

SOC 250: Racial and Ethnic Communities in the United States

Term: TBD
Course Number: TBD
Credit Hours: 3 Units
Class Meetings: TBD

Instruction Mode: TBD
Instructor: TBD
Email: TBD
Office Hours: TBD

Course Description

Catalog Description: Sociological description and analysis of a specific racial or ethnic community.

Course Objectives

1. Use sociological concepts to examine how the identities of a specific racial and ethnic community in the United States are shaped and contested within systems of power and inequality.
2. Develop critical thinking and quantitative reasoning skills by analyzing empirical evidence on a specific racial and ethnic community in the United States.
3. Discuss histories of policies and practices of institutions and their impact on a specific racial and ethnic community in the United States.
4. Identify key sociological figures and engage with changing perspectives over time in the context of theorizing a specific racial and ethnic community in the United States.
5. Describe the roles of social movements in shaping the experiences of a specific racial and ethnic community in the United States.
6. Evaluate how a specific racial and ethnic community has shaped the development of the United States.

Learning Outcomes: Flexible Core, U.S. Experience in its Diversity

This course fulfills the U.S. Experience in its Diversity area of the CUNY Common Core Flexible Core. By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
2. Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
3. Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.
4. Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of sociology exploring the U.S. experience in its diversity.
5. Analyze and explain one or more major themes of U.S. history from more than one informed perspective.
6. Evaluate how indigenous populations, slavery, or immigration have shaped the development of the United States.
7. Analyze and discuss common institutions or patterns of life in contemporary U.S. society and how they influence, or are influenced by, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation.

Course Materials

All course materials are available at no cost through Brightspace.

Grading Policy

Your grade is based on four components: weekly forum posts (40%), participation (20%), a midterm reflection essay (20%), and a final project (20%). Final grades are calculated and posted on CUNYfirst using the following scale: A, 90–100%; B, 80–89%; C, 70–79%; D, 60–69%; F, 0–59%.

Weekly Forum Posts (40%)

A weekly discussion post of approximately 200–250 words offering your own analytical response to that week's readings and media, due before each class session. You need at least 10 satisfactory posts across the semester's discussion weeks to earn full credit. Posts are graded pass/fail against the four Guiding Principles for Evaluation posted on Brightspace: Engagement with Assigned Materials, Critical Analysis, Clarity, and Academic Integrity. A post that summarizes without analyzing does not pass. You receive feedback each week to help you develop your writing and analysis.

Participation: Case Study Activities (20%)

Assorted case study activities that invite active learning and problem solving, tied to weekly themes and topics and completed individually or in small groups. Six are formally assessed, at sessions announced in advance: Weeks 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, and 13. At each, you submit your own individual response — a post to the shared class board, a completed worksheet, or a one-page exit ticket for group-based activities. Responses are graded against the four Guiding Principles for Evaluation posted on Brightspace: Engagement with the Case, Application of Concepts, Critical Analysis, and Contribution and Exchange. Written feedback identifies what to strengthen in your next response.

Midterm Reflection Essay (20%)

An individual essay of approximately 300 words on how your understanding of a specific racial or ethnic community has changed over the first half of the semester, which moments or questions shifted your perspective on race as a social construct, and what you intend to keep exploring. Graded pass/fail against the three Guiding Principles for Evaluation posted on Brightspace: Comprehension, Self-Reflection, and Forward Engagement.

Final Project: Policy Proposal (20%)

An individual 500-word essay or a creative project of equivalent depth (a one-page flyer or poster, a 3-minute video, or a 3-minute podcast clip) that explains a specific historical insight related to racial inequality, proposes a policy inspired by it, and accounts for how that policy would address disparities today. Graded against the five Guiding Principles for Evaluation posted on Brightspace: Historical Insight, Policy Proposal, Relevance and Impact, Clarity and Organization, and Creativity (creative formats only).

Course Agenda

Important note: To reflect current events and developments, any changes or updates to this syllabus, including our course schedule, will be posted on Brightspace and communicated via email in advance.

Module 1: Foundations of Race, Ethnicity, and Belonging

Week 1 — Course Orientation and Introduction

Course Syllabus; "Race and Racism in the US," American Sociological Association (2023); selected chapters from *Making Hispanics* by G. Cristina Mora (2014); Case Study: "Who You Calling 'Hispanic'?" (NPR, 2021) — a podcast debriefing activity; Interactive Timeline: "What Census Calls Us," Pew Research Center (2020).

