudice, “identity politics” and racism in public opinion
- Assess the contemporary impact of racial divisions, prejudice and/or stereotypes on contemporary American society.

Readings

There is no textbook for this class; instead all but one reading is available through the library or on-line at no charge to University of Toronto students. This includes out of copyright texts like 18th- and 19th Century books. If you cannot find a copy of a text, please check Blackboard or email the professor. The exception is *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee, which is widely available used, at local libraries, or on-line. Books (or videos) necessary to complete the book report are similarly available. An on-line textbook on American politics is listed in the reading list; please note that a donation to support the text and the publisher’s efforts to make texts available to all students is recommended by both the publisher (openstax.org) and the instructor.

Assignments

Term test = 20%. March 6

Book Report: Confirming or Dispelling Stereotypes & Social Hierarchy = 15% Due March 27

Presentation on the impact of racial divisions, prejudice and/or stereotypes on contemporary American society = 10%. Up to four students at the start or mid-point of every class session.

Public Opinion Analysis = 10% Due February 27

Final Paper= 30% Due April 3. Topics must be approved no later than March 9.

Participation=15%

Grading Policies

Late Assignments

Unless explicitly specified, the deadline for all assignments is at 11:59 pm on turnitin.com. 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 for the first nine days of lateness. After nine calendar days of lateness, the instructor will refuse to accept the work for grading. Extensions for non-health reasons may only be granted prior to the deadline or quiz. Students whose health renders them unable to complete an assignment should also contact the professor before deadlines or test administration 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 with a cover letter explaining the basis of the appeal to the instructor. No oral or emailed appeals will be considered. Such re-marking may involve the entire piece of work, and may raise or lower the mark.

Accessibility Services

I wholeheartedly share the University of Toronto's commitment to accessibility and hope that every student is given a fair opportunity to excel in this course. 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>

Plagiarism – turnitin.com

Every year, students are caught for plagiarism. This is defined by the University of Toronto's Code of Behavior on Academic Matters as "the wrongful appropriation and purloining, and publication as one's own, of the ideas, or the expression of the ideas...of another." Do not become a cheater. Penalties are severe. On all work you complete for this course, all passages, ideas or information culled from other people or sources must be attributed to them. Students agree that by taking this course all papers must be submitted for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the turnitin.com web site.

Assignment Details

More detailed descriptions of each assignment will be posted on Blackboard.

Term Test

A test primarily on Unit 2, Understanding Prejudice and Racism will be multiple choice but may also contain some short answer questions. The test will take place during class time.

Book Report

Critics often accuse some popular works of American fiction intentionally or unintentionally perpetrate racial, ethnic, class and/or gender stereotypes. Other works intentionally seek to undo such stereotypes. Students will read one such work and compose a report that will: a) summarize the story, b) identify what characters, scenes or situations might perpetrate or dispel such stereotypes, c) articulate their personal response to the book (did you like it? Did it inspire, entertain or enrage you?), d) assess how they think people with high levels of racial resentment, social dominance orientation, or strong in-group affinity would respond to the book. For extra credit, students may choose to report on both a book and a film or stage adaptation. Instead of a book, students may also watch two movies and compose analyses of each. All books or movies should be approved in advance by the instructor. Expected length of report: 1000-3000 words.

Presentation

In no more than four minutes and using no more than two Powerpoint slides (or Prezi nodes), students will take a turn presenting to the class 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 divisions in criminal sentencing, barriers to employment equity or controversies over policing or university admission practices. No more than four students will present in any one class at the start or the midpoint of the lecture. The first students to present will be graded more generously for courageously “going first.”

