

Public Policy 475/750: Racial Foundations of Public Policy

Fall 2023: Tuesdays, 10am - 12:50pm in 1120 Weill Hall

Dom Adams-Santos, PhD (she/her)

You can call me Dr. Dom or Dr. Adams-Santos. Thanks!

Please email me at adamssan@umich.edu.

My office hours are Thursdays, 10am - 12pm in Rm 5312 or via Zoom.

Please visit [this link](#) to schedule an office hours appointment.

“As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another’s voices, in recognizing one another’s presence.” — bell hooks, *Teaching To Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*

Course Description

In 1903, W.E.B. Du Bois proclaimed that “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line.” Despite social movements and policy initiatives put forth to combat racial disparities and inequities, systemic racism persists in the contemporary moment, reminiscent of the struggles Du Bois wrote about a century earlier. Through the lens of racial justice and with a focus on anti-Black racism in the U.S. context, *Racial Foundations of Public Policy* will equip students to better understand the critical role of public policy in shaping our historical and contemporary social world.

This course examines the power of public policy in both bolstering and undercutting life chances and opportunities, and draws on historical and sociological analyses as critically important tools for us to measure, reflect, examine, and help us define the way forward. The course is designed around three modules: (1) *foundations*, (2) *cross-cutting issues*, and (3) *justice*. The first module introduces students to key historical facts and foundational concepts that will help guide our exploration of race and racism in the U.S. context. In the second module, students will engage multidisciplinary texts and perspectives that address deep challenges around racial inequity across four cross-cutting issues: reproduction; housing; education; and carcerality & punishment. The final module explores multiple pathways to justice that include policy, activism, and the interplay of the two. Throughout the course, we will take an intersectional approach to expand our knowledge and highlight strategies and tools that address the complex intersections between racism, misogyny, heterosexism, classism, ableism, and other forms of oppression.

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Course Objectives

1. Explain race as a social construct and global organizing mechanism.
2. Employ an intersectional approach to examine how race interacts with gender, class, sexuality, citizenship, and other social categories and systems to form and uphold social hierarchies.
3. Demonstrate how structural and cultural racism is reinforced through laws, policies, institutions, and everyday interactions.
4. Analyze the interplay between policy and activism in the pursuit of racial justice.
5. Effectively synthesize course materials through leading and participating in class discussions, writing weekly in-person reflection responses, conducting critical analyses, and crafting a final project.

Course Requirements

Participation & Discussion (20%)

In preparation for our class discussions, critically engage the assigned readings by using the following guiding questions:

1. Who is the author? What is their disciplinary background?
2. When was the piece written? What were notable events, laws, and policies taking place during the time in which the author wrote the piece?
3. What do you want to collectively discuss as you develop your understanding of the relationship between race and the policy issue in focus?
4. In what ways have laws, policies, and institutions created, ignored, or reinforced racial inequities? Alternatively, in what ways have laws, policies, and institutions served as mitigating forces and/or helped to dismantle racial hierarchies?

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5. What do the authors' inquiries and analyses reveal about the relationship between race and policy?

Group/Partner Panel Discussion (15%)

Once in the semester, students will participate in a panel discussion with 1-2 other students. You will meet prior to the class to organize your panel and discuss the material. During the class, each panelist will provide 5 minutes of commentary about the texts of the week, analyzing the presented ideas, offering critiques, and connecting the ideas to other assigned texts or larger societal events. A good rule of thumb is to assign one text or distinct parts of a text to one person.

After each panelist's brief opening remarks, panelists are collectively responsible for leading the class in discussion. You might pose questions to the class. You might present a brief media clip from YouTube or another source to further illustrate the themes of the week (please make sure that the clip is less than ten minutes and appropriate for a classroom environment). You will be graded on your preparedness and ability to *lead*, not just add to, insightful conversations and debates. Expect to utilize **60 minutes** of class time for your panel. Dr. Dom will utilize the remaining time.

Critical Analyses (40%)

Throughout the semester, students will write four 2-page (single-spaced, no more than 1,000 words) papers that critically analyze specific policy issues and prescriptions related to the social problems explored in this course. Additionally, students will be expected to use and cite course materials and external texts to support their arguments.

An example of one such paper could be an analysis of policy responses and initiatives to curb LGBTQ homelessness in LA county that integrates concepts from course texts focused on the relationship between race and housing.

Final Project (25%)

For the final project, students will submit a revised compilation of their four reflection papers based on feedback from their peers that incorporates concepts and frameworks from our final module on *justice*. Students will write a *preface* that contextualizes and

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outlines the synergies between the four policy issues explored in their reflection papers. In addition to the preface, students will write a *coda* that reflects on the policy prescriptions and/or analytic tools outlined in their reflection papers. What are the convergences and divergences across the policy prescriptions and/or analytic tools? How do those policy prescriptions and/or analytic tools align with or depart from ideas of justice explored in the final module? Final projects should be 10 single-spaced pages (no more than 5,000 words).

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Module 1: Foundations

Tuesday, August 29, 2023 – Introductions, Community Aspirations & Learning About Race

- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1903. "Of the Dawn of Freedom." In *The Souls of Black Folks*.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2014. "The Strange Enigma of Race in Contemporary America." In *Racism Without Racists*.
- Arao & Clemens. 2013. "From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces." In *The Art of Facilitation*.

Tuesday, September 5, 2023 – Understanding Racism I: Cultural Currents

- Coates, Ta-Nehesi. 2015. "Color-Blind Policy, Color-Conscious Morality." *The Atlantic*.
- Feagin, Joe. 2013. Chapters 1 and 2 in *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing*.
- Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. 2021. "A Culture of Racism." In *A Field Guide to White Supremacy*.

Tuesday, September 12, 2023 – Understanding Racism II: Structural Forces

- Hill Collins, Patricia. 2000. "Work, Family, and Black Women's Oppression." In *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*.

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- Omi, Michael & Winant, Howard. 2014. "Racial Politics and the Racial State." In *Racial Formation in the United States*.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2014. "The New Racism: The U.S. Racial Structure Since the 1960s." In *Racism Without Racists*.

Module 2: Cross-Cutting Issues Across the Life Course

ZOOM & Room 1230: Tuesday, September 19, 2023 – Reproduction I: Historical Perspectives

- Roberts, Dorothy. 1999. "Reproduction in Bondage." In *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty*. (Access online version at U-M Library)
- Roberts, Dorothy. 1999. "The Dark Side of Birth Control." In *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty*. (Access online version at U-M Library)
- [Birthing Reproductive Justice: 150 Years of Images and Ideas](#). University of Michigan Library.

Tuesday, September 26, 2023 – Reproduction II: Contemporary Perspectives

- Stafford, Kat. 2023. "[Why do so many Black women die in pregnancy?](#)" *Associated Press*.
- Wright Rigueur, Leah. 2021. "The Persistent Joy of Black Mothers." *The Atlantic*.
- Ross, Loretta and Rickie Solinger. "A Reproductive Justice History." *Reproductive Justice: A New Vision for the Twenty-First Century*.
- Ross, Loretta and Rickie Solinger. "Reproductive Justice in the Twenty-First Century." *Reproductive Justice: A New Vision for the Twenty-First Century*.

Tuesday, October 3, 2023 – Housing I: Historical Perspectives

- Rothstein, Richard. 2017. Chapters 1 - 4 in *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*.

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Tuesday, October 10, 2023 – Housing II: Contemporary Perspectives

- Pattillo, Mary. 2013. Introduction. In *Black Picket Fences: Privilege & Peril among the Black Middle Class*.
- Taylor, Keeanga-Yamattha. 2019. Chapters from *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*.
- Desmond, Matthew. 2017. “How Homeownership Became the Engine of American Inequality.” *The New York Times*.

Tuesday, October 17, 2023 – Fall Study Break: No Class - Enjoy your break!

Tuesday, October 24, 2023 – Education: Historical Perspectives

- Williams, Heather Andrea. 2007. “In Secret Places: Acquiring Literacy in Slave Communities.” In *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*.
- Brown, Karida. 2018. “The Colored School.” In *Gone home: Race and Roots through Appalachia*.
- Reece and O’Connell. 2015. “How the Legacy of Slavery and Racial Composition Shape Public School Enrollment in the American South.”

Tuesday, October 31, 2023 – Education: Contemporary Perspectives

- Lewis et al. 2015. “Conundrums of Integration: Desegregation in the Context of Racialized Hierarchy.”
- Shedd, Carla. 2015. Chapters from *Unequal City: Race, Schools, and Perceptions of Injustice*.

