

SWRK 603: American Racism: History, Policy and Social Work Practice

School of Social Policy & Practice

University of Pennsylvania

Fall 2021

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Office Hours by Appointment-via zoom

Time: 3:30-6pm

Location: Williams Hall 421

<https://www.facilities.upenn.edu/maps/locations/williams-hall>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

White supremacy and institutional racism are deep and pervasive parts of the American experience. They influence the daily experience of Black/African American people and other persons of color. Encounters with institutional oppression based in ideas about race are a defining element of social work practice. Racial profiling, inequity in access to health care, and segregation in housing, education, and work are the realities faced by people of color with whom social workers interact. This course explores the complexities of racism in America: the construction of racial and ethnic categories, the impact of racism and discrimination on individuals and social institutions, and the influence of ideology and oppressive policies and practices on social welfare systems and their clients.

In SWRK 603, students learn about forms and patterns of social and economic injustice based on race and ethnicity that impact American social systems at individual and, particularly, institutional levels. They will also develop a more critical understanding of the history of racism in the US, and its relationship to policy and practice. As a result, students develop conceptual frameworks and practice approaches that undergird professional responsibility to combat social ills. They are also challenged to consider how race and racism has shaped their own life including their personal beliefs, family, privileges and opportunities. Students learn how they may function as competent practitioners with populations who experience unjust practices. The subsequent course, SWRK 713, Understanding Social Change: Issues of Race and Gender, offered in the last semester of the MSW program, focuses on developing skills in carrying out planned social change. Relevant to all realms of practice, students gain knowledge and skills for ethical professional practice to maximize the recognition of worth and dignity in individuals, increase institutional respect for diverse cultural realities, and enhance the capacity of individuals or institutions to gain and offer needed resources.

In SWRK 603 the relationship between Blacks/African Americans and Americans of European descent provides a commonly understood history and social experience from which to analyze the experiences of oppression based on ascribed or inherent characteristics. Historically, this “Black-White binary” was used to organize much of the course. According to a power-conflict framework, an ideology of white superiority and anti-Black racism justifies institutional practices to deny oppressed groups access to material, social, and civic resources. This focus has implications for direct and macro levels of practice. Through the specific focus on the experience of oppression of Blacks/African Americans, students gain perspectives on an experience of racism that is central to the development of the United States as a nation, thus providing a lens with which to critically analyze and shape all aspects of professional social work education and practice. Through this course, students will also critically examine this traditional approach to understanding racism and consider how the historical and contemporary experiences of Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and multiracial groups are best understood. Examination of historical aspects of racism informs inquiry into contemporary policies and practices of selected social institutions: housing, education, economics and employment, politics, and immigration. Readings help assess the congruence of the policies and practices with the ethics and values of the social work profession. These assessments provide the platform for exploring strategies and directions for planned social change, which is the essence for the course sequel, SWRK 713.

LINKAGES TO OTHER COURSES

Accordingly, course material in SWRK 603 builds upon knowledge about persons-in-environment from undergraduate courses and is enhanced by content learned in the other Foundation courses. SWRK 603 builds upon knowledge about human behavior at the individual, relational and group levels which was introduced in students’ earlier education in liberal arts, particularly the social sciences. Students will draw upon theoretical learning about human behavior from SWRK 602 (Individuals and Families in the Social Environment) including: the development of race based identity, behavioral responses to race based stereotypes, and the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality. Using knowledge about policy analysis and implementation developed through examination of anti-poverty and other social policies in SWRK 601 (History and Philosophy of Social Work and Social Welfare), students in SWRK 603 expand their ability to identify how social policies and historic practices of a discriminatory nature remain present in contemporary institutional forms. SWRK 603 also draws upon students’ background literary knowledge through use of fictional and autobiographical narratives about experiences with political and economic processes over time. In parallel with the Foundation Social Work Practice course (SWRK 604), SWRK 603 relates all course material to practice with individuals, groups, communities and society.