Week 2 — Eugenics, Biopolitics, and the Making of Citizens

"Eugenics and Scientific Racism," National Human Genome Research Institute; "Birth Control or Race Control? Sanger and the Negro Project," The Margaret Sanger Papers Project (2001); *The Eugenics Crusade*, PBS (2018) — a documentary analysis exercise; Case Study: Controversies of Margaret Sanger — "History of Planned Parenthood" (2022); "Opposition Claims About Margaret Sanger" (2018), cited by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Week 3 — Migration, Borders, and the Politics of Exclusion

Selected chapters from *The Third Net* by Park et al. (2024); selected chapters from *Surviving the ICE Age* by Joanna Dreby (2025); "Know Your Rights Under the U.S. Constitution," National Immigration Law

Center (2024); Case Study: selected chapters from *Drawing Deportation* by Silvia Rodriguez Vega (2023) — a virtual gallery walk activity.

Week 4 — Whiteness, Hegemony, and Histories from Below

“Sociology of Whiteness” by Monica McDermott and Annie Ferguson (2022); “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” by Stuart Hall (1990); Introduction from *Race Rebel* by Robin Kelley (1996); Interview: “Speaking Freely — bell hooks” (2002); Case Study: Representation, Race, and Media (example: the “model minority” myth).

Module 2: Theories on Race and Ethnicity

Week 5 — Identity Politics, Intersectionality, and Critical Race Theory

Introduction from *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* by Patricia Hill Collins (2019); selected chapters from *New Growth* by Jasmine N. Cobb (2023); “The Urgency of Intersectionality,” Kimberlé Crenshaw TED Talk (2016); Case Study: “CRT Forward Tracking Project,” UCLA School of Law (2024) — a policy analysis small group activity.

Week 6 — Black Geographies and Racial Capitalism

Selections from *The Souls of Black Folk* by W. E. B. Du Bois (1903); “Notes of a Native Son” by James Baldwin (1955); “Gentrifying Blackness” podcast with Brandi Summers (1919 Radio, 2021); Case Study: “Black Space Manifesto,” Black Space Urbanist Collective — a shared-board mapping activity.

Week 7 — Policing, Prisons, and Racialized Surveillance

Selected chapters from *Building the Prison State* by Heather Schoenfeld (2018); *13th*, Netflix documentary (2020) — a documentary analysis exercise; “The United States of Incarceration,” The Marshall Project (2020); Case Study: “Visualizing Abolition: Making Art as a Form of Resistance,” Mural Arts Philadelphia; “Removal of slavery exhibit at Independence National Historical Park” (2026).

Week 8 — Midterm

Midterm Reflection Essay due.

Module 3: Systemic Racism

Week 9 — Colorblind Racism and the Politics of Silence

“Color-Blind Racism in Pandemic Times” by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2022); selected chapter from *Race for Profit* by Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor (2021); “Color Blind or Color Brave?” Mellody Hobson TED Talk (2014); Case Study: The Myth of Post-Racial America — “Woke-Washing Your Company Won’t Cut It,” Harvard Business Review (2020).

Week 10 — Embodiment, Performance, and Resistance

Selected chapters from *Redface* by Bethany Hughes (2024); selected chapters from *Talking Back* by Alejandra Dubcovsky (2023); “He They,” short film by Ronnie Braithwaite (2022); “How Bad Bunny Became the Global Voice of Puerto Rican Resistance” by Vanessa Díaz and Petra R. Rivera-Rideau (2026).

Week 11 — Property, Laws, and Displacement

“Introduction” from *The Residential Is Racial* by Adrienne Brown (2024); “Rural and Racialized,” The Law and Political Economy Project (2023); *The Color of Law* book talk, Richard Rothstein (2017); Case Studies: New York City’s Stories of Gentrification and Resistance.

Week 12 — Third Space, Hybridity, and Queer of Color Critique

Selected chapters from *The Location of Culture* by Homi Bhabha (1994); Introduction from *Brown and Gay in LA* by Anthony Ocampo (2022); Podcast: “Book Talk: *Hip Hop Heresies* with Shanté Smalls,” Fantastic Blackness (2022); Case Study: “Queer Aesthetics in New York City,” drawn from *Hip Hop Heresies* by Shanté Smalls (2022).

Module 4: Movements and Resistance

Week 13 — Machine Biases, Innovation, and Technology

“Introduction” from *Is Artificial Intelligence Racist?* by Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (2023); “Algorithms of Oppression” with Safiya Noble (Databite, 2018); “Ruha Benjamin — Is Technology Our Savior or Our Slayer?” (2023); Case Study: “Joy Buolamwini and the Gender Shades Project” (2020); “Machine Bias,” ProPublica (2016).

Week 14 — Black Wall Street and Reparations

“1921 Tulsa Race Massacre,” Museum of Tulsa History; Digital Storytelling: “The Massacre of Black Wall Street,” The Atlantic (2019); “Tulsa Race Massacre: 100 Years Later,” PBS (2021); Case Study: “Reparations Toolkit,” The Movement for Black Lives.

