This course focuses on race and ethnicity in American politics. These concepts have, to varying degrees, been central to politics since the nation's founding. The most obvious example is the struggle over slavery and segregation, which endures today in the debate about what should be done to address their legacies. Yet today's debates over immigration also have deep historical roots; indeed, conflict on this issue gave birth to a major third-party movement in the 1850s. Racial issues are of interest to social scientists not just because of their frequent occurrence and effects on individuals' lives, but because they touch on fundamental questions about the extent and meaning of membership in a national polity.

Most obviously of concern to political scientists is that voting behavior, public opinion, and political outcomes are strongly correlated with racial and ethnic identification. Yet racial conflict and inequality, most often of interest to social psychologists and sociologists, is equally the subject of political contestation as policymakers, activists, and ordinary citizens debate causes, effects, and solutions.

Therefore, this course is important for those interested in American politics and in race and ethnicity. For political scientists, while racial and ethnic politics issues only one of several domains of American political conflict, they are nonetheless important enough to deserve significant attention, especially as race sometimes intrudes on apparently non-racial issues. To those more directly interested in race, whether as advocates or as interested citizens, political scientists have much to say about the effectiveness and feasibility of various public policy solutions and the ways in which mass opinion, interest groups, and activists shape outcomes. For all, it is intended to give you further tools to develop a deeper understanding of racial and ethnic politics in the United States that is informed by social scientific theory and research.

Office Hours

My office hours and Alex's are listed at the top of the page. Office hours are a great resource to ask questions about difficult material, or further explore concepts you are interested in; please take advantage of them!
**Course Resources and Readings**

There is one textbook required for this class: *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* by Mary C. Waters. Other readings will be posted on Learn@UW and are detailed in the course outline below, though they are subject to change. I encourage you to do all readings in the order listed. You are expected to have completed the week's readings in advance of your section meetings. I will not cover most of the readings in lecture, so much of section will be spent discussing them. It will be impossible to understand the discussion or to gain a good participation grade if you have not completed the readings before your section material.

**Discussion sections**

Sections will meet every week, including the first week of classes. As discussed above, you must complete the readings in advance of section meetings. It will be impossible to earn a good section grade if you are unprepared to discuss the material They are called “discussion sections” for a reason – some level of participation is required. If this is difficult for you, talk to me or Alex about some strategies to help you feel more comfortable participating.

**Grading and Exams**

Twelve percent of the grade will come from discussion section. The rest will be based on three exams, which will be weighted equally. Section grades will be based on attendance and participation. The first two exams will include a take-home essay (60% of each exam grade) and an in-class portion (40%). The take-home portion will be assigned a week in advance of the exam date and due when you turn in the in-class portion. The midterms will be Thursday, February 26 and Thursday, March 26 in the usual class period and room. The final will be on Monday, May 11 from 12:25 to 2:25, room TBA.

After we return exams, there is a 24-hour moratorium on contacting me or Alex except when necessary. If you wish to discuss your grade, or have questions about how to improve your work, please meet with Alex first. If you are still dissatisfied, you may appeal your grade to me. I will regrade the exam as I deem appropriate, which may mean that your grade is increased or lowered.
**Electronic Devices**

The use of laptops in lecture and section is not allowed except by special arrangement. The same goes for other electronic devices. Please turn off and put away your phones before you come to lecture or section.

**McBurney students**

I will make every effort to accommodate students with disabilities or special needs. Please contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements. Your confidentiality will be protected in accordance with university policy and procedures. For more information, contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center, 1305 Linden Drive, 608.263.2741, or visit [http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu](http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu).

**Academic Integrity**

I take academic integrity very seriously. If I suspect academic misconduct, I will investigate and impose penalties in accordance with university guidelines. Depending on the severity of the offense, penalties may include failure in the course and a notice being sent to the Dean of Students. You are encouraged to study with other students, but your work must be entirely your own. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, please talk to me or Alex. I cannot stress this enough; academic misconduct, even if it is unintentional, can seriously damage your career, and it is not worth the risk.

**Miscellaneous**

Important course news will sometimes be communicated by email. Please check your WiscMail regularly.

It is important to stay informed about current events. By giving you further opportunities to apply the course material to understanding the real world, this is likely to improve your essays and section participation, as well as making you a more informed citizen. I recommend that you subscribe to a major national newspaper like the *New York Times*. The *Times* is free online, but I encourage you to obtain a print subscription, as this is available to students at a steep discount, and studies have shown that comprehension is much greater when you read a paper copy.
Course Outline and Reading List

Week 1 (1/20-1/22) Introduction: Course outline, understanding identity, race, and ethnicity

Readings: None

Week 2 (1/27-1/29): Race, Ethnicity, and Identity continued: origins and effects

Readings:
* Ethnic Options*, pp. 1-33, 52-57, and 115-68

Week 3 (2/3-2/5)
Racial conflict and racism

Readings:

Week 4 (2/10-12) Race and inequality

Readings: Exchange between Ta-Nehesi Coates and Jonathan Chait, March 2014:
Ta-Nehesi Coates, “The Secret Lives of Inner-City Black Males,” *The Atlantic*
Jonathan Chait, “Barack Obama, Ta-Nehesi Coates, Poverty, and Culture,” *New York* 
Coates, “Black Pathology and the Closing of the Progressive Mind,” *The Atlantic*
Chait, “Barack Obama vs. the Culture of Poverty,” *New York* 
Coates, “Other People's Pathologies,” *The Atlantic*
(reading list continued on next page)
Chait, “Ta-Nehesi Coates Disagrees with 'Jonathan Chait,' and So Do I,” New York

Week 5 (2/17-2/19): Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans in America

Readings:

Week 6 (2/24-2/26): Immigration introduction, midterm

Readings: None

Week 7 (3/3-3/5) Immigration continued (3/3), Joe Salmons guest lecture (3/5).


Week 8 (3/10-3/12): Public opinion and voting behavior

Readings:
(reading list continued on next page)
Jamelle Bouie, “Demography is Not Destiny,” Democracy Journal 31, 2014,
http://www.democracyjournal.org/31/demography-is-not-destiny.php
http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2014/02/07/a-purple-texas-not-so-fast/

Week 9 (3/17-3/19): Public opinion and voting behavior continued; race in the public sphere


Week 10 (3/24-3/26): Race and Representation (3/24), Midterm 2 (3/26)

Readings: None

Week 11 (3/31-4/2): Spring Break

Week 12 (4/7-4/9): African Americans in the Pre-Civil Rights era (4/7); guest lecture by Kristen Fox (4/9)

Readings: Booker T. Washington, “Atlanta Exposition Address” (1895)
W.E.B. DuBois, excerpts from The Souls of Black Folk (1903)
Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963)
Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” (1964)
Week 13 (4/14-4/16): Civil Rights Movement continued


Week 14 (4/21-4/23): Policy, week one

Readings:
Shelby Steele, excerpt from *The Content of our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* (1990)

Week 15 (4/28-4/30): Policy, week two

Readings: None

Week 16 (5/4-5/6): Big-picture reflections: What should be done?

Jon Stewart-Bill O'Reilly debate on white privilege: [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2014/10/16/bill_oreilly_vs_jon_stewart_on_white_privilege.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2014/10/16/bill_oreilly_vs_jon_stewart_on_white_privilege.html)