SOCIAL WORK COMPETENCIES

The following competencies, based on the [2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards \(EPAS\)](#) from the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE), will be addressed in this course:

- *Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior.* Social workers understand how their personal experiences and identities influence their professional judgment and behavior and understand the impact of racism and white supremacy on the social work profession.
- *Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice.* Social workers act with humility and self-awareness as to their own positionality and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences.
- *Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice.* Social workers critically examine the role of racism and white supremacy in oppressive structures on an ongoing basis while working actively to advance the human rights at the individual and system levels.
- *Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice.* Social workers understand that human rights and social justice, as well as social welfare and services, are mediated by contemporary and historical policies and their implementation at the federal, state, and local levels.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

By the end of SWRK 603, students are expected to demonstrate:

1. Knowledge about white supremacy, varied forms of racism, the historical construction of race, and the contemporary manifestations of racism in American society and specifically in the social service sector;
2. Knowledge about the centrality of racism as an issue in social welfare service mobilization, service delivery, and policy formulation;
3. Ability to identify and analyze contemporary indicators of racism within particular social institutions through critical review of research-based literature; identification of the opportunities for change and examination of strategies for addressing them;
4. Ability to participate in discussion about racism and other oppressions in a manner which advances the exploration and resolution of this issue;
5. Critical self-reflection about the relationship between an intellectual understanding of racism and the incorporation of non-racist values and behavior into one's professional identity and social work practice;
6. Expanded ability to apply knowledge about the manifestations of institutionalized racism to similar forms of discrimination based on gender, age, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, ethnicity, religion, class, and the like.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to adhere to the University's Code of Academic Integrity. Care should be taken to avoid academic integrity violations, including: plagiarism, fabrication of information, and multiple submissions (see descriptions below). Students who engage in any of these actions will be referred to the Office of Academic Integrity, which investigates and decides on sanctions in cases of academic dishonesty.

1. Plagiarism: using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific or proper acknowledgment. Examples: copying, in part or in its entirety, another person's paper, article, or web-based material and submitting it for an assignment, using someone else's ideas without attribution, failing to use quotation marks where appropriate.
2. Fabrication: submitting contrived or altered information in any academic exercise. Example: making up data or statistics, citing nonexistent articles, contriving sources, etc.
3. Multiple submissions: submitting, without prior permission, any work submitted to fulfill another academic requirement.

It is the student's responsibility to consult with the instructor if the student is unsure about whether something constitutes a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Everyone is expected to write a reflection paper for 9/7, and for the readings assigned for 9/21; You may choose the other week that you submit your 3rd essay.

The focus of your paper should be on the author's arguments. I am especially interested in seeing a dialogue among the main ideas of the author(s) and your interpretation and/or assessment of those ideas. My expectation is that your diligence in thinking through the readings will translate into better performance on your part in classroom discussion. The annotation and analysis of these reflective essays are designed to help you get your ideas on paper, sharpen your thinking and stimulate your creativity and imagination. Beyond the basic requirement that you annotate the reading's main ideas, this is your space to experiment. You might compare how two different readings from the course grapple with one theme. You might select an issue that is missing in the reading and examine how its absence weakens the author's overall arguments. You may select one theme that particularly interests you and follow it throughout several weeks of the course. Your goal is to place the readings in some sort of interpretive framework that makes sense to you.

All reflective essays will be graded pass/fail.

2. For the second reflection (9/21), you should add the following:

Please take the <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>.

Please take the RACE IAT and two others that you believe may be relevant to your professional practice. Please answer the following:

1. After taking the IBT, what aspects of your results surprised you?
2. Why is it important to consider our personal biases when contemplating ways that we interact with diverse populations?

3. While acknowledging that there may be valid criticisms of such tests, what other means might you recommend for honest introspection around bias?

3. Book Review

You will also be required review an autobiographical account of experiences with racism in the US. Book reviews will be submitted and graded. **These will be assigned.** After the book assignments are made, please obtain your book ASAP. The review should be no less than 5 pages. The list is below. For this review, you will analyze the main character's experiences within context of assigned readings and class discussions. Your review should include both in-text citations and a bibliography.

