

# Race and Ethnic Politics in the U.S. | POL 390

Tuesdays and Thursdays (11:00am -12:15pm)  
Dooley Memorial 216

**Professor:** Matthew D. Nelsen

**Office hours:** Email me to set up a Zoom appointment

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## **Course Description**

This course explores race, ethnicity, and politics in the United States. In particular, the course aims to demonstrate that no comprehensive account of American politics can sidestep the centrality of racial and ethnic identity. We begin by discussing the politics of learning about race and racism within contemporary American politics, highlighting how contemporary debates over educational content—both at the K-12 and college level—are reflective of longstanding conflicts over how to use educational settings to maintain and challenge existing racial hierarchies. We then consider multiple theories of racial formation, examining the ways in which socially constructed racial categories permeate into all aspects of American life. Next, we explore the development of racial group consciousness, examining the role of social context in shaping how people think about their own racial and ethnic identities and how these identities impact how they think about politics. We then complicate existing theories of racial group consciousness by considering the ways in which other facets of identity (e.g., gender, class, national origin, and sexuality) intersect with race in politically meaningful ways.

The second half of the course examines how racial and ethnic identities impact how individuals participate in politics—both at the ballot box and through extra-systemic political acts, including protests. Then we examine how racism permeates into the American legal system, contributing to over policing in predominantly Black, Latinx, and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. Finally, we consider a variety of strategies and policy domains that help chart a path forward for those interested in forging a vibrant multiracial democracy in the United States.

While the course takes a critical perspective, it is also meant to be an empowering civic learning experience for all those who enroll. You will not be an expert on race, ethnicity, and politics at the end of this course. However, the course will provide you with some basic knowledge, tools, dispositions to reflect upon the ways in which racism and racial inequity have and continue to shape American politics

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

By successfully completing this course, students will be able to...

- Explain why learning about race and racism in the United States is politically contentious
- Compare and contrast multiple theories of racial formation

- Explain the role of social context in the development of racial group consciousness
- Connect theories of racial group consciousness to accounts of political behavior
- Apply theories of intersectionality to complicate (or critique) existing theories of group consciousness
- Create a final presentation that teaches a general audience about a concept discussed over the course of the semester

## **Course Policies**

### *Grading Policies*

This course provides the opportunity for informed discussion of ideas pertaining to race, ethnicity, and politics. In order to be a productive participant in an informed discussion, you need to be prepared for class. If you are not prepared for class, you not only undermine your own learning, you also lower (or at least do not help to elevate) the overall level of the discussion, and thus detract from the learning experience of others. Make sure to budget your time so that you have enough time to engage with the assigned materials before class. You are expected to read the required texts and engage with other assigned materials (e.g., podcasts and documentaries) before each class meeting. These materials will be uploaded to Blackboard prior to the start of the semester.

Assignments must be turned in by their assigned deadline or receive a half letter grade penalty for each day it is late. Of course, you should always prioritize your physical, mental, and emotional well-being, especially during these unprecedented times (see below). You should expect feedback on your assignments as well as number of points earned within a week after submission. For all assignments, I will use a rubric for grading that you will receive ahead of time. Following each assignment, I will also provide an overview of grade distributions in order to maintain transparency and to ensure that grades do not reflect or reinforce existing societal inequities. I will not accept any assignment for credit after the last day of the semester.

At the end of the semester, I will convert points to letter grades using the following scale:

- 93-100 = A
- 90-92 = A-
- 87-89 = B+
- 83-86 = B
- 80-82 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 73-76 = C
- 70-72 = C-
- 67-69 = D+
- 63-66 = D
- 60-62 = D-
- 59 or less = F

## *Navigating School During a Pandemic*

These are unprecedented times. Let us all acknowledge this and prioritize taking care of ourselves and one another. I am happy adjust course materials and expectations as much as possible while still pursuing our main learning objectives. Please check in with me if you're struggling. I'm happy to be flexible and to explore ways to ensure you successfully navigate the course. However, I need to have some idea what is going in order to be helpful.