Public Opinion Analysis

Students will be responsible for completing a brief bivariate statistical analysis examining contemporary differences in public opinion or political behavior by race, ethnicity or gender using data 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/>

Final Paper

The causes and consequences of prejudice and discrimination in America is a broad topic; in this paper, students have the opportunity to focus on one aspect of the causes and/or consequences to complete a research paper. The basis of this research could be a review of existing scholarship, further data analysis or any other investigative method that is appropriate for the question and is feasible given the parameters of the course and the students' existing research skills. Topics must be approved by the instructor no later than March 9. Possible topics include in-depth studies of material covered in class, such as an examination of Thomas Jefferson's writings on race and inequality or a comparison of activist memoirs like Douglass and Minnemucca; a replication of an experiment on racial resentment; an original

data analysis of 2016 public opinion data; or, topics that go far beyond what was covered in class like an investigation of the causes of disproportionate minority incarceration rates, a study of the late rhetoric of Dr. Martin Luther King on social justice, or a comparison of anti-immigrant attitudes in the US, Canada and Europe. The instructor is happy to suggest topics, books, articles or data sources, so all students are encouraged to talk to the professor or send him an email sooner at their earliest convenience. Expected length of paper: 2500-7000 words.

Participation

Participation will be based on occasional attendance, thoughtful contributions to in-class discussions and/or participation in on-line discussions on Blackboard. Other tasks that may arise during the term may also count towards participation, such as brief in-class writing tasks or on-line course evaluation surveys.

Contact

Questions and concerns

Students are encouraged to post all questions about the course material, discuss current events and class readings on Blackboard, in the appropriate discussion forum.

Instructor meetings and contact

You are welcome to meet with the course instructor. At UTSC, my office hours are on Thursday afternoons from 1-3 pm in MW 332 or BV 498. At St. George, I am happy to meet before class at a location to be announced in class. I can also meet immediately after class by appointment; please be aware that, especially during the winter when weather might delay my commute to pick up kids at school, I may need to leave immediately after class. Outside of office hours, email (renan.levine@utoronto.ca) is the best way to reach me. Via email, I will be happy to arrange a phone conversation at a mutually agreeable time.

Other

Please be comfortable bringing your lunch to seminar, but be conscientious of needing to leave the classroom clean and avoiding food that may distract your classmates because of a strong smell or loud chewing noises.

Occasionally, students will find it helpful to consult class readings on a smartphone, tablet or laptop computer. Some students will also feel comfortable taking notes on electronic devices. However, due to the ease in which such devices can distract oneself and one's classmates, I recommend that students plan on taking notes with a pen and paper. If you are using an electronic device during class, please endeavor to ensure that your usage does not distract your classmates.

Reading Schedule

1. Legal & Historical Context

January 9 Jefferson and the United States' Original Sin?

Key Questions: How do we reconcile Jefferson's rhetoric about equality with his ownership of slaves? Was Jefferson a hypocrite? An opportunistic Janus-faced politician? A racist by the standards of his time, our time or all time?

Declaration of Independence, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

Rough draft of Declaration, see paragraph, "he has waged cruel war..." <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2h33t.html>

Jefferson, Thomas. "Notes on the State of Virginia," Ch. 14 "Laws," Query 14, pp. 144-154. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/jefferson/jefferson.html#p144>

Banneker, Benjamin, letter to Thomas Jefferson <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-22-02-0049>

Jefferson's Response: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-22-02-0091>

Jefferson's forward to Marquis de Condorcet <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-22-02-0092>

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

Wheatley, Phillis. "An Elegiac Poem On the Death of that celebrated Divine, and eminent Servant of Jesus Christ, the Reverend and Learned Mr. George Whitefield" <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/wheatley/whitefield/whitefield.html>

Wood, Gordon S. "Thomas Jefferson, Equality, and the Creation of a Civil Society." *Fordham L. Rev.* 64 (1995): 2133. <http://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3265&context=flr>