1. McCall, N. (1994) *Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America*. New York:Random House
2. Stevenson, B. (2014) *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. Spiegel and Grau:New York.
3. Glaude, E. (2020) *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own*. New York:Random House.
4. Luiselli, Valerie (2017), *Tell Me How It Ends* (SP2's One Book)

4. Final Project #1

You will select and investigate an organization's "wicked problem", either the organization in which you are working in your field assignments or some other organization for the following:

1. Engage in a visioning process, identifying how the organization can become a multicultural, antiracist organization.
2. Prepare a racial effect analysis of policies and practices of the organization, so that specific policies and practices can be identified for change. Use the available resources to challenge racist policies, practices, and behavior.
3. Create expectations for the organization's leaders and board of directors to lead the organization in addressing institutional racism.
4. Identify methods of accountability to ensure that planning is implemented and evaluated on a regular basis.
5. The product for this project can be a Memorandum, Staff Training, Change Proposal, etc. The product will be uploaded to google but will need to be presented as a power point.

- You will also present your projects to the class.

5. **Final Project #2 (Portfolio)**

Intellectual Autobiography: Your intellectual autobiography should summarize your intellectual development in this course. The primary focus of the essay should be on your engagement with the main ideas of the course, not simply your internal state of mind. This essay is best written after reviewing your own individual class notes, the weekly reaction papers that you submitted and throughout the semester. It is your opportunity to examine main ideas that stand out for you – No less than 8 pages if written, *differentiated forms of submission for this product are encouraged and desired! Your journaling from your affinity groups may also provide a framework for this final project.*

- With hindsight, how would you assess the corpus of work that you completed for this seminar?
- What patterns do you see in your own work?
- How did the course readings and discussions shape your thinking about the topics of the seminar? Be specific. Cite ideas from specific works. Cite patterns that you see across the readings and/or class discussions.
- How did the course readings and discussions shape your thinking about your current and/or future scholarship and/or intellectual production? Be specific. Cite ideas from specific works. Cite patterns that you see across the readings and/or class discussions.

Class Participation (15%): It is essential that you come on time, stay for the entire class, and come prepared. Class participation will be evaluated by:

- Your overall attendance
- The quality of your in-class presentations on weekly assigned readings-*Each week, at least two students will start off the discussion by presenting the ideas from the assigned readings- hands on activity.*
- The quality of your participation in class discussions.

GRADING

Reflection Papers: 15%

Book Review: 20%

Final Project 1: 25%

Final Project 2: 25%

Class participation: 15% Assessed Weekly

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE

Tuesday Class (8/31): Introduction and Framing

Required reading:

- Taylor, KY (2020), "The State is Failing Black People," *New York Times* 20 May.
- Zhou, Li (2020), "Corona virus is surfacing America's deep-seated Anti-Asian Bias," Vox.com, 21 April.
- Baldwin, J. (1985) *Price of the Ticket. A Report from Occupied Territory*. St. Martin's/Marek:New York.
- Cardoza, C. Unpack the history of social work (2021).
<https://www.antiracismdaily.com/archives/social-work-anti-racism-daily>.
- Social Workers Must Help Dismantle Systems of Oppression (2021)
<https://www.socialworkers.org/News/News-Releases/ID/2219/Social-Workers-Must-Help-Dismantle-Systems-of-Oppression-and-Fight-Racism-Within-Social-Work-Profession>

WEEK TWO - **Rosh Hashanah- Please Advise if you are not attending Class**

Wednesday Class (9/7): Notions of Citizenship and the History of American Racism

Hands on Activity: Sara A and Alexandra

Required reading:

- Muhammad, K.G. (2010) *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*. Harvard University Press:Cambridge. (Chapters 1 - 4)
- Smith, R.M. (1997) *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press (Chapter 1).

Please watch

- Episode 2: "How Race was Made," from Scene On Radio, "On Seeing White" podcast (29 mins).