## *Academic Integrity*

While the work you submit for class should engage with course materials, I will not accept assignments that include plagiarism. The University of Miami defines plagiarism as “representing the words or ideas of someone else as your own. Examples include, but are not limited to, failing to properly cite direct quotes, and failing to give credit for someone else's ideas.” Synthesizing someone else's ideas into your own words is fine, but you should still include a citation to be safe. You can read more about the university's academic integrity policies by clicking on the following link: <https://dos0.studentaffairs.miami.edu/honor-council/honor-code/index.html>

## *Recording Policy*

Students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Meetings of this course might be recorded by the university. Any recordings will be available to students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. Students are expected to follow appropriate university policies and maintain the security of passwords used to access recorded lectures. Recordings may not be reproduced, shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments. If the instructor or a University of Miami office plans any other uses for the recordings, beyond this class, students identifiable in the recordings will be notified to request consent prior to such use.

Professor Nelsen is the copyright owner of the courseware; individual recordings of the materials on Blackboard and/or of virtual sessions (i.e., class held on Zoom) are not allowed; such materials cannot be shared outside the physical or virtual classroom environment.

## *Participation*

Informed participation in discussions is required of each student. The *quality* of participation will weigh more heavily than the *quantity* of participation. This course *is* an exercise in democracy, so it is essential to find ways to engage in discourse with individuals who may not share your perspective of ideological predispositions. In the process, I commit to fostering an environment that is inclusive for all voices. However, I am also committed to facilitating conversations that do not rearticulate existing inequalities or violate the norms of pluralist democracy. We will discuss acceptable forms, styles, and levels of participation during the first week of class. Students who are concerned about this course requirement, due to shyness or for any other reason, are encouraged to meet with me at the beginning of the semester to discuss individual strategies for meeting this course requirement. However, I will provide opportunities for individual reflection throughout the course that will also contribute to the overall participation grade.

### *Religious Holidays and Other Excused Absences*

Please let me know about any absences due to religious holidays during the first two weeks of class so we can be proactive about making sure that you stay on track. Of course, personal emergencies and illness arise unexpectedly. Your physical, mental, and emotional health should be prioritized. The sooner you let me know about an impending absence, the quicker we can make accommodations to help you complete the course while navigating other obligations.

### *Accommodations*

If you have a disability concern and/or accommodation, talk to me the first week of class in office hours or over email. If you haven't already, familiarize yourself with the services available through the Camner Center: <http://camnercenter.miami.edu>.

### *A Note on Positionality*

I believe that it is impossible to provide a comprehensive account of American politics without centering racial and ethnic identity. As a white person who specializes in the study of race, ethnicity, and politics in the United States, I can be a source of knowledge about ongoing social and academic debates pertaining to these topics. However, students are encouraged to bring their own expertise and lived experiences to the conversation as a means of building upon/critiquing this academic discourse. Though I believe it is the responsibility of everyone to talk about racism, racial inequities, and potential remedies to address these injustices, it is also critical to recognize that the knowledge associated with mastering a subfield is distinct from the knowledge that derives from the lived experiences of marginalized groups.

## **Graded Assignments**

### *Class Participation (50 points)*

Your attendance and quality of participation in each class session will be taken into consideration as part of your final grade (see engagement rubric). In order to account for different learning styles, multiple forms of participation will be taken into consideration (in-class discussion, written reflections, Blackboard posts) when evaluating student engagement throughout the course.

### *Response Essays (75 points; 25 points x 3)*

This course is divided into eight parts, each of which examines a separate theme related to race, ethnicity, and politics (see class schedule). Over the course of the semester, you should submit **three** 1-2 page response essays that engage with (or respond to) a reading, a set of readings, or theme that relates to the course materials being discussed in a forthcoming class. You should submit one response paper for every three units. In other words, you should submit one response sometime during units 1-3, one response sometime during units 4-6, and one response during units 7-8. **Response essays should be submitted before we discuss the topic/reading you decided to focus on.**

Broadly speaking, the response essay should have a thesis that (1) critiques a course reading, (2) applies a concept present in a reading to a real-life event (political, cultural, etc.), (3) or raises a question that came to mind while reading a text. While you should certainly reference course materials in these essays, these are meant to be fairly open ended. I will use these essays to evaluate the extent to which you are processing the course materials and to help guide our discussions during class. A rubric that will guide my evaluation is included on BlackBoard.

### *Final Presentation (100 points)<sup>1</sup>*

By the time the end of the quarter gets here, we will have had quite a time together. For your final presentation, you are tasked with teaching some concept or idea you learned in the course to us, your public audience. You can choose to teach us in whatever way you decide, but it must be in a format that is accessible to folks who haven't spent all quarter in our course. You can choose to write a popular essay, for example, or you might choose to create a magazine article, a podcast episode, or a video. Again, whatever method you choose, the objective is the same: teach us something. A rubric for this assignment will be provided, but excellent products will demonstrate a command of some concept covered in the course, be well executed, and legible to those outside the course.

### **Required Texts**

There are no required books for this class. However, a subscription to a reputable daily newspaper such as the New York Times or the Washington Post is strongly encouraged. Student subscriptions to the New York Times are free through the University of Miami library.

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<sup>1</sup> Shout out to Hakeem Jefferson at Stanford University for developing and sharing this creative assignment.

## Part I

### Race and American Folklore

#### August 22, 2023: Introduction

Camp, Emma. 2022. "Opinion | I Came to College Eager to Debate. I Found Self-Censorship Instead." *The New York Times*, March 7, 2022, sec. Opinion. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/07/opinion/campus-speech-cancel-culture.html>. (2 pages)

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#### August 24, 2023: The Politics of Learning About Race

Lewis, Jr., Neil. 2022. "What Happens When American Children Learn About Racism?" *FiveThirtyEight*. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/what-happens-when-american-children-learn-about-racism/>. (5 pages)

Nelsen, Matthew. 2021. "Analysis | Serious Historians Are Criticizing Trump's 1776 Report. It's How Most U.S. History Is Already Taught." *Washington Post*, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/01/28/trumps-1776-report-is-getting-lot-criticism-its-how-most-us-history-is-already-being-taught/>. (3 pages)

Tillery, Alvin B. 2021. "Analysis | Would the Founding Fathers Support Critical Race Theory?" *Washington Post*. Accessed August 30, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/06/30/would-founding-fathers-support-critical-race-theory/>. (3 pages)

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#### August 29, 2022: American Folklore (The Founding)

Declaration of Independence: A Transcription." 2015. National Archives. November 1, 2015. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>. (7 pages)

NPR. 2019. "Founding Documents: Declaration of Independence." Civics 101: A Podcast. <https://www.civics101podcast.org/civics-101-episodes/declaration>. (28 minutes)

NPR. 2020. "The Declaration Revisited: Black Americans." Civics 101: A Podcast. <https://www.civics101podcast.org/civics-101-episodes/declarationblackamericans>. (15 minutes)

NPR. 2020. "The Declaration Revisited: Native Americans." Civics 101: A Podcast. <https://www.civics101podcast.org/civics-101-episodes/declarationnativeamericans>. (15 minutes)

NPR. 2020. "Frederick Douglass' Descendants Deliver His 'Fourth of July' Speech." <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/03/884832594/video-frederick-douglass-descendants-read-his-fourth-of-july-speech>. (7 minutes)

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#### August 31, 2023: American Folklore (A Nation of Immigrants) (No Class; Dr. Nelsen at a Conference)

Lazarus, Emma. 1883. "The New Colossus - Statue Of Liberty National Monument (U.S. National Park Service)." 1883. <https://www.nps.gov/stli/learn/historyculture/colossus.htm>. (1 page)

Hunter, Walt. 2018. "The Story Behind the Poem on the Statue of Liberty - The Atlantic." 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/01/the-story-behind-the-poem-on-the-statue-of-liberty/550553/>. (8 pages)

Clusiau, Christina, and Shaul Schwarz, dirs. 2020. *Immigration Nation* | Netflix Official Site. 2020. <https://www.netflix.com/title/80994107>. (60 minutes; out of class)

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### **September 5, 2023: American Folklore (Democracy)**

Hannah-Jones, Nikole. 2021. "America Wasn't a Democracy, Until Black Americans Made It One" in *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*. Edited by Caitlin Roper, Ilena Silverman, and Jake Silverstein. New York: One World. (Pages 8-36; 28 pages)

Cohen, Cathy J. 2020. "Death and Democracy" (7 pages)

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## **Part II Theories of Racial Formation**

### **September 7, 2023: A Theory of Racial Formation and Triangulation**

Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant. 2015. *Racial Formation in the United States*. 3rd edition. New York: Routledge. (Pages 105-132; 27 pages)

OR

Kim, Claire Jean. 1999. "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans." *Politics & Society* 27 (1): 105–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329299027001005>. (26 pages)

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### **September 12, 2023: Racial/Ethnic Categories and Self-Identification**

