SOC 134
Problems of American and Racial and Ethnic Minorities
1:20-2:10 Pm Monday/Wednesday/Friday
5208 Sewell Social Sciences Building

Instructor: Taylan Acar
Office: 2435 Sewell Social Sciences Building
Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 2:30-3:30 PM or by appointment
tacar@ssc.wisc.edu

Teaching Assistant: Yaowen Dong
Office: 7102 Sewell Social Sciences Building
Office Hours: TBA
dong8@wisc.edu

Discussion Sections¹
Section 321          Wednesday 7:45 -8:35 AM   6314 Social Science
Section 322          Wednesday 8:50-9:40 AM   6314 Social Science
Section 323          Wednesday 9:55-10:45 AM  6310 Social Science
Section 326          Thursday 9:55 -10:45 AM  6109 Social Science
Section 327          Thursday 11:00-11:50 AM  6109 Social Science

¹ Please discuss the issues related to your discussion section and attendance with your Teaching Assistant.
COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The official name of this course is “Problems of American Racial and Ethnic Minorities.” Unfortunately the problems of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States are plenty. However, in a single semester we will not have the time to examine the problems of specific groups of racial and minority groups. Instead we will be exploring the structure of the American society that shapes and is shaped by race, ethnicity, racism and racial and ethnic inequalities from a sociological perspective.

Two primary goals of sociology are

• Identify the causes and consequences of social inequalities;
• Describe the social processes that perpetuate them.

Thus, at the end of this course, I will expect you to apply “the sociological imagination” to social issues in relation to race and ethnicity. This means understanding race and ethnicity as social constructs, learning how race and ethnicity exist within social structures and institutions.

This course is not only about the history of the problems of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States. We will refer to the historical progression of race relations; changes in the legal-political structure of the American democracy; economic and social emancipation of African-Americans. But it is not about slavery, the Civil War, Tuskegee, Japanese Internment Camps, and Ellis Island. We will not focus on these historical incidents and episodes, rather on the contemporary reflections of these developments, on our time and space, and on the lives of others around us. In other words this course is about current problems of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States.

I expect you to participate in lecture, discussion section, and independently through a variety of course requirements. Most people have not had much practice talking about race and ethnicity, and some of the topics we will explore are controversial. Yet, again most people have some degree of opinion and beliefs about the issues of race and ethnicity. Participation will likely feel uncomfortable at times—both as a speaker and as a listener. Productive conversation is the goal.

It is crucial that we all remember that every person is living with a race and ethnicity (and sex, gender, sexual orientation, class, size, belief system, nationality, etc.), and each person’s individual perspective is relevant to our conversation. Speak up and feel free to disagree with me, with your TA, or your peers, but always stop and think about how you can phrase your words to respect everyone in the room and their unique experiences and diverse backgrounds. Likewise, push yourself to assume that everyone else in the class is coming from a place of good intentions, of trying to learn and struggle with the concepts of the class. Come with an open mind, respect the different experiences of others, and be prepared to rethink your own assumptions about racial and ethnic relations.
This class meets the University of Wisconsin’s Ethnic Studies requirements, which aims to “**increase understanding of the culture and contributions of persistently marginalized racial or ethnic groups in the United States, and to equip students to respond constructively to issues connected with our pluralistic society and global community.**”

**COURSE POLICIES AND INFORMATION**

**Accommodations**

Please send me an email by the end of the second week of the course if you are eligible for special arrangements or accommodations for testing, assignments, or other aspects of the course. Accommodations are provided for students who qualify for disability services through the **McBurney Center**. Their website has detailed instructions about how to qualify: [http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/](http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/). Provide a copy of your accommodations request (VISA) to the instructor by the end of the second week of class.

If you wish to request a scheduling accommodation for religious observances, send an email by the end of the second week of the course stating the specific date(s) for which you request accommodation; campus policy requires that religious observances be accommodated if you make a timely request early in the term. See the university’s [web page](https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=21698) for details.

**Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. It will be detected and detested. It is truly not worth it. Ignorance of the rules is NOT an excuse. Believe me, it will be easily detected and it will lead to an unpleasant situation for all of us.

All work that you submit must be your own and must have been done for this class. This means no recycling of old papers or projects (yours or anyone else’s) and absolutely no plagiarism. This means no buying papers online, no cutting and pasting chunks of text from other sources and presenting it as your own writing, and no paraphrasing and presenting it as your own ideas. Beware of the different ways of committing plagiarism:

- Reproducing verbatim (or almost verbatim) another author’s words and phrases, without using quotation marks and/or without providing a citation;
- Using another author’s ideas (even if you don’t use their precise words) without providing a citation.