WEEK THREE

Weekly Movie: 13th

(9/14): Critical Race Theory and the Racial Contract

Hands on Activity: Mary and Michaela

Required reading:

- Charles Mills (1997). *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, Introduction, [Chpt. 1](#) “Overview,” and [Chpt. 2](#) , “Details,” pp. 1-90.
- Ashley Daftary (2020) [Critical race theory: An effective framework for social work research](#), Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 29:6, 439-454
- Kolivoski, M., Weaver, A, Constance-Huggins, M. (2014) [Critical Race Theory: Opportunities for Application in Social Work Practice and Policy](#). Families in Society. 95(4), 269–276

WEEK FOUR

(9/21): White Supremacy and Colonialism

Hands on Activity: Alexandra F and Riana

Required reading:

- Saad, L. F. (2020), *Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor*, Welcome to the Work and The Basics).
- [Gutierrez, R. \(2004\)](#). Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race. Du Bois Review, 1:2 (2004) 281–295.
- Jackson, M. (2009). Neo-Colonialism, Same Old Racism: A Critical Analysis of the United States' Shift toward Colorblindness as a Tool for the Protection of the American Colonial Empire and White Supremacy. *The Berkeley Journal of African-American Law & Policy*, 11, 156.

WEEK FIVE

(9/28): Anti-Racism, Power, Policy, Behavior and Biology

Hands on Activity: Hanah and Victoria

Required reading:

- Kendi, I. (2019) [How to Be an Anti Racist](#) Read chapters on Definitions (Chapter 1), Power (Chapter 3), Biology (Chapter 4), and Behavior (Chapter 8).

WEEK SIX

(10/5): Social Policy and Race- Part 1

Hands on Activity: Marissa and Amy

Required reading:

- The Color of Social Policy. Edited by King E. Davis and Tricia B. Bent-Goodley. CSWE Press. Chapters [3](#), [4](#), and [6](#)
- Kennedy ,A. C. (2008) [Eugenics, "Degenerate Girls," and Social Workers During the Progressive Era](#) Affilia 23: 22-37

- Bailey, Z.D., Feldman, J.M. and Bassett, M.T. (2021) [*How Structural Racism Works — Racist Policies as a Root Cause of U.S. Racial Health Inequities*](#) The New England Journal of Medicine 734-773.

WEEK SEVEN

(10/12): Social Policy and Race – Part 2

Hands on Activity: John and Hayley

Required reading:

- Black, R. and Sprague, A. *The Welfare Queen is a Lie*. The Atlantic. September 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/09/welfare-queen-myth/501470/>
- Dorothy E. Roberts (2014) Child protection as surveillance of African American families, *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 36:4, 426-437
- Emanuel, E. J. (2008). The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment in *The Oxford textbook of clinical research ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Please watch: The Myth of the Welfare Queen. <https://www.thirteen.org/programs/black-america-since-mlk-still-rise/black-america-mlk-and-still-i-rise-myth-welfare-queen/>

WEEK EIGHT

(10/19): Racial Literacy

Hands on Activity: Gabrielle and Sara Murphy

Required reading:

- Stevenson, H. C. (2014). *Promoting racial literacy in schools: Differences that make a difference*. [*If Elephants Could Talk*](#). New York: Teachers College Press (Chapters 1 and 2).
- Anderson RE, McKenny M, Mitchell A, Koku L, Stevenson HC. [*EMBRacing Racial Stress and Trauma: Preliminary Feasibility*](#) and Coping Responses of a Racial Socialization Intervention. *Journal of Black Psychology*. 2018;44(1):25-46.
- Stevenson, H. C. and Arrington, E. G. : [*Racial/ethnic socialization mediates perceived racism and identity experiences of African American students*](#). *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Mental Health* 15(2), 2009.

