Race, Riot, and Backlash in the United States
DPI-390, Fall 2015
Tuesdays/Thursdays, 1:15-2:30PM

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Course Description

This course explores the ways in which the racial experiences and emotions of the nation’s citizens collided and produced different forms of public rebellion, backlash and resistance in the modern United States. We will cover a variety of topics including urban riots, civil rights, ethnic and racial nationalism, suburban socio-economic revolts, and contemporary political rebellions of the left and the right. Over the course of the semester, we will use these moments to examine not only how these processes influenced political institutions, but also how they influenced the development of policy over the course of the 20th Century.

Course Expectations

This class is a seminar and as such, class participation is a vital, required part of this course. Students should come to class prepared and ready to contribute. Course attendance is mandatory, thus absences will have a detrimental impact on your grade. I also expect you to be engaged participants and listeners; moreover, I evaluate class participation based not on quantity but rather, on quality. If you have difficulty speaking in class, I encourage you to meet with me to discuss strategies for class participation. Finally, you may also boost your class participation grade by occasionally sending me links to articles relevant to the course subject matter; these emails should include a brief analytical note explaining the significance of the piece and how it relates to the course and our in-class discussions.

Please bring your name cards with you to every class.

There is a canvas course page for this class. Please make sure you have access to the site. Copies of the course documents and readings are posted there, along with optional readings, links to relevant websites, and assignments. New content will be added regularly.

Please hand your assignments and papers in on time. A late paper will result in a full letter grade reduction. I do not grant extensions except in the case of emergency, religious observance, or illness.

As a general rule, please show respect for your professor and your classmates. It is not courteous to be late or to walk out in the middle of class. Cell phones/smart phones must be placed on silent during class or turned off. Laptops may be used in class but only for scholarly purposes, not surfing the web. Inconsiderate and inappropriate use of laptops will result in a class-wide ban.

I expect every student to abide by the Harvard Kennedy’s School’s Academic Code. All work should be yours, and yours alone - plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. You must properly quote, cite and reference all of your sources. I accept Chicago style citations. For more information, please see the Kennedy’s School’s site on Academic Integrity.

It is the policy of the Kennedy School to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for contacting and registering with the Student Disability Coordinator, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. More information about the Kennedy School’s policy can be found at http://www.hks.harvard.edu/degrees/life/disability-accommodation-and-access-services.
I strongly encourage you to meet with me outside of class, especially if you have questions about your performance in the course, the discussion, writing, or research. Feel free to stop by my office hours, or to schedule an appointment.

**Course Assignments**

Weekly analytical response papers are due on Tuesdays by 10:00am (2 pages, double-spaced). Your paper does not need to respond to all of the assigned materials for the week; however, it should critically engage some significant aspect of the required reading/materials. This assignment is your opportunity to grapple with your observations, questions, ideas and criticisms that are relevant to the course and subject matter. You may not collaborate on this assignment, although you should read your classmates’ papers and feel free to respond to them in class. Additionally, you may skip this assignment three times over the course of the semester. Response papers will be scored on a scale of 0 – 4. A “0” indicates a failure to complete the assignment, while a “1” indicates a standard completion. A “2” indicates a satisfactory or good completion on the assignment, while a “3” indicates an outstanding job. A “4” is reserved for a truly exceptional response.

Each student is responsible for presenting on the weekly readings and materials once over the course of the semester. These presentations will generally take place on Tuesdays, unless otherwise noted. Your presentation should be analytical and succinct, lasting no more than 10 minutes; it should also be accompanied by three critical discussion questions for the entire class. These questions are due by 10:00am on the day of your presentation in lieu of your response paper. Depending on the size of the class, you may have to co-present. In the event that this happens, you may collaborate with your co-presenter(s) if you so choose. Nevertheless, each presenter will be evaluated individually and you must each submit three discussion questions of your own design.

At the midpoint of the semester, you will write one 5 – 7 page analytical paper, the broad details of which will be outlined and discussed in class. The due date for this assignment is Tuesday October 20 by noon.

The last week of class for this semester (December 1 and 3) will be devoted to a final group presentation, the topic of which will be determined in consultation with me. As a group, you will also submit an accompanying paper or memo of 7 – 10 pages summarizing your findings and conclusions, as discussed in your presentation; this paper/memo will be due by Thursday December 10 at noon. We will discuss the details of this group presentation as the semester progresses.

**Grading**

Class participation including individual presentation: 30%
Response papers: 20%
5 – 7 page paper: 25%
Group presentation and final paper: 25%

For details on my grading practices and expectations, please see the document at the end of this syllabus.

**Required Texts**

Texts are available for purchase at the Harvard Coop. Additionally, you should feel free to rent or purchase books from other sources (the library, Amazon, Alibris, etc.) – just make sure that they arrive in time for class use.

Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*
Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*
Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*
Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics*
Class Schedule

(Please read all materials by Tuesday, unless otherwise specified)

**Week 1: September 3**

*Course Introduction*

Optional Reading:


**Week 2: September 8 & 10**

*Defining Race, Riot, and Backlash in the United States*

Reading:


Chapter XI in the Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot* (1922)


**Week 3: September 15 & 17**

*The Origins of Modern Racialized Conflict*

Reading:


Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, chapters 1-3

**Week 4: September 22 & 24**

*The Civil Rights Movement and Communities of Resistance*

Reading:

Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle*, introduction, chapters 1-3, 7, and 9

Primary source documents on backlash and the southern civil rights movement


**Week 5: September 29 & October 1**  
*Backlash and Resistance*  
**Reading:**
- Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, chapters 8 – 9
- Kevin Kruse, *White Flight*, excerpts from chapters 5 – 8
- Short excerpt from Barry Goldwater, *Conscience of a Conservative* (1960)

**Week 6: October 6 & October 8**  
*Domestic Disorder: Problems and Solutions*  
**Reading:**
- Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, conclusion
- Excerpts from *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (1968)
- Excerpt from Leah Wright Rigueur, *The Loneliness of the Black Republican*

**Week 7: October 13 & 15**  
*Racial Nationalism*  
**Reading:**
- Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle*, chapters 14 and 16

**Week 8: October 20 & 22**  
*Ethnic Nationalism and the Politics of Suburbia*  
**Reading:**
Kevin Kruse, *White Flight*, epilogue

Ronald Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, chapters 6 and 8

Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, chapters 6-7

**Midpoint Paper Due on Tuesday October 20 by Noon**
**No Response Paper Due**

**Week 9: October 27 & 29**
*The Culture Wars and Race*

Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, chapters 9-10


**Week 10: November 3 & November 5**
*From Watts to South Central: the Los Angeles Riots*
Reading:
Jeff Chang, excerpt from *Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation*

*To Rebuild is Not Enough: Final Report and Recommendations of the Assembly Special Committee on the Los Angeles Crisis*

Judith Butler, “Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia,” in *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprisings*


**Week 11: November 10 & 12**
*New Dimensions of Resistance, Riot and Backlash*
Reading:
Excerpt from Kate Zernike, *Boiling Mad: Inside Tea Party America*

Student-selected documents on the Occupy Wall Street Protests


**Week 12: November 17 & 19**
*Black Lives Matter & Contemporary Racial Crisis in America*
Reading:

Brandon M. Terry, “After Ferguson,” *The Point* (Summer 2015)


**Week 13: November 24 & November 26 (No Class on November 26 – Thanksgiving)**

*Final Group Presentations – Preparation*

Reading:
Please come to class having done serious research – on your own – covering your topic of interest. We will discuss this research as a group. Your response paper for this week should reflect your research.

**Week 14: December 1 & December 3**

*Final Group Presentations*

**NO REQUIRED READING**

**NO RESPONSE PAPER DUE**

**ACCOMPANYING GROUP PAPER/MEMO DUE BY THURSDAY DECEMBER 10 BY NOON**
GRADING PRACTICES

Papers
An A or A- thesis, paper, or exam is one that is good enough to be read aloud in a class. It is clearly written and well organized. It demonstrates that the writer has conducted a close and critical reading of texts, grappled with the issues raised in the course, synthesized the readings, discussions, and lectures, and formulated a perceptive, compelling, independent argument. The argument shows intellectual originality and creativity, is sensitive to historical context, is supported by a well-chosen variety of specific examples, and, in the case of a research paper, is built on a critical reading of primary material.

A B+ or B thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates many aspects of A-level work but falls short of it in either the organization and clarity of its writing, the formulation and presentation of its argument, or the quality of research. Some papers or exams in this category are solid works containing flashes of insight into many of the issues raised in the course. Others give evidence of independent thought, but the argument is not presented clearly or convincingly.

A B- thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates a command of course or research material and understanding of historical context but provides a less than thorough defense of the writer's independent argument because of weaknesses in writing, argument, organization, or use of evidence. The paper may also suffer from poor mechanics – errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and citation format.

A C+, C, or C- thesis, paper, or exam offers little more than a mere a summary of ideas and information covered in the course, is insensitive to historical context, does not respond to the assignment adequately, suffers from frequent factual errors, unclear writing, poor organization, or inadequate primary research, or presents some combination of these problems. The paper may also suffer from errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and citation format.

Whereas the grading standards for written work between A and C- are concerned with the presentation of argument and evidence, a paper or exam that belongs to the D or F categories demonstrates inadequate command of course material.

A D thesis or paper demonstrates serious deficiencies or severe flaws in the student's command of course, research material, and writing mechanics.

An F thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates no competence in the course, research materials, or writing mechanics. It indicates a student's neglect or lack of effort in the course.

Class Participation
A student who receives an A for participation in discussion typically comes to every class with questions about the readings in mind. An ‘A’ discussant engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others, and consistently elevates the level of discussion.

A student who receives a B for participation in discussion typically does not always come to class with questions about the readings in mind. A ‘B’ discussant waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Some discussants in this category, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation.

A student who receives a C for discussion attends regularly but typically is an infrequent or unwilling participant in discussion.

A student who fails to attend class regularly and is not adequately prepared for discussion risks the grade of D or F.