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COURSE OVERVIEW

Race and Politics in the United States is a seminar course designed to help scholars build and hone skills for identifying, interrogating, and interpreting contrasting theories about the role of race and ethnicity in political ideology, civic participation, policymaking, and polarization in American politics. This course will challenge scholars to think critically about historical implications, conceptual frameworks, and popular narratives regarding race in America that shape contemporary political discourse, party dynamics, and public policy designs. We will examine and evaluate social issues— past and present, the actions of political actors, the inner workings of political institutions, and the stratification of political processes to better understand the rationales, strategies, and conflicts fueling some of today's most contentious political debates related to race.

Few topics endure in American politics that are as archaic yet relevant, divisive and unifying, or simplistic but complex as race. As such, this course provides scholars opportunities to explore a wide range of political perspectives. We will inspect opposing arguments about cultural, economic, and structural influences on political power, efficacy, capacity, goals, outcomes, and indicators. While surveying federal-level administrations, legislations, bureaucracies, and Supreme Court decisions, scholars will engage in exercises that will help them develop new investigative tools for critiquing academic assessments of these institutions. Scholars will utilize these techniques to disentangle the multitude of factors at work when considering race and politics in the United States.

By semester's end, scholars will be able to better scrutinize the integrity of race-centered research designs, public policies, and government programs. Scholars will possess the know how to spot and challenge with confidence racial generalizations and assumptions, analyze contextualization, claims, and findings, and accurately classify causes, correlates, and consequences in political scenarios. As scholars become more empowered and equipped with the know-how and the utilities needed for performing independent analyses, they will be required to test these proficiencies through a weekly discussion board, on (two) exams, and by producing (three) short-form essays.