

RACE, CLASS, AND SOCIETY

(Registration no. 19231)

O'Brian 109 / Mon & Wed / 3:00 pm – 4:20 pm

Office Hours: See your class home page

PART ONE

Introduction

Folks/People/Guys,

Welcome to this Spring 2020, AAS 355 class.

This 4-credit hour course is one of the most important classes you will ever take in this school. Yes, I know. Probably all teachers say that about their classes. However, if you stick it out for the rest of the semester than you will discover that as we explore the fundamentals of this course (see description below), we will cover a range of issues that have helped to shape and continue to shape this country as a whole, for good (or ill). And regardless of your major, and regardless of who you are in terms of your racial/ethnic/gender identity, your lives are impacted by what this country is today and where it is going, from the social structural perspectives of race/ethnicity, class, and gender—on which hangs everything else: democracy, peace, harmony, and security.

Below, I have provided you with the basic requirements of this course. Before you go through them, I want to emphasize one foundational aspect about taking this class with me: *attendance is absolutely and totally mandatory*. Yes, I will be taking attendance roll-calls.

Some other points about this class I want to underline: (a) The primary focus of this course will be on how the **social structure** functions—in terms of race/ethnicity, class, and gender. (b) It is always my practice to introduce you to the workings of a research university and how to succeed in such a university. A research university is different from a teaching university. Compared to a teaching university, the responsibility for learning falls heavily on your own shoulders because faculty are expected to spend only 40% of their time teaching; they are required to devote the rest of their time to *research* and service. (c) I have a dry sense of humor; so please, don't have a cow (smile)

when I tell you something that appears so silly—because it will be silly—to drive home a point. (d) I am, unashamedly, going to encourage you to consider doing a major or a minor or even a double-major in African American Studies. Why? To deepen your knowledge of this country (and thereby appreciate the powerful role that African Americans have played in its development)—which in turn will be good for your intellectual development on one hand, and on the other, it will help you better understand the importance of democracy *and your part in it*. (It will also make your resume more interesting when you go on to the job market.) (e) The sitting arrangement in class is the prerogative of the instructor. (f) To encourage *professionalism*, please do not send me e-mails that do not begin with this proper salutation (Dear Professor...) and closure (Sincerely,...), *otherwise you may not get a response*. (g) You are not allowed to use *any* electronic devices in class (computers, cell phones, etc.) without instructor permission. (h) Course requirements are subject to change, but with prior notice (and with prior consultation). (i) The course workload, in terms of homework assignments, will require about 10 hours per week using this formula: 40 hour work-week, divided by 15 (credit hours),



multiplied by 4 (credit hours). NOTE: If you are taking more than 15 credit hours, then rearrange your class schedule by dropping one of your other classes. (j) If you are still registered in this class after the last day for drop/add then I will take it to mean that you have *contractually* agreed to abide by all the requirements and instructions (specified either verbally in class or in writing) concerning this course. ← Read this sentence again!

PART TWO

Basic Course Information

1. Course Requirements (may be subject to change, at instructor's discretion, *but with prior notice*)

Basic Course Requirements and Grading Policy

(a) Textbook(s): The two required textbooks, indicated below, *are now optional*—that is, you do **not** have to purchase them. Instead of textbooks, you are **required** to purchase a USB flash drive (if you do not have one already) for your computer. Cost of this drive is usually less than ten dollars. The purpose of this drive is so that you can download and save required online homework, which will include, besides readings, AV materials (films, documentaries, videos, etc.).

(b) **60%** of course grade: written and/or multiple-choice quizzes; tests; extra credit quizzes; etc. Missed tests/quizzes cannot be made up, unless, with rare exception, you have an excuse backed up by written documentation.

← Read this sentence again.

(c) **20%** of course grade: final exam during *exam week*. NOTE: Your exam schedule is available now via your “MYUB” portal.

(d) **20%** of course grade: a writing *project*.

(e) Your final course grade, therefore, will be computed by using this formula: **B*0.6 + C*0.2 + D*0.2**

(f) Letter grade equivalents of percentage points: A =97-100 A- =93-96 B+ =90-92 B =85-89 B- =80-84 C+ =73-79 C =66-72 C- =60-65 D+ =55-59 D =51-54 F =0-50

Supplementary Course Requirements (may have an impact on your final course grade):

(a) Class attendance is mandatory (may be taken into consideration in the final computation of your course grade).¹

(b) Participation, *reflecting completion of assigned readings*, is mandatory (may be taken into consideration in the final computation of your course grade); therefore, I may call on you in class. However, note that *class participation does not include being a class clown and/or a class jerk*. A class jerk is someone who is so insecure that he/she thinks that he/she can build self-esteem by frequently interrupting class proceedings with frivolous questions and comments aimed solely at trying to show off to other class members that he/she knows more than the teacher. Almost every semester, I get one or two of them in my classes. If you have self-esteem issues, deal with your insecurity in some other way: may be, get psychiatric help.

