



**NYU**

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

## **PADM-GP 4456**

# **Race and Voting in the United States**

**Spring 2023**

### **Course Description**

This course will introduce students to the history of and contemporary fight for voting rights in the United States. We will begin with a brief overview of historical struggles over access to the ballot box, up through and including the 15th Amendment and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The bulk of the course will focus on the contemporary context of voting rights, looking specifically at recent Supreme Court decisions, scholarship about white backlash against the growing political power of nonwhite Americans. Of course, white supremacy is not the whole story—throughout American history, nonwhite Americans have organized and fought for their rights as citizens. As such, we will pay close attention to the agency and power of these groups. This course specifically attends to how voting laws both reflect and codify structural racism in the American context.

### **Assignments**

This course will work best if you arrive ready to engage thoughtfully with the topics up for discussion each week. As such, there are relatively few formal assignments, freeing you up to prepare thoroughly for classroom discussions.

#### **Participation and Discussion (50%)**

- By 5PM on the evening before class meets, please submit a brief reflection on the week's readings to Brightspace. These can be questions you want to chew on with your classmates; other examples the readings made you think of; ideas you found challenging; or anything else you want to bring to our discussion.

#### **Discussion Leader (10%)**

- Depending on the size of the class, either groups or individuals will be responsible for leading the discussion each week. Discussion leaders are expected to read their classmate's responses posted on Brightspace, and to synthesize these responses. You are not expected to present on any of the readings, but please come prepared to tell the class

the concepts that your classmates found the most interesting, challenging, and which they are most interested in discussing.

### **Pre-Reflection Exercise (10%)**

- Before our second meeting, you will write a brief reflection (2 pages double-spaced) on what you are most interested in about our collective enterprise over our short 7 weeks together. I'm especially interested in what the idea of citizenship means to you; how you think of political power, both in the voting booth and outside of it; and how electoral politics does / does not fit in with your theory(ies) of social change.

### **Policy Analysis (30%)**

- Your final assignment will be to pick either a voting policy or a social movement that relates to access to the ballot box. You will place the policy in historical context and explain how it does or does not fit into the contested history of voting rights in America. You will also discuss how the particular policy draws / expands boundaries around who is considered a citizen deserving of political voice. This should be roughly 6 double-spaced pages.

## **A Note on a Participatory Classroom**

You'll notice that there is a fair amount of reading expected in this class. But doesn't the current moment call for serious study of these issues? Of course, like any class, stories and issues are left out (such as Native American voting rights, immigration, and the women's suffrage movement, to name just a few). On the first day of class, we will discuss the syllabus as a group, discussing whether there are ways to make the class more reflective of what *you* want to get out of it. After all, running a class on democracy as an instructional despot doesn't make any sense!

## **Schedule**

Week 1: What Does It Mean to be American? How do race and citizenship mutually create one another?

- Epps, Garrett. "Voting: Right or Privilege?" *The Atlantic*, September 18, 2012.
- Douglass, Frederick. "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" 1852.
- Hannah-Jones, Nikole. "America Wasn't a Democracy, Until Black Americans Made It One." *The New York Times*, August 14, 2019.
- Keyssar, Alexander. *Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*. New York, United States: Perseus (Hachette), 2008. **Chapter 1**.

Week 2: Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the VRA

- Du Bois, W. E. B. *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*. New York: Touchstone, 1995. **417—end of chapter**.

- Epperly, Brad, Christopher Witko, Ryan Strickler, and Paul White. “Rule by Violence, Rule by Law: Lynching, Jim Crow, and the Continuing Evolution of Voter Suppression in the U.S.” *Perspectives on Politics* 18, no. 3 (September 2020): 756–69.
- Berman, Ari. *Give Us the Ballot: The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America*. First edition. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015. **Prologue and Chapter 1**.
- Grofman, Bernard, Lisa Handley, and Richard G. Niemi. *Minority Representation and the Quest for Voting Equality*. Cambridge, GBR, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1992. **Pages 10—23**.
- [ACLU History of the VRA](#)
- **Optional:** Watch *Selma* (currently free on Peacock)

#### Week 3: *Shelby County v Holder* and Contemporary Backlash

- Berman, 2015. **Chapter 9**.
- *Shelby County v. Holder*, No. 12-96 (U.S. Supreme Court June 25, 2013).
- Komisarchik, Mayya, and Ariel White. “Throwing Away the Umbrella: Minority Voting after the Supreme Court’s *Shelby* Decision.” *Working Paper*, 2022.
- Lopez, Tomas. “‘*Shelby County*’: One Year Later.” Brennan Center for Justice, 2014.

#### Week 4: White Racial Identity and Trump-Era Backlash

- Jardina, Ashley, and Robert Mickey. 2022. “White Racial Solidarity and Opposition to American Democracy.” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 699 (1): 79–89.
- Miller, Steven V., and Nicholas T. Davis. 2021. “The Effect of White Social Prejudice on Support for American Democracy.” *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 6 (2): 334–51.
- Grumbach, Jacob. “Laboratories of Democratic Backsliding.” *American Political Science Review*, 2022.
- Morris, Kevin. “A Right Restricted: Racial Threat and Restrictive Voting Laws. *Working Paper*, 2022.

#### Week 5: Contemporary Policies: Criminal Legal System, Voter ID

- Soss, Joe, and Vesla Weaver. “Police Are Our Government: Politics, Political Science, and the Policing of Race–Class Subjugated Communities.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 20, no. 1 (2017): 565–91.
- Lee, Hedwig, Lauren C. Porter, and Megan Comfort. “Consequences of Family Member Incarceration: Impacts on Civic Participation and Perceptions of the Legitimacy and Fairness of Government.” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 651, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 44–73.
- Fraga, Bernard L, and Michael G Miller. “Who Does Voter ID Keep from Voting?” *The Journal of Politics*, July 15, 2021.

- Kuk, John, Zoltan Hajnal, and Nazita Lajevardi. “A Disproportionate Burden: Strict Voter Identification Laws and Minority Turnout.” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2022): 126–34.

#### Week 6: Fighting Back

- Olney, Charles. “Black Lives Matter and the Politics of Redemption.” *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, April 20, 2021: 1-21.
- Towler, Christopher C., and Christopher S. Parker. “Between Anger and Engagement: Donald Trump and Black America.” *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 3, no. 1 (March 2018): 219–53.
- Gutierrez, Angela, Angela X. Ocampo, Matt A. Barreto, and Gary Segura. “Somos Más: How Racial Threat and Anger Mobilized Latino Voters in the Trump Era.” *Political Research Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (December 1, 2019): 960–75.
- Walker, Hannah L. “Targeted: The Mobilizing Effect of Perceptions of Unfair Policing Practices.” *The Journal of Politics* 82, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 119–34.

#### Week 7: Presentations

## Brightspace

All announcements, resources, and assignments will be delivered through the Brightspace site. I may modify assignments, due dates, and other aspects of the course as we go through the term with advance notice provided as soon as possible through the course website.

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner’s Academic Code](#). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](#). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

## Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Student Accessibility

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) and click the “Get Started” button. You can also call or email CSD (212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

## **NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays**

[NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

## **NYU's Wellness Exchange**

[NYU's Wellness Exchange](#) has extensive student health and mental health resources. A private hotline (212-443-9999) is available 24/7 that connects students with a professional who can help them address day-to-day challenges as well as other health-related concerns.