Jan, Tracy. 2019. "In Miami, Your Skin Color Is a Better Predictor of Wealth than Where Your Ancestors Came From." *Washington Post*. Accessed July 18, 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2019/02/27/miami-your-skin-color-is-better-predictor-wealth-than-where-your-ancestors-came/>. (2 pages)

Phan, Ngoc T., and Kevin Lujan Lee. 2022. "Toward a Decolonial Quantitative Political Science: Indigenous Self-Identification in the 2019 Native Hawaiian Survey." *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 7 (1): 90–118. <https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2021.39>. (28 pages)

OR

d'Urso, Amanda d'. 2022. "A Boundary of White Inclusion: How Religion Shapes Ethnoracial Assignment." *Perspectives on Politics*. (15 pages)

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## **Part III Racial Group Consciousness**

### **September 14, 2023: Double Consciousness, Linked Fate, and Racialized Social Constraint**

Du Bois, W. E. B. 2014. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Mineola: Dover Publications. (8 pages)

Rogers, Reuel, and Jae Yeon Kim. 2021. "Rewiring Linked Fate: Bringing Back History, Agency, and Power." *Perspectives on Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592721003261>. (10 pages)

White, Ismail K., and Chryl N. Laird. 2021. "Ideas Podcast: Why Are Black Americans Democrats?" <https://press.princeton.edu/ideas/ideas-podcast-why-are-blacks-democrats>. (50 minute)

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### **September 19, 2023: Collective Identity and Counterpublics**

Harris-Lacewell, Melissa Victoria. 2010. *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought*. Princeton University Press. (Pages 162-203; 38 pages)

Cohen, Cathy J., and Matthew D. Luttig. 2020. "Reconceptualizing Political Knowledge: Race, Ethnicity, and Carceral Violence." *Perspectives on Politics* 18 (3): 805–18. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592718003857>. (10 pages)

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#### **September 21, 2023: Racial Resentment**

Cramer, Katherine. 2020. "Understanding the Role of Racism in Contemporary US Public Opinion." *Annual Review of Political Science* 23 (1): 153–69. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-060418-042842>. (20 pages)

DeSante, Christopher D., and Candis Watts Smith. 2019. "Less Is More: A Cross-Generational Analysis of the Nature and Role of Racial Attitudes in the Twenty-First Century." *The Journal of Politics* 82 (3): 967–80. <https://doi.org/10.1086/707490>. (10 pages)

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#### **September 26, 2023: Rural Consciousness, White Privilege, and "New" Measures of Whiteness?**

Cramer Walsh, Katherine. 2012. "Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective." *The American Political Science Review* 106 (3): 517–32. <https://doi.org/10.2307/23275431>. (15 pages)

Nelsen, Matthew D., and Christopher D. Petsko. 2021. "Race and White Rural Consciousness." *Perspectives on Politics* 19 (4): 1205–18. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592721001948>. (13 pages)

Jefferson, Hakeem. 2021. "Storming The U.S. Capitol Was About Maintaining White Power In America." *FiveThirtyEight* (blog). January 8, 2021. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/storming-the-u-s-capitol-was-about-maintaining-white-power-in-america/>. (4 pages)

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### **Part IV Voting, Partisanship, and Representation**

#### **September 28, 2023: Voting and Voting Rights**

Barreto, Matt A., Gabriel R. Sanchez, and Hannah L. Walker. 2022. "Battling the Hydra: The Disparate Impact of Voter ID Requirements in North Dakota." *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 7 (1): 119–40. <https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2022.1>. (21 pages)

Brown and Reed. 2020. "Analysis | Stacey Abrams's Success in Georgia Builds on Generations of Black Women's Organizing." *Washington Post*. Accessed August 30, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/12/10/stacey-abramss-success-georgia-builds-generations-black-womens-organizing/>. (3 pages)

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#### **October 3, 2023: Partisanship and Ideology**

Barbaro, Michael, Diana Nguyen, Asthaa Chaturvedi, Nina Feldman, Rachel Quester, Paige Cowett, Marion Lozano, Dan Powell, and Chris Wood. 2022. "The Latino Voters Who Could Decide the Midterms." *The New York Times*, October 3, 2022, sec. Podcasts. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/03/podcasts/the-daily/latino-voters-midterm-elections-polling.html>.