Please watch:

[How to resolve racially stressful situations \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

WEEK NINE

(10/26): Social Policy and Anti-Indigenous Racism

Hands on Activity: Sarah Nicholas and Shayan

Required reading:

- Paradies, Yin (2016), "[Colonisation, racism and indigenous health](#)," *J Pop Research* 33: 83–96.
- Jacobs, Michelle (2019), "[Resisting & reifying racialization among urban American Indians](#)," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42(9): 570-588.
- *The Color of Social Policy*. Edited by King E. Davis and Tricia B. Bent-Goodley. CSWE Press. Chapters [1](#) and [8](#)
- Weaver H.N. [The Colonial Context of Violence: Reflections on Violence in the Lives of Native American Women](#). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 2009;24(9):1552-1563

Please watch: [Carlisle School \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

WEEK TEN

(11/2): Intersectionality/Black Feminist Theory

Hands on Activity: Abigail and Courtney

Required reading:

- Kimberle Crenshaw (1991). [Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color](#), *Stanford Law Review* 43(6): 1241-1299.
- Dorothy Roberts, Chapter 6, "[Critical Race Feminism](#)," pp. 112-126 in *Research Handbook on Feminist Jurisprudence*.
- Lorde, Audre (1984) [Sister outsider: Essays and Speeches](#). Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House."
- Stripling, J. July 6, 2021. [How Chapel Hill Bungled a Star Hire](#). In the Nikole Hannah-Jones tenure case, leaders settled for less and wound up with nothing. Chronicle.

WEEK ELEVEN

(11/9): Global Dimensions of Colorism: A Function of White Supremacy

Hands on Activity: Emily S and Emily T

Required reading:

- Blay, Y. (2011) Skin Bleaching. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 4, no. 4, June 2011.
 - Hunter, Margaret (2007), The Persistent Problem of Colorism: Skin Tone, Status, and Inequality, *Sociology Compass* 1(1): 237–254.
 - Jones, Trina (2012), “The Significance of Skin Color in Asian and Asian-American Communities: Initial Reflections,” *UC Irvine Law Review* 3: 1105-1123.
- Please watch:
- Barnes Foundation Lecture: Facing Change: Colorism | A Conversation on Race in America
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJZycoqJzeQ&t=910s>

WEEK TWELVE

(11/16): Anti-Asian Racism

Hands on Activity:

Required reading:

Please watch one of the following: PBS, “Asian Americans: The History of Identity, Contributions, and Challenges Experienced by Asian Americans,” 2020. Watch two of the one-hour episodes.

PBS – The American Experience: Chinese Exclusion Act.

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/chinese-exclusion-act/>

Anti-Asian Racism

- Chang, Robert. (1999). *Disoriented: Asian Americans, law, and the nation-state*. New York: New York University Press. [Chpt 7](#), and [Chapter 1](#)
- Tianlong Yu (2006) [Challenging the Politics of the “Model Minority” Stereotype](#) A Case for Educational Equality, Equity & Excellence in Education, 39:4, 325-333.
- Li, Y., & Nicholson, H.L. (2021). [When “model minorities” become “yellow peril”](#)—Othering and the racialization of Asian Americans in the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sociology Compass*, 15.

WEEK THIRTEEN

Please watch:

Episodes 1 and 2 of *Immigration Nation* – Available on Netflix.

Anti-Latinx Racism

- *The Color of Social Policy*. Edited by King E. Davis and Tricia B. Bent-Goodley. CSWE Press, [Chapter 2](#)

- Elizabeth Kiehne, [Latino Critical Perspective in Social Work](#), *Social Work*, Volume 61, Issue 2, April 2016, Pages 119–126.
- Laura E. Gómez(2021) [Latinos and Structural Racism](#),
- The American Journal of Bioethics, 21:3, 83-85.

Book Review discussions

WEEK FOURTEEN

(11/30): Racial Capitalism

Final Project Presentations

- Pulido, L. (2016). “[Flint Michigan, Environmental Racism and Racial Capitalism.](#)” *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 27 (3): 1-16.
- Pirtle, Whitney (2020), “[Racial Capitalism: A Fundamental Cause of Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) Pandemic Inequities in the United States,” *Health Education & Behavior*.

Final Presentations