



**Racial and Ethnic Politics in the Obama Era**  
**Jimenez Building Room 0220**  
**Spring 2017**

**University of Maryland, College Park**  
**Department of Government and Politics**

Professor Antoine J. Banks  
Office: Chincoteague Room 4102  
Office Hours: Tues. 1pm-2pm  
Email: [abanks12@umd.edu](mailto:abanks12@umd.edu)  
Phone: 301-405-4114

TA: Noa Balf  
Office: Patterson Room 4123  
Office hours: Mon. 11am-1pm  
Email: [nbalf@umd.edu](mailto:nbalf@umd.edu)

In 2008 Americans witnessed a historical moment, Barack Obama, an African American, was elected the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States of America. Some pundits and scholars argue that we have truly entered a new “post-racial” era, in which the color of one’s skin is no longer an impediment to one’s opportunities or success in life. This course seeks to understand the meaning and significance of Barack Obama as the first African American president. The course examines the extent to which the United States of America has entered into a post-racial society. We also examine the policy challenges Obama has faced as the first African American president. One example is the passing of comprehensive health care reform. We discuss whether opposition to health care is driven by people’s racial attitudes or their different views about the role of government. Others topics that the course will examine are: how Obama became the first African American president; the strategies his campaign used to motivate citizens to the voting booth; the public’s reaction to Obama’s election; racial group identity during the Obama era; Trump’s victory as a response to Obama.

**Course Requirements**

The class consists of 2 lectures each week taught by Professor Banks and a discussion section each week taught by the teaching assistant (Noa Balf). Both the lecture and the discussion sections are required. Students are expected to come to discussion sections having done the readings for the week.

Your course grade is based on the following components:

- Two Reaction Papers (25%)
- Final Exam (30%)
- Group Presentation (20%)
- Class Participation (10%)
- Quizzes (administered in lecture) (15%)

*Final Exam* (cumulative): The exam will be an in class exam based on both the readings and the materials discussed in class up to that point – bring a blue book or two. **There will be NO early**

**or make-up exams except in cases of *extreme, documented* emergencies, observance of religious holidays, or properly documented University-sponsored planned activities.**

Missing the exam in all other cases will result in a score of zero on the exam.

*Group Assignment:* Students will be randomly assigned to a group of 5. At the end of semester, each group will present a 20-minute power point presentation on the ways in which we have and have not entered into a post-racial society with the election of Barack Obama in 2008. The group is responsible for using the material in the course to justify their arguments. Each group should use at least 4 sources (3 sources from the course and 1 outside source) to support their arguments. Before presenting in discussion section, the whole group has to have two meetings with the TA. These meetings are to provide feedback and guidance on the presentation before presenting to the class.

*Reaction Papers:* Reaction papers are short 3 -5 page papers that summarize your *analysis* of the readings from one of the weeks listed below (e.g., Who Elected Obama?, Blacks Politics in the Obama Era, or Tea Party Movement). *Reactions papers must be turned in during discussion section the week of the assigned readings.* The papers are structured to encourage you to develop your own arguments and evaluations of the topics in the course. Reaction papers are NOT just summaries of the readings. A good reaction paper contains a well-structured argument and should examine at least one of the following questions: How do the readings fit together? What important questions were answered by the readings? How well are these questions answered? What important questions are left unanswered? What shortcomings characterize this week's reading? How would you improve upon them?

Your reaction papers should:

- Be well written (proofread) and organized
- Contain original ideas and analysis of the readings
- Contain support for your claims (e.g., with well structured arguments, convincing examples, or references to other research)
- Discuss all of the week's readings under a chosen topic
- All references to other person's thoughts, ideas or terminology should be acknowledged using some standard form of citation such as Modern Language Association (MLA), Chicago Manual of Style (CMS), American Psychological Association (APA)
- Doubled spaced with 1" top and bottom margins and 1" or 1.25" left and right margins
- 12 point, Times New Roman font

Your reaction paper should **NOT**:

- Be over 5 pages
- Be a simple summary of the readings
- Offer simply stylistic comments about the readings

*Class Participation:* Please read all assigned materials and participate in class discussions. Your class participation grade consists of an equal weighting of attendance and *quality* of participation. *Quality* refers not to quantity but to close attention to the readings and course materials.