All work will be submitted in electronic form and checked against plagiarism detection software. All incidences of plagiarism and academic dishonesty will be reported to the Chair of the Sociology Department as well as the Office of the Dean of Students, and you will receive a failing grade for the course. I expect you...
to acquaint yourself with the University’s policy on academic misconduct, found here: http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html

If you have questions as to what constitutes plagiarism, the Writing Center has numerous resources and tutorials online on their website (http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Documentation.html).

As with all courses at the University of Wisconsin, you are expected to follow the University’s other rules and regulations pertaining to academic honesty and integrity. The standards are outlined by the Office of the Dean of Students at http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/

According to UWS 14, academic misconduct is defined as:

• Seeking to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
• Using unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
• Forging or falsifies academic documents or records;
• Intentionally impeding or damaging the academic work of others;
• Engaging in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student’s academic performance;
• Assisting other students in any of these acts.

For a complete description of behaviors that violate the University’s standards as well the disciplinary penalties and procedures, please see the Dean of Students website.

Office Hours and Getting Help

Many students are intimidated by the idea of going into office hours—I know; I was as an undergrad myself. Don’t be afraid to stop by your TA’s or my office hours or make an appointment to meet. You do not have to be experiencing difficulty or even have profound questions to come to office hours. We are happy to answer questions and discuss ideas stemming from lecture, readings, or current events that relate to the course. Do not hesitate to contact your TA or me if you need assistance. Head off problems before they turn into emergencies. If you cannot meet with us during office hours, we can make an appointment to meet at another time.

The Writing Center

It is always useful to develop your academic writing skills as early as possible. Throughout your college life you will be asked to consult the UW Writing Center. The Center provides you with a diverse range of resources to help you write as a scholar and with style. Friendly writing tutors are available to work with students one-on-one on a regular basis. The Writing Center is located in 6171 Helen C.
White Hall. Their hours are Mon-Thu 9:00 Am-8:30 Pm; Fri 9:00 Am to 3:00 Pm. It will be very helpful if you can schedule several meetings with the same writing instructor over the semester. For more information, visit their website at www.writing.wisc.edu or call 263-1192.

Friendly tip: The Writing Center also organizes writing workshops in specific topics such as CV and resume writing, which might be useful for all of you in the future.

Questions and Complaints about Grading

The TAs and I are humans; and we do make mistakes in grading. If you have a question about how an assignment was graded, please communicate with us. Note, however, that any time we look back to an assignment to evaluate the grading, that your grade may go up or down. Please follow this procedure for grade questions and complaints:

1. Wait 24 hours, and review the assignment description; often students are able to identify why their work was marked down by reviewing this information.
2. 24 hours after a grade has been posted, submit to me (not your TA) an one page paper with the following:
   a. Clearly and specifically describe your question or complaint (hint: this tends to be better received if you can frame this around learning rather than your grade)
   b. Justify any complaints with a description of how you believe you met the requirements.
   c. Request a meeting. Include several days and times when you can meet with the grader to discuss the issue.
3. I will reply to you within 48 hours (except on holidays or weekends, when it will be by the end of the following business day) to confirm the meeting time.
4. Meet with the grader.
5. In exceptional cases, when I agree that the original grade is in question, I may re-grade your paper. Note, again, that grades may go up or down.

The Department of Sociology regularly conducts student evaluations of all professors and teaching assistants near the end of the semester. Students who have more immediate concerns about this course should report them me or to the chair of the department, 8128 Social Science.
Department’s Learning Objectives

Beyond the specific substantive and methodological content I will cover in this course, I have designed this course to achieve the following instructional objectives designated as priorities by the Department of sociology:

- **Critically Evaluate Published Research.** Sociology graduates will be able to read and evaluate published research as it appears in academic journals and popular or policy publications.
- **Communicate Skillfully:** Sociology majors write papers and make oral presentations that build arguments and assess evidence in a clear and effective manner.
- **Critical Thinking about Society and Social Processes:** Sociology graduates can look beyond the surface of issues to discover the "why" and "how" of social order and structure and consider the underlying social mechanisms that may be creating a situation, identify evidence that may adjudicate between alternate explanations for phenomena, and develop proposed policies or action plans in light of theory and data.
- **See Things from a Global Perspective:** Sociologists learn about different cultures, groups, and societies across both time and place. They are aware of the diversity of backgrounds and experiences among residents of the United States. They understand the ways events and processes in one country are linked to those in other countries.
- **Prepare for Graduate School and the Job Market:** Students use their social research skills to identify opportunities for employment or further study, assess their qualifications for these opportunities, and identify strategies for gaining the necessary knowledge and experience to improve their qualifications. Students are encouraged to develop and maintain portfolios of their written work and educational experiences to aid them in preparing applications and to learn how to present theirs.
- **Work effectively in groups:** Students will improve their skills in understanding group dynamics and working well with people from different backgrounds with different strengths and weaknesses.
- **Improve project management skills:** Students will improve their skills in time management, ordering and executing a series of complex and inter-related tasks, and integrating distinct components of a project into a final product.