Jefferson, Hakeem. 2020. "How The Two-Party System Obscures The Complexity Of Black Americans' Politics." *FiveThirtyEight* (blog). October 6, 2020. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-the-two-party-system-obscures-the-complexity-of-black-americans-politics/>. (7 pages)



Jefferson, Hakeem. 2022. "The Politics of Respectability and Black Americans' Punitive Attitudes." *American Political Science Review*. (20 pages)

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#### **October 5, 2023: Beyond Descriptive Representation**

Carlson, Kirsten Matoy. 2022. "Beyond Descriptive Representation: American Indian Opposition to Federal Legislation." *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 7 (1): 65–89. <https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2021.38>. (24 pages)

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### **Part V Intersectionality**

#### **October 10, 2023: What is Intersectionality?**

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1990. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6): 1241–1300. (61 pages)

#### **October 12, 2023: Intersectional Frames**

Combahee River Collective. 1974. "The Combahee River Collective Statement." [https://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition\\_Readings.pdf](https://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition_Readings.pdf). (21 pages)

Brower, Margaret Teresa. 2022. "Reframing Women's Issues: Intersectional Identity Frames & Policy Agendas." *Political Behavior*. (20 pages)

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#### **October 17, 2023: Fall Recess**

No class. Enjoy Fall Recess!

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#### **October 19, 2023: No Class**

No class! Dr. Nelsen conducting field work.

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#### **October 24, 2023: Women, Race, and Class/Race and Sexuality**

Cohen, Cathy J. 1999. *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*. 1 edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Pages on Blackboard)

Davis, Angela Y. 1983. *Women, Race, & Class*. 1st Vintage Books ed edition. New York: Vintage. (28 pages)

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### **Part VI Social Movements**

#### **October 26, 2023: Black Lives Matter**

Woodly, Deva R. 2021. *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements*. New York: Oxford University Press. (10 pages)

Francis, Megan Ming. 2022. "Can Black Lives Matter within U.S. Democracy?" *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 699 (1): 186–99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162221078340>. (11 pages)

Chudy, Jennifer, and Hakeem Jefferson. 2021. "Opinion | Support for Black Lives Matter Surged Last Year. Did It Last?" *The New York Times*, May 22, 2021, sec. Opinion. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/22/opinion/blm-movement-protests-support.html>. (4 pages)

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### **October 31, 2023: Racial Scripts and Counterscripts**

Molina, Natalia. 2014. *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. (26 pages; Pg. 1-13 and 139-152)

Kim, Claire Jean, and Taeku Lee. 2001. "Interracial Politics: Asian Americans and Other Communities of Color." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 34 (3): 631–37. (6 pages)

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## **Part VII The Carceral State**

### **November 2, 2023: The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the New Jim Crow**

Alexander, Michelle. 2020. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. 10th Anniversary ed. edition. The New Press. (19 pages)

DuVernay, Ava. 2016. *13th*. Netflix. (90 Minutes; in class)

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### **November 7, 2023: The Development of Punitive Crime Policy (Online)**

Weaver, Vesla M. 2007. "Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy." *Studies in American Political Development* 21 (2): 230–65. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898588X07000211>. (35 pages)

### **November 9, 2023: The Police State**

Soss, Joe, and Vesla Weaver. 2017. "Police Are Our Government: Politics, Political Science, and the Policing of Race–Class Subjugated Communities." *Annual Review of Political Science* 20 (1): 565–91. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-060415-093825>. (20 pages)

### **November 14, 2023: Policy Feedback and Mass Incarceration**

Burch, Traci. 2013. *Trading Democracy for Justice: Criminal Convictions and the Decline of Neighborhood Political Participation*. Illustrated edition. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press. (12 pages)

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## **Part VIII**

### **Toward a Multiracial Democracy**

#### **November 16, 2023: The Case for Reparations**

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2014. "The Case for Reparations." *The Atlantic*.  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>. (Sections I, II, IV, V; 20 pages)

Herndon, Astead W. 2021. "A City's Step Toward Reparations." *The New York Times*, July 12, 2021, sec. Podcasts.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/12/podcasts/the-daily/evanston-racial-reparations.html>. (40 minutes)

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#### **November 21 and 23, 2023: Thanksgiving Break**

No class. Enjoy the holiday!

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#### **November 28, 2023: Queer Politics/ Begin Final Presentations**

Cohen, Cathy J. 1997. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3 (4): 437–65. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-3-4-437>. (28 pages)

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#### **November 30, 2023: Final Presentations**

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#### **December 5, 2023: Final Presentations**

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#### **December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023: Upload Final Presentations Files by 5:00pm**

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