- Jan. 16 Civil Rights Overview: From Constitution to *Masterpiece Cakeshop*
Objectives: Understanding the historical evolution of civil rights in America from slavery to the civil rights era. Review causes and consequences of the American Civil War. Current legal tests for discrimination: strict scrutiny & intermediate scrutiny.
U.S. Constitution, Amendments 1, 5, 13, 14, 15 & 16
Kruz, Glen et al. *American Government* Openstax.org (2016), Ch. 5. <https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government>
Abraham Lincoln, "House Divided" speech: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2934.html>
Ambrosino, Brandon. "Supreme Court hears wedding cake case: here's what you need to know." *Washington Post* December 6, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/12/05/wedding-cake-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-highly-anticipated-supreme-court-ruling/?utm_term=.ea99e5024ea9
- Jan. 23 Frederick Douglass vs. America (including William Lloyd Garrison & Abraham Lincoln)

Objectives: Sample pro-slavery white rhetoric; Understand tensions between white abolitionists and Frederick Douglass, the most prominent anti-slavery activist among former slaves in the USA.

Key Questions: Is the Constitution a pro- or anti-slavery document? What motivated Lincoln? How did prejudice & stereotypes affect white views of African-Americans in the 19th Century?

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Ch. 7, 9 & 11
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23/23-h/23-h.htm> or
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/douglass.html>

Douglass, Frederick. "Oration in memory of Abraham Lincoln"
<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/oration-in-memory-of-abraham-lincoln/>

Foner, Eric. "Abraham Lincoln, the Thirteenth Amendment, and the Problem of Freedom." *Georgetown Journal of Law & Public Policy* 15 (2017): 59.

Selby, Gary S. 2000. "The Limits of Accommodation: Frederick Douglass and the Garrisonian Abolitionists." *Southern Communication Journal* 66 (1): 52-66.

Thomas R. Dew Defends Slavery (1852) Excerpts:
http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/archive/resources/documents/ch15_03.htm

Recommended: Quarles, Benjamin. "The Breach between Douglass and Garrison." *The Journal of Negro History* 23, no. 2 (1938): 144-54.

Jan. 30 Indigenous Identity & Struggle

Objectives: Understand how Native Americans were perceived; how they were mistreated during westward expansion. How perceptions of the history of the west changed during the civil rights-Vietnam War Era.

Key Questions: What was similar/dissimilar about the ways white Americans perceived and treated African- and Native- Americans? How did 19th century economic ambitions contribute to anti-slavery stances and support for moving Native Americans onto reservations?

Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (1883)
http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library/life_among_the_piutes/ Ch. 1, 5 & 7

Eves, Rosalyn "Sarah Winnemucca Devoted Her Life to Protecting Native Americans in the Face of an Expanding United States" *Smithsonian Magazine* July 27, 2016.
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/sarah-winnemucca-devoted-life-protecting-lives-native-americans-face-expanding-united-states-180959930/>

Chief Joseph <http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/resources/archives/six/jospeak.htm>
http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/a_c/chiefjoseph.htm

Sheppard, R.Z. (1 Feb 1971). "The Forked-Tongue Syndrome". Time. New York City: Time Inc. (Review of "Bury my heart at Wounded Knee," by Dee Brown)

2. Understanding Prejudice & Racism

Feb. 6 Symbolic Politics & Racial Resentment

Ethnocentrism & In-Group Favoritism

Social Dominance Theories

These topics will continue for classes on February 13 and February 27. Start with the article by Leonie Huddy which reviews many of the others.

Huddy, Leonie. 2004. "Contrasting Theoretical Approaches to Intergroup Relations." *Political Psychology* 25(6): 947–67.

Sidanius, Jim, Felicia Pratto, Colette van Laar, and Shana Levin. 2004. "Social Dominance Theory: Its Agenda and Method." *Political Psychology* 25(6): 845–80.

Bobo, Lawrence D., and Vincent L. Hutchings. 1996. "Perceptions of Racial Group Competition: Extending Blumer's Theory of Group Position to a Multiracial Social Context." *American Sociological Review* 61(6): 951–72.

Sears, David O. and Henry, P.J., 2003. "The origins of symbolic racism." *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 85(2), pp.259-275.

Kinder, Donald R., and Cindy D. Kam. 2009. *Us Against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 1 & 10 (Later, Ch. 2 & 3)

Recommended: Ekehammar, Bo, Nazar Akrami, Magnus Gylje, and Ingrid Zakrisson. "What matters most to prejudice: big five personality, social dominance orientation, or right-wing authoritarianism?." *European Journal of Personality* 18, no. 6 (2004): 463-482.