Week 15 — *The 1619 Project* and Abolitionist Futures

Selected essays from *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story* (2021); “The Transatlantic Slave Trade,” The Equal Justice Initiative (2022); “Conversation with Nikole Hannah-Jones on *The 1619 Project*” (2021); Case Study: “1776 Project Foundation Files Lawsuit Against Los Angeles Unified for Discrimination Against White Students” (2026).

Week 16 — Class Review and Final Project Workshop

Final Project Q&A and workshop; end-of-semester survey.

Finals Week

Final Project due.

Assignments and Activities Keyed to Learning Outcomes

Weekly Forum Post

Each week you write a short post (about 200–250 words) in the Brightspace discussion forums, responding analytically to that week’s readings or to a peer — for example, raising a question the reading left open, or weighing whether you find its argument convincing. Optional prompts are provided each week to help you get started, and detailed guides and examples are posted on Brightspace. Every post is written and submitted individually and receives weekly feedback. Posts are graded pass/fail against the four Guiding Principles for Evaluation: Engagement with Assigned Materials, Critical Analysis, Clarity, and Academic Integrity. A post that summarizes without analyzing does not pass.

Learning Outcomes: (1) Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view; (2) Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically; (3) Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions; (4) Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of sociology exploring the U.S. experience in its diversity; (5) Analyze and explain one or more major themes of U.S. history from more than one informed perspective; (6) Evaluate how indigenous populations, slavery, or immigration have shaped the development of the United States; (7) Analyze and discuss common institutions or patterns of life in contemporary U.S. society and how they influence, or are influenced by, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation.

Participation: Case Study Activities

The second half of every class meeting is devoted to a case study activity that applies the week’s concepts to a real-world example — a podcast, a documentary, artwork, a dataset, a policy tracker, or a primary source. These take different forms across the semester: small-group analysis, a virtual gallery walk on a shared class board, collaborative annotation, or guided discussion. Six are formally assessed at sessions announced in advance, and at each one you submit, and are evaluated on, your own individual response: a post to the shared class board, a completed worksheet, or a one-page exit ticket, depending on the activity.

Each response is read as a whole against four Guiding Principles for Evaluation, posted in full on Brightspace. Engagement with the Case asks you to work directly with the assigned material, citing specific details rather than general impressions. Application of Concepts asks you to name the week's sociological concept or framework and apply it to the case at hand. Critical Analysis asks you to move beyond description: to weigh the evidence, consider more than one perspective, or identify what the case reveals about institutions, policies, and patterns of life. Contribution and Exchange asks you to describe what you contributed to the session and what you took from your classmates' analysis. Attendance alone is not participation.

Learning Outcomes: (1) Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view; (2) Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically; (3) Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions; (4) Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of sociology exploring the U.S. experience in its diversity; (5) Analyze and explain one or more major themes of U.S. history from more than one informed perspective; (6) Evaluate how indigenous populations, slavery, or immigration have shaped the development of the United States; (7) Analyze and discuss common institutions or patterns of life in contemporary U.S. society and how they influence, or are influenced by, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation.

Midterm Reflection Essay

At the midpoint of the course, this short reflective essay asks you to take stock of how your understanding has evolved — reflecting on your own learning rather than summarizing content, and noting the moments, readings, or discussions that shifted your thinking about race and racism in the United States. The full prompt and instructions are posted on Brightspace. The essay is written and submitted individually and is graded pass/fail against the three Guiding Principles for Evaluation: Comprehension, Self-Reflection, and Forward Engagement. An essay that restates course content without reflecting on your own learning does not pass.

Learning Outcomes: (2) Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically; (4) Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of sociology exploring the U.S. experience in its diversity; (5) Analyze and explain one or more major themes of U.S. history from more than one informed perspective; (7) Analyze and discuss common institutions or patterns of life in contemporary U.S. society and how they influence, or are influenced by, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation.

Final Project: Policy Proposal

The final project asks you to move from analysis to proposal. You choose one specific historical event or movement related to racial inequality and use it as the foundation for a policy proposal addressing a current disparity, submitting either a 500-word essay or a creative project of equivalent depth — a one-page flyer or poster, a 3-minute video, or a 3-minute podcast clip. Whichever format you choose, the project must explain the historical insight, describe the policy it inspires, and account for how that policy would address disparities today. The project is completed and submitted individually, is due in Finals Week, and is graded against the five Guiding Principles for Evaluation: Historical Insight, Policy Proposal, Relevance and Impact, Clarity and Organization, and Creativity (creative formats only).

Learning Outcomes: (1) Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view; (2) Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically; (3) Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions; (5) Analyze and explain one or more major themes of U.S. history from more than one informed perspective; (7) Analyze and discuss common institutions or patterns of life in contemporary U.S. society and how they influence, or are influenced by, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation.