



HIST 50b
Race and America
Perspectives on United States History, Origins to the Present

Brandeis University

Fall 2023

Tuesday/Friday 9:35am-10:55am Shiffman 201

Professor Abigail Cooper abcooper@brandeis.edu

Office Hours: TF 1-2pm Olin Sang 121

(or [brandeis.zoom.us/my/abigailcooper](https://brandeis.zoom.us/j/9876543210))

*Sign up [here](#) for office hour slot. Specify Zoom needs. Drop-ins accommodated when possible.

Course Description:

This is a lecture and discussion course on race and America we will undertake together at a time in the 21st century dubbed a "racial reckoning," though the substance of that reckoning is unfinished. In our endeavor to probe the past, we will put the history of slavery & freedom (1619 Project) and the study of race in America (Wilkerson) at the center of the conversation. We will grapple with how slavery made race in America, and how that shaped the political utility of racism. This reverberated for the racialization of other marginalized groups. We will engage questions of gradual evolutionary changes versus sudden revolutionary change. We will think critically about how and where we identify systemic power and human agency. We will sit in informed discomfort to confront heavy shared inheritances and hauntings of racial injustice. We will think deeply about how in studying change over time, we better understand how change is possible in our society today.

Readings:

The texts for this course (e-books available through LATTE; print books available for purchase at bookstore)

- Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins Of Our Discontents* (ISBN 9780593230251)
- Nikole Hannah-Jones et al., *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story* (ISBN: 9780593230572)

Also read forum posts by your classmates before class.

Assignments Over the Course:

1. **LATTE posts:** Before class, please post one reflection or question about the reading as a contribution to the conversation. Each student must write **at least 5** posts over the course of the semester. These posts serve as a launchpad to class

discussion. The student posting will usually get an opportunity to talk more about their post in class. *Unofficial guideline: Posts should be about 75-250 words (3 sentences - paragraph).*

2. **Writing Assignment:**

Event Response Papers: Each student will **submit four (4) one-page responses** to events/talks/panel discussions/docu-videos. The response paper should provide:

- a summary of the talk, its speaker, the main points of the talk/event AND
- an analytical engagement with the subject of the talk/event.

*SUGGESTION: Write this as though you were publishing this in *The Justice* as a write-up of the event for the broader Brandeis community readership. Be clear, concise, and engaging.

Please submit the one-page response paper within a week of the event (or your viewing of the event video). All four event write-ups must be submitted by Dec. 8.

*Late papers will receive the penalty of one half-grade reduction for each day late.

Exams:

There will be a midterm and final exam. Exams include short answer questions and a long essay. There will be review sessions for each exam. Midterm: 10/27 Final: 12/12

Evaluation:

Writing Assignment (4 Event Response Papers -- due by December 8) — 20%

Participation — 20%

LATTE Posts (5+ Reading Reflections) — 20%

Midterm Exam — 20%

Final Exam — 20%

The schedule for readings and lecture/discussion is posted below. We may also engage materials from [Professor Cooper's Google Site](#) – resources, videos, news updates, commentary, and the like. I welcome your engagement and questions on any and all materials there.

Prof. Cooper's Lectures:

- **Current Events Reflection**
- **Where Do We Start the Story?**
- **GEN/-ocide/-esis**
- **The Racialization of Slavery in America**
- **Evolutions and Revolutions**
- **Conjuring Emancipation**
- **Reconstruction and Its Legacies**
- **Reframing the Civil Rights Movement**
- **Shifts in American Political Parties Over Time**
- **Property and Race in America**
- **Historicizing BIPOC**

Schedule:

WEEK ONE: Sept. 1, 2023

Introduction to Course

WEEK TWO: Sep 5 & Sep 8, 2023

Reading:

Caste: The Man in the Crowd preface, pp. xv-xvii
(Part One: Toxins in the Permafrost and Heat Rising All Around)
CH 1 Afterlife of Pathogens, pp. 3-13
Vitals of History interlude, pp. 13-15
CH 2 Old House & Infrared Light, pp. 15-21
CH 3 An American Untouchable, pp. 21-33

1619 Project, Preface: "Origins"

Tuesday: LECTURE - **Current Events Reflection [2023: STOP W.O.K.E., STAY WOKE]**

Friday: DISCUSSION

WEEK THREE: Sep 12 2023 (Friday, Sept. 15 NO CLASS)

Reading:

Caste: Invisible Program interlude
(Part Two: Arbitrary Construction of Human Divisions)
CH 4 Long-Running Play & Emergence of Caste in America
CH 5 "Container We Have Built For You"
CH 6 Measure of Humanity

1619 Project, Chapter 1: "Democracy" by Nikole Hannah-Jones

Tuesday: DISCUSSION (from forum posts)

WEEK FOUR: Sep 19 & Sep 22, 2023

Reading:

Caste: CH 7 Through the Fog of Delhi to the Parallels in India & America
CH 8 Nazis and Acceleration of Caste
CH 9 The Evil of Silence
Foundation of Caste interlude

1619 Project, Chapter 5: "Dispossession" by Tiya Miles

Tuesday: LECTURE - **Where Do We Start the Story? & GEN/-ocide/-esis**

Friday: DISCUSSION

WEEK FIVE: Fri, Sep 29, 2023 (No Class Tues, Sep 26)

Reading: *1619 Project*, Chapter 2: "Race" by Dorothy Roberts

Friday: DISCUSSION

WEEK SIX: Oct 3 & Oct 6, 2023

Reading:

Caste: (Part Four: The Tentacles of Caste)

"Brown Eyes vs. Blue Eyes" pp. 167-171

CH 10 Central Miscasting, pp. 171-178

CH 11 Dominant Group Status Threat and the Precarity of the Highest Rung, pp. 178-190

CH 12 A Scapegoat Threat and the Precarity of the Highest Rung, pp. 190-202

1619 Project, Chapter 3: "Sugar" by Khalil Gibran Muhammad

Tuesday: LECTURE - **The Racialization of Slavery in America**

Friday: DISCUSSION

WEEK SEVEN: Oct 10 & Oct 13, 2023

Reading:

Caste: CH 13 The Insecure Alpha and the Purpose, pp. 202-208

CH 14 The Intrusion of Caste In Everyday Life, pp. 208-224

1619 Project, Chapter 6: "Capitalism" by Matthew Desmond

Tuesday: LECTURE - **Evolutions and Revolutions**

Friday: DISCUSSION

WEEK EIGHT: Oct 17 & 20, 2023

Reading:

~~*Caste*: CH 15 & CH 16~~

~~*1619 Project*, Chapter 13: "Church" by Anthea Butler~~

*** Just listen to the 1619 Podcast Episode 5, parts 1 & 2 on Sugar by Khalil Gibran Muhammad***

Tuesday: ~~LECTURE~~

DAY OF CATCH-UP/REST – PROF. COOPER HAS OFFICE HOURS FOR ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS

Friday: DISCUSSION

WEEK NINE: Oct 24 & Oct 27, 2023

Reading:

Caste: CH 17 On the Early Front Lines of Caste

CH 18 Satchel Paige and the Illogic of Caste

1619 Project, Chapter 4: "Fear" by Leslie Alexander and Michelle Alexander

Tuesday: LECTURE - **Conjuring Emancipation**

Friday: DISCUSSION

WEEK TEN: Oct 31 & Nov 3, 2023
MIDTERM EXAM

WEEK ELEVEN: Nov 7 & Nov 10, 2023

Reading: *1619 Project*, Chapter 10: "Punishment" by Bryan Stevenson

Tuesday: LECTURE - **Reconstruction and Its Legacies**

Friday: DISCUSSION

WEEK TWELVE: Nov 14 & Nov 17, 2023

Reading:

Caste:

(Part Six: Backlash)

CH 25 A Change in the Script, pp. 311-322

CH 26 Turning Point and the Resurgence of Caste, pp. 322-333

CH 27 The Symbols of Caste, pp. 333-350

CH 28 Democracy on the Ballot, pp. 350-353

CH 29 The Price We Pay for a Caste System, pp. 353-361

Tuesday: LECTURE - **Reframing the Civil Rights Movement**

Friday: DISCUSSION

WEEK THIRTEEN: Nov 21 (Last class before Thanksgiving Break)

TBD

WEEK FOURTEEN: Nov 28 & Dec 1, 2023

Reading:

Caste:

(Part Seven: Awakening)

CH 30 Shedding the Sacred Thread, pp. 361-365

"Radicalization of Dominant Caste," pp. 365-370

CH 31 The Heart is the Last Frontier, pp. 370-377

1619 Project, Chapter 16: "Traffic" by Kevin M. Kruse

Tuesday: LECTURE - **Shifts in American Political Parties Over Time | Property and Race in America**

Friday: DISCUSSION

WEEK FIFTEEN: Dec 5 & Dec 8, 2023

Reading:

Caste: Epilogue: A World Without Caste, pp. 377-387

1619 Project, Chapter 18: "Justice" by Nikole Hannah-Jones

Important Information

Tech Needs for this course

You will need a computer and internet access for this course. Please see Brandeis notifications on means to acquire equipment. For access to pandemic-related emergency funds, contact emergencyfunds@brandeis.edu.

Academic Integrity

Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. A student shall not submit work that is falsified or is not the result of the student's own effort. Infringement of academic honesty by a student subjects that student to serious penalties, which may include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension from the University or other sanctions (see section 20 of R&R). Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. A student who is in doubt regarding standards of academic honesty as they apply to a specific course or assignment should consult the faculty member responsible for that course or assignment before submitting the work. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Student Rights and Community Standards. Citation and research assistance can be found at [Brandeis Library Guides - Citing Sources](https://guides.library.brandeis.edu/c.php?g=301723) (<https://guides.library.brandeis.edu/c.php?g=301723>).

Accommodations

Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, I want to support you. In order to provide test accommodations, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance. I want to provide your accommodations, but cannot do so retroactively. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS <https://www.brandeis.edu/accessibility/>) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.

Library

The [Brandeis Library](https://www.brandeis.edu/library/about/index.html) collections and staff offer resources and services to support Brandeis students, faculty and staff. These include workshops, consultations, collaboration, materials and instruction on emerging trends in technologies such as machine learning, emerging trends in research such as data visualization, and emerging trends in scholarship such as open access. Librarians at the Circulation Desk, Research Help Desk, Archives & Special Collections, Sound & Image Media Studios, MakerLab, AutomationLab, and Digital Scholarship Lab are available to help you. <https://www.brandeis.edu/library/about/index.html>

Student Support

Brandeis University is committed to supporting all our students so they can thrive. The following resources are available to help with the many academic and non-academic factors that contribute to student success (finances, health, food supply, housing, mental health counseling, academic advising, physical and social activities, etc.). Please explore the many links on this [Support at Brandeis](https://www.brandeis.edu/support/undergraduate-students/browse.html) page (<https://www.brandeis.edu/support/undergraduate-students/browse.html>) to find out more about the resources that Brandeis provides to help you and your classmates to achieve success.

Teaching Continuity

This course is designed to maintain teaching and learning continuity. The professor will communicate via LATTE email in the event of such changes. For more information on best practices and LATTE/Zoom guidance, please see the Center for Teaching and Learning's website: Teaching Continuity at <https://www.brandeis.edu/teaching/teaching-continuity.html>.