Tuesday, November 7, 2023 – Carcerality & Punishment: Historical Perspectives

- Wells-Barnett, Ida B. 1900. “Lynch Law in America.”
- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. Introduction - Chapter 2. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. (Access online via U-M Library)

Tuesday, November 14, 2023 – Carcerality & Punishment: Contemporary Perspectives

- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. Chapters 3 - 5. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. (Access online via U-M Library)
- Rankine, Claudia. 2014. *Citizen*.

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Module 3: Justice

Tuesday, November 21, 2023 – Activism: Changemaking from the Outside

- Benjamin, Ruha. 2022. Chapters from *Viral Justice: How We Grow the World We Want*.
- Ransby, Barbara. 2018. Introduction and Chapter 5, “Themes, Dilemmas, and Challenges.” In *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the 21st Century*.

Tuesday, November 28, 2023 – Policy & Activism: A Blended Approach to Changemaking

- Watkins-Hayes, Celeste. 2019. Chapters from *Remaking A Life: How Women Living with HIV Confront Inequality*.

Tuesday, December 5, 2023 – Reflections & Peer Review

- No readings.

Ford School Inclusivity Statement: Members of the Ford School community represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. We are committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community
- value one another’s opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature
- use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in Ford classes and across the UM community

Ford School Public Health Protection Policy: In order to participate in any in-person aspects of this course—including meeting with other students to study or work on a team

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project—you must follow all the public health safety measures and policies put in place by the State of Michigan, Washtenaw County, the University of Michigan, and the Ford School. Up to date information on U-M policies can be found [here](#). It is expected that you will protect and enhance the health of everyone in the Ford School community by staying home and following self-isolation guidelines if you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19.

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing: The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. We acknowledge that a variety of issues, both those relating to the pandemic and other issues such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, can directly impact students' academic performance and overall wellbeing. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available.

You may access counselors and urgent services at [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) and/or [University Health Service \(UHS\)](#). Students may also use the Crisis Text Line (text '4UMICH' to 741741) to be connected to a trained crisis volunteer. You can find additional resources both on and off campus through the [University Health Service](#) and through [CAPS](#).

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you believe you need accommodations for a disability, please reach out to the U-M [Services for Students with Disabilities \(SSD\)](#) office to help determine appropriate academic accommodations and how to communicate about your accommodations with your professors. Any information you provide will be treated as private and confidential.

Academic Integrity: The Ford School academic community, like all communities, functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. We hold all members of our community to high standards of scholarship and integrity. To accomplish its mission of providing an optimal educational environment and developing leaders of society, the Ford School promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty, plagiarism and misconduct. Academic dishonesty may be understood as any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community. Plagiarism involves representing the words, ideas, or work of others as one's own in writing or presentations, and failing to give full and proper credit to the original

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source. Conduct, without regard to motive, that violates the academic integrity and ethical standards will result in serious consequences and disciplinary action. The Ford School's policy of academic integrity can be found in the [MPP/MPA, BA](#), and [PhD Program](#) handbooks. Additional information regarding academic dishonesty, plagiarism and misconduct and their consequences is available [here](#).

Use of Technology: Students should follow instructions from their instructor as to acceptable use of technology in the classroom, including laptops, in each course. All course materials (including slides, assignments, handouts, pre-recorded lectures or recordings of class) are to be considered confidential material and are not to be shared in full or part with anyone outside of the course participants. Likewise, your own personal recording (audio or video) of your classes or office hour sessions is allowed only with the express written permission of your instructor. If you wish to post course materials or photographs/videos of classmates or your instructor to third-party sites (e.g. social media), you must first have informed consent. ***Without explicit permission from the instructor and in some cases your classmates, the public distribution or posting of any photos, audio/video recordings or pre-recordings from class, discussion section or office hours, even if you have permission to record, is not allowed and could be considered academic misconduct.***

Please review additional information and policies regarding academic expectations and resources at the Ford School of Public Policy at:

<https://intranet.fordschool.umich.edu/academic-expectations>

Use of Generative AI: In principle you may submit material that contains AI-generated content, or is based on or derived from it, as long as this use is ***properly documented***. This includes, for example, drafting an outline, preparing individual sections, combining elements and removing redundant parts, and compiling and annotating references. Your documentation should make the process transparent, and the submission itself should meet our standards of attribution and validation.