Tajfel, Henri, and J.C. Turner. 1979. "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict." In *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, eds. W.G. Austin and S. Worchel

Kinder, Donald R., and Nicholas Winter. "Exploring the racial divide: Blacks, whites, and opinion on national policy." *American Journal of Political Science* (2001): 439-456.

Pettigrew, Thomas F. "In pursuit of three theories: Authoritarianism, relative deprivation, and intergroup contact." *Annual review of psychology* 67 (2016): 1-21.

Feb. 13 See above, with a focus on white identity and ethnocentrism.

Banks, Antoine J., and Nicholas A. Valentino. 2012. "Emotional Substrates of White Racial Attitudes." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(2): 286–97.

Jardina, Ashley. "Demise of Dominance: Group Threat and the New Relevance of White Identity for American Politics." Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2014. Ch. 4 & 6 (Recommended: Ch. 3)

Kinder, Donald R., and Cindy D. Kam. 2009. *Us Against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 2 & 3.

Feb. 20 *Reading Week (no class)*

Feb. 27 See above, with a focus on new academic findings.

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.

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

Enos, Ryan D. "Causal effect of intergroup contact on exclusionary attitudes." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111, no. 10 (2014): 3699-3704.

Weber, Christopher R., Howard Lavine, Leonie Huddy, and Christopher M. Federico. "Placing racial stereotypes in context: Social desirability and the politics of racial hostility." *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no. 1 (2014): 63-78.

** Public Opinion Analysis Due

Mar. 6 Term Test

3. Applications & Implications

Mar. 13 To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee

Key Questions: Why is TKAM so popular as a high school text? Do Americans read TKAM as ancient history or to understand Americans today? What stereotypes or views of social hierarchy are perpetrated by TKAM? How do theories of prejudice and racism predict how people will read and respond to TKAM?

Mar. 20 Political implications

Objectives: Understanding a sampling of the scholarship on how prejudice and stereotypes impact political outcomes and public policy outcomes.

Fox, Richard L., and Jennifer L. Lawless. "Gendered perceptions and political candidacies: A central barrier to women's equality in electoral politics." *American Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 1 (2011): 59-73.

Hanushek, Eric A., John F. Kain, and Steven G. Rivkin. "New evidence about Brown v. Board of Education: The complex effects of school racial composition on achievement." *Journal of Labor Economics* 27, no. 3 (2009): 349-383.

Piston, Spencer. 2010. "How Explicit Racial Prejudice Hurt Obama in the 2008 Election." *Political Behavior* 32(4): 431-51

TBA

Mar. 27 America Divided

Objectives: Understanding perspectives on the causes and effects of residential segregation in America.

Key questions: What, if anything, is the matter with choosing to live near people "like you"? Where did you grow up? Why? Was the place, county or neighborhood homogenous or heterogeneous?

Bobo, Lawrence, and Camille L. Zubrinsky. "Attitudes on residential integration: Perceived status differences, mere in-group preference, or racial prejudice?." *Social Forces* 74, no. 3 (1996): 883-909.

Cutler, David M., Edward L. Glaeser, and Jacob L. Vigdor. "The rise and decline of the American ghetto." *Journal of political economy* 107, no. 3 (1999): 455-506.

Charles, Camille Zubrinsky. "The dynamics of racial residential segregation." *Annual review of sociology* 29, no. 1 (2003): 167-207.

Recommended: Bayer, Patrick, Hanming Fang, and Robert McMillan. "Separate when equal? Racial inequality and residential segregation." *Journal of Urban Economics* 82 (2014): 32-48.

Sears, David O., Mingying Fu, P.J. Henry, and Kerra Bui. 2003. "The Origins and Persistence of Ethnic Identity among the 'New Immigrant' Groups." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 66(4): 419-37.

Apr. 3 TBA