**LECTURE ETIQUETTE**

Please avoid disruptions such as arriving late, leaving early, checking email, and especially avoid packing up before I finish lecturing. Please do not use laptops or tablets to surf the web—it’s distracting for your classmates and for me. Smart phone/cell phone use will not be permitted during lecture. If you have a phone, turn it off or put it on silent. Laptops and tablets will be permitted for taking notes during lecture. This is a 100-student lecture in a room that seats 218 people. This makes it especially important not to arrive to class late or leave early.
Please find a seat in the middle of a row when possible to facilitate the seating process; please try to sit closer to the front side of the classroom.

**EMAIL ETIQUETTE**

This is a large course. Therefore, I expect you to be respectful of your TA’s and my time and schedules. Most of the time the answer of a question is in the syllabus. Please email the following email etiquette:

1. If you have questions or concerns, check the syllabus first
2. If you have questions or concerns, always check the syllabus first.
3. If you cannot find what you need, contact your TA.
4. Please compose emails in formal, professional language.
5. If your TA cannot help you, he will contact me on your behalf or you may contact me directly. You are always welcome to come to my office hours or schedule an appointment to speak with me at another time.

Other than stopping by the office hours, the best way to contact me is email. You can expect a response from me within 24 hours, unless you send the message on or just before a weekend or holiday. Except for emergencies, please do not ask last-minute questions about an assignment.

**COURSE MATERIAL**

All required reading material is be available on Learn@UW (learnuw.wisc.edu). Abridged PowerPoint slides will be uploaded to Learn@UW after each lecture. The slides you see in lecture will be more detailed than those on Learn@UW.

Background Reading (Placed on Reserve at the College Library):


**GRADING:**

94-100% = A  
89-93.9 = AB  
84-88.9 = B  
78-83.9 = CB  
70-77.9 = C  
60-69.9 = D  
Under 60 = F
The break-down of your final letter grade is the following:

Analysis Short Essay#1 15%
Analysis Short Essay#2 15%
Analysis Short Essay#3 15%
Midterm-Exam 15%
Final Exam 20%
Weekly responses: 10%
Section Participation & Attendance: 10%
Total 100%

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading
I expect you to complete all assigned reading material prior coming to the class. Note that you will be responsible from all the readings, videos, etc. in the exams. In addition, you will have to build your analysis short-essays on the assigned readings. You will not have time to read through five-weeks of reading material right before writing your essay.

Exams
There will be two non-cumulative exams. They will cover material from the readings, lectures, and videos. The locations of the exams will be announced later in the semester. Make-up exams will be permitted, at my discretion, only in cases of illness, serious family emergencies, or participation in UW athletics, but you must notify me ahead of time. Students who miss an exam without prior approval will receive an F for that exam.

Weekly Short-Responses
You are expected to write 10 weekly responses. These should reflect your ideas, reactions, opinions, frustrations and take-home messages from the lecture, readings and class and section discussions. Do not worry about typing them; you can write them on a piece of paper. You are going to be graded on a pass/fail scheme. You are going to get a pass (10 papers = 10 points) just by writing them, as long as they related to our weekly readings and materials. **Analyses or arguments are not required for short-responses.** Few sentences are enough, but you can write as much as you want. Once again, **writing on a piece of paper suffices.** The short responses are due Mondays in the class, EXCEPT the week you turn in Short-Essays (Week 1; 2; 6; 11; and 14). If you fail to turn in more than four (4) responses, you will automatically fail the class.

Analysis Short-Essay:*2
Over the course of the semester, you will write **three short essays (each approximately 5 paragraphs; 900-1200 words)** on topics of your choice related to our course and course readings. For these essays, you will have to select a real-world artifact—a news report, blog post, TV show, a movie, a book or an

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*2 This is adapted from Jason Nolen’s Soc 134 Spring 2015 course syllabus.
article, or an event such as a protest or demonstration you attended. Using the concepts, readings from the class, syllabus or class discussions, I expect you to provide an **analysis of what you have chosen using our sociology of race/ethnicity framework.**

**Deadlines:**

The first essay is due on **Sunday, October 4th**; the second essay is due on **Sunday, November 8th**; the third essay is due on **Thursday, December 17th**. The essays should be uploaded to Learn@UW on the due date. For the first essay, the three required readings must come from the weeks 1 through 5. For the second essay, the three required readings must come from the weeks 6 through 10. For the third essay, the three required readings must come from the weeks 11 through 15.