¹ University policy on attendance specified in the *Undergraduate Catalog* states: “Students may be justifiably absent from classes due to religious observances, illness documented by a physician or other appropriate health care professional, conflicts with university-sanctioned activities documented by an appropriate university administrator, public emergencies, and documented personal or family emergencies. The student is responsible for notifying the instructor in writing with as much advance notice as possible. Instructors may determine a reasonable amount of coursework that should be completed in order to make up the student’s absence. Students are responsible for the prompt completion of any alternative assignments.”

- (c) Keeping up with current affairs. A lot of material we will be covering in this course will have relevance for comprehending what is going on outside the classroom (locally, nationally, and internationally) and vice versa; therefore, you are required to be current with national and international news by visiting these three websites on a regular basis: www.npr.org; www.pbs.org/newshour; and www.bbc.com

Extra Credit

In light of frequent requests every semester for an extra credit assignment, from time to time, you may be assigned course-relevant material from current news sources or other sources. Quizzes on this material will count toward extra credit earning you bonus points. Quizzes on this material will count toward extra credit, earning you bonus points. However, note that since this is a favor, an individual may forfeit such bonus points for unprofessional behavior. ← Read this sentence again.

Policy on Incompletes

Incompletes will NOT be assigned, except in the *rarest* of cases. Note that university policy is that incompletes are assigned at the discretion of the instructor. ← Read this sentence again. Moreover, incompletes can only be assigned if the student has maintained a passing grade in the course, and there is a well-defined pathway to meeting the incomplete course assignment(s).

2. Course Description (What this course is about)

The United States is truly one of the most pluralistic countries in the world today. In addition to the obvious diversity in terms of gender, class, and religion, the U.S. has a diversity of races and ethnic groups that are representative of almost the entire humanity. Not surprisingly, these major dimensions of society have historically shaped, and continue to shape, the lived experiences of all peoples in this country (politically, economically, and socially). Our purpose then will be to explore the processes behind these determinants. Our focus, however, will be less on empirical manifestations of these dimensions in the evolution and current circumstances of a multiracial capitalist democracy, such as the United States, than on obtaining a generic grounding in the theoretical underpinnings of class, race, etc. as heuristic concepts—considered, it must be emphasized, from an interdisciplinary perspective, and where possible from a broader historical and global context.

3. Pedagogy (How this course will be taught)

1. This **4-credit hour** course will be taught from the perspective of a “foundational course,” meaning in addition to factual content it will also seek to provide you with a firm grounding in the analytical theories and concepts that lie behind the major themes, debates, and issues relating to race/ethnicity, class, and gender.
2. This course will be taught from an *inter-disciplinary* perspective (combining primarily political science, history, sociology, and law). That is, it will introduce you to whatever insights, concepts, and theories relevant to the study of a given topic, regardless of their disciplinary location.
3. From a structural point of view, the course has three parts to it: class lectures, course readings, and audio-visual material. While each of these three parts will, of course, be related, they, however, will *not* have identical content. For example: class lectures will not always be a repetition of material in course readings. In fact, my primary concern during class lectures/discussions will be to highlight *macro-societal* processes and events (leaving the rest

of the heavy lifting to assignments). Therefore, attendance in this course is absolutely mandatory. Missing the audio-visual material, for instance, will have severe repercussions on test-performance. (NOTE: Audio-visual material screened in class will not always be available outside class.)

4. Please note that the course will also briefly introduce you, as the course progresses, to what may be called “the ways of a research university” (research, publication, service, tenure, governance, and so on).

PART THREE

Learning Outcomes

(What you are expected to learn in this course)

See separate document

PART FOUR

Instructor Biography

I have been living in this country *longer than most of you*. I have been engaged in researching, writing, teaching, and activism on issues of authentic and procedural democracy—including human rights, civil rights, political and economic justice—for many years; therefore, I want you to consider yourself privileged to be taking a course with me. Why? Because I will bring to class not only my expertise and *passion* as an instructor but analytical perspectives that can only come from the kind of geographically diverse educational and lived experiences I have had. Specifically, I have degrees from universities in Africa, England, Canada, and here in the United States—four different countries, three different continents.

PART FIVE

Optional Textbooks

As indicated above, the required textbooks are now optional—you do **not** have to purchase them. However, for those of you who may desire to go more deeply into some of the topics that will be covered in the course, then these are the original textbooks:

(a) *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study—Eleventh Edition*, by Paula S. Rothenberg and Christina Hsu Accomando. ISBN: 978-1319143657 (Price: about \$100.00)

(b) *Privilege, Power, and Difference—Third Edition*, by Allan G. Johnson. ISBN: 978-0073404226. (Price: about \$70.00)

PART SIX

Course Proceedings Schedule

The course proceedings schedule that specifies course topics, readings, assignments, test dates is available as an interactive web page; and you can access it via the class home page.