**Guidelines:**

- You must incorporate **at least three course readings into your analysis.** Incorporate does not mean just mentioning the authors or the articles. Incorporating is difficult; it means a concept; a discussion or a historical example from a reading helps you to analyze a contemporary event of your choice; that helps you to show us a “connection” between the two phenomena—the reading and the event—for our sociological understanding of the problems of racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S.

- Your first paragraph should provide a description of the event or topic of choice, ending with **a bolded thesis statement** that tells the reader your key analytic point about the topic.

- In each of the three body paragraphs, you should make analytic arguments that support your thesis statement. You should use concepts from our class in your analysis, and you should clearly use evidence from the artifact of choice to support your analysis. You must cite sources appropriately (lecture, required readings, outside sources—note that outside sources are not required). Please use one of the following citation styles: APA, MLA, Chicago or ASA; please be consistent in your citations and bibliography.

- Your concluding paragraph should include a brief synopsis of your argument, and might include other applications of the ideas in your essay, benefits of accepting your argument, and/or limitations of your argument.

- To earn an “A” on these essays, you must demonstrate originality and critical thinking (beyond restating key concepts from lecture, required readings, and discussion). Simply explaining key concepts is not sufficient; you should clearly demonstrate how the concepts are applicable and useful for an analysis of the artifact you’ve chosen to analyze.
Your essays will be graded according to the following rubric (15 points total):

4 points—Quality of argument (originality, thoughtfulness, critical thinking);

4 points—Engagement with and understanding of course material;

4 points—Substantive evidence (strength of information, how well it supports the argument, quality of topical information);

3 points—Writing quality (organization, flow, sentence structure, voice) and technical requirements (cited evidence, proper document naming and upload, word count, bolded thesis statement, appropriate topic).

An example for analysis short-essay:

In June 2013, The Federal Supreme Court struck the key clauses of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The decision was taken on a 5-4 vote. Simply put, the Court claimed there is no need for extra protection of the voting rights of minority groups, given the development of racial relations over the course of fifty years. The majority decision also argued that today in the six states, which were originally under the provision of Voting Rights Act, the registration for African-American voters is higher than white voters. This decision was extremely controversial, given the notoriously low rates of voting among minority and low-income groups of the American society, as well as the history of voter discrimination against—mostly African American—minority citizens in the Southern states.

This is an almost perfect event/topic for the students of race and ethnicity courses to incorporate what they learn in the class to an exercise: a. it comes from the highest legal institution, the Supreme Court, of the country; b. it is a ruling about one of the most important documents in the history of race relations; c. it closely affects millions of American citizens and their participation to political processes in sixteen states, which were under scrutiny of the Act; d. most importantly, the Supreme Court makes a political decision arguing that there is no need for extra protection of right for political participation of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States anymore.

I think this Supreme Court decision can be discussed from three points of view. These three points are not exhaustive; I just want to provide you examples to guide you in your own paper projects.

First, you can critically handle this decision that despite significant developments in the political participation of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States, there are still efforts to disfranchise the minority groups, e.g., redistricting, Voter ID Laws. Striking the protective clauses of Voting Rights Act would encourage local authorities to pass disenfranchising election laws against racial and ethnic minority groups, especially in the Southern states.

Second, you can criticize this decision on the basis of the limits of Supreme Court’s authority. The American Congress adopted the Voting Rights Act in 1965 to enforce 14th and 15th Amendments. The Congress repeatedly reauthorized the
special provisions of the Act, and enacted major amendments to the Act in recognition of continuing voting discriminations. You may argue that it is not under Supreme Court’s authority to strike an act of Congress, which not only enforces two constitutional amendments, but also recognized the necessity of the Act over four decades [last reauthorization of the VRA was in 2006 by bi-partisan support]. Moreover, you might note that not since 1883, U.S Supreme Court struck down an act of Congress that was passed to enforce [14th and 15th] Constitutional Amendments.

Third, you can critically support the decision of Supreme Court. Chief Justice Roberts put forth in the majority opinion “While any racial discrimination in voting is too much, Congress must ensure that the legislation it passes to remedy that problem speaks to current conditions.” Furthermore, he argues that in the six states, which were originally under scrutiny of the Voting Rights Act, the voter registration for African-Americans is higher than that for whites. Thus, you may claim that with this decision the Supreme Court allows the Congress for the remedy and requalification of the Voting Rights Act according to current conditions of the United States.

Seeking advise for short-essays: One of your discussion sections with your TA will be devoted to your paper topics. You are also welcome to seek my and Yaowen’s further assistance, what kind of argument to develop, how to write your paper. Yet, I strongly encourage you seeking advise from your classmates first. Do not hesitate to form groups to discuss your topics and share your ideas. First, you and your peers will have more time for each other than both of us. Therefore, discussing your ideas will lead to better quality ideas. Second, best advise/support comes from the lateral relationships, rather than the hierarchical ones, because they tend to be more solidaristic.

If you made this far in the syllabus please send an email to Yaowen before September 1, 11:59 PM. This will award you one extra point to be added to your final total score at the end of the semester. Put “Soc-134: Syllabus” in the subject line of the email, there is no need to write anything in the body of the email. It saddens me to award an extra point to those who read the syllabus—fulfill the most basic duty of a college student. Unfortunately in the past, I had students, who did not read the course syllabus; sometimes even by the middle of the semester. I hope you will never fail to read your course syllabi fully in the future.
SEMESTER SCHEDULE:

Week 1: Welcome to the Sociological Study of Race & Ethnicity

September 2 & 4

Reading:

- American Sociological Association. The Field of Sociology [http://www.asanet.org/introtosociology/Documents/Field%20of%20sociology033108.htm](http://www.asanet.org/introtosociology/Documents/Field%20of%20sociology033108.htm)

Week 2: History of Race, Ethnicity & Racial Domination

September 9 & 11

Reading:


Listen: Remembering Jim Crow (50 minutes)
[http://download.publicradio.org/podcast/americanradioworks/2001/remembering.mp3?_kip_ip x=7%2001656351-128318211](http://download.publicradio.org/podcast/americanradioworks/2001/remembering.mp3?_kip_ip x=7%2001656351-128318211)

Week 3: The Social Construction of Race

September 14, 16 & 18

Reading:


Week 4: Prejudice, Discrimination and Privilege
September 21, 23 & 25
Reading:

Week 5: Family, Health and the Body
September 28 & 30, October 2
Reading:
Listen: Schaefer, Double Consciousness: “Ally’s Choice” Listen (8:45 to end)
http://www.radiolab.org/blogs/radiolab-blog/2013/jul/02/allys-choice/

Guest Lecturer, October 2
• Jerrett B. Jones, PhD Candidate in Sociology. Family formation among minority groups in the United States.

***Analysis Short-Essay #1 due Sunday, October 4. Focus on concepts and readings from weeks 1 through 5***

Week 6: Labor Markets & Economics
October 5, 7 & 9
Reading:

Week 7: Politics and Voting
October 12, 14 & 16
Reading:
1088-1093 (stop reading when you get to section entitled “An Empirical Approach”)


Week 8: Criminal Justice System

October 19, 21 & 23

Reading:

• Sociologists Issue Statement on Ferguson: 400 Sociologists Demand Justice and Change in Policing of Communities of Color.

Guest Lecturer, October 23

Alternative Room: 6210 Sewell Social Sciences Building

• Pamela Oliver, Chair of Sociology Department: “Mass Incarceration in Contemporary Wisconsin and the United States.”

Week 9: Space & Segregation

October 26, 28 & 30

Reading:

• Rothstein, R. 2014. The Making of Ferguson: Public Policies at the Root of its Troubles. Economic Policy Institute (Read pp. 1-12; until “Restrictive Covenants” & pp. 28-31; from “Public labor market policy contributing to segregation”)
• Fox, L. 2015. Same Income, Different Neighborhood, Contexts Blog, June 28.

***Exam #1 on Monday, October 26th in lecture***

Week 10: Education
November 2, 4 & 6
Reading:

***Analysis Short-Essay #2 due Sunday, November 8. Focus on concepts and readings from weeks 6 through 10***

Week 11: Relationships, Associations and Networks
November 9, 11 & 13
Reading:


**Week 12: Sports, Arts, Popular Culture and the Media**

**November 16, 18 & 20**

**Reading:**


**Week 13: Environment**

**November 23 & 25**

**Reading:**


Week 14: New!??! Minorities: Immigration and Citizenship
November 30; December 2 & 4

Reading:


Week 15: Toward Racial Justice
December 7, 9 & 11

Reading:


Guest Lecturer, December 11
Alternative Room: 6210 Sewell Social Sciences Building
- Young Gifted & Black Coalition Activists: Challenges & Hopes

***Exam #2 on Monday, December 14th in lecture***

***Analysis Short-Essay #3 due Thursday, December 17th. Focus on concepts and readings from weeks 11 through 15***

***Syllabus may change based on class needs as they arise***