*Quizzes:* There will be 3 quizzes throughout the semester. They will test students on whether they have been doing the week's readings. The quiz will be administered in lecture. If you are late, we will still collect all quizzes 15 minutes after the start of lecture, regardless of successful completion. Any quiz missed due to an unexcused absence will result in a zero grade (with no exceptions). An absence will only be excused if you present the appropriate documentation to

your teaching assistant. If you miss a quiz due to an excused absence, you must contact your teaching assistant within one week following your return to class in order to arrange a makeup. Failure to arrange a makeup date within this one-week period will result in a zero grade for the missed quiz.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Students will develop a better understanding of racial diversity in the United States. They will also learn about the difficulty politicians experience in representing such a diverse population. These skills will help students in the future as they interact with a growing diverse population.
- Students will also learn the different methodological techniques scientists use to examine questions of race. They will read articles and books by leading experts that employ a multitude of techniques to answer their research questions, such as experimentation, large-scale surveys, and case studies.
- Students will also improve their writing skills. The course requires students to write two reactions papers. They will have to develop well-structured arguments and provide convincing examples to support their theory.

### **Professionalism**

Remember that this is an academic environment. Therefore, I ask that you minimize unnecessary disruptions (This includes, but it is not limited to, side conversations and cell phone calls), respect others beliefs (challenge the idea and not the person), be courteous and refrain from using profanity in the class. I also ask that you be proactive if any conflict occurs. This means notifying me immediately of any problems you are having in class.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

All written work must be your own, and must be in line with the University of Maryland regulations on academic honesty. You are expected to be well aware of these guidelines; ignorance does not excuse a violation of these guidelines.

The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit: <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html>.

### **Laptops, cellphones, and other distractions**

Please silence your cellphone and refrain from texting—which is distracting to me and to other students. Laptops should be used only for course-related reasons, such as taking notes. If I can hear you talking, it means you are too loud and are disturbing the class. If you repeatedly disrupt class by talking with friends, texting, surfing the web, etc., it will negatively affect your course participation grade.

### **Medically necessitated absences:**

The University of Maryland has a policy regarding medically necessitated absences from class. I will not take attendance during lecture, but the TA will take attendance in discussion section. Under the policy, we will accept a self-signed note from the student attesting to the date of the

illness as an excused absence from a single section. A student is allowed only TWO self-signed notes per class per semester.

A student who experiences a prolonged absence or an illness preventing attendance at a major scheduled grading event (see above) is required to provide written documentation of the illness from the Health Center or an outside health care provider, verifying the dates of the treatment and the time period during which the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities.

Students with disabilities: I will make every effort to accommodate students with disabilities. If you need accommodation, please let me know as early as possible, and please provide written documentation from the Disability Support Service office.

**Religious observances:**

Please provide advance notice if a religious observance will cause you to miss section or a major grading event so that we may make alternative arrangements ahead of time.

**Grade Appeals:**

All grade appeals will only be considered in writing. Should you believe that you deserve a higher grade on an exam, quiz, or the term paper, you must write a paragraph or so outlining your case and why the grade should be changed. You should submit this written appeal to your teaching assistant, who will then be happy to read your explanation and consider your exam, quiz, or paper. If you are still dissatisfied with your grade following your teaching assistant's appeal decision, you may then submit a written appeal to the professor. The deadline for consideration of any appeal will be one week following the receipt of the grade in question. There will be no exceptions to this policy. Of course, you may always ask questions for clarification, but I (or your teaching assistant) will not consider grade changes that you have not pursued in writing (or that you fail to submit before the one-week deadline).

**Readings**

As you do the readings, you might find it useful to keep the following questions in mind:

1. TYPE: What type of reading is this? Is it a theoretical piece? Is it a literature review? Is it an empirical piece?
2. PROPOSITIONS/HYPOTHESES: What are the propositions, or hypotheses, advanced by the author?
3. EVIDENCE: If it is a theoretical piece, what are the justifications? If it is a literature review, what are the sources? If it is an empirical piece, what data are analyzed?
4. CONCLUSIONS: What are the conclusions that the author reaches? Are they justified given the evidence presented?
5. REMARKS: What are your reactions to this piece? What questions does it answer? What does it leave unanswered? If you have criticisms, how would you improve upon the piece?

**Texts**

Each of these required texts are available for purchase on-line at Amazon.com.

- 1) Tesler, Michael & David Sears. 2010. *Obama's Race: The 2008 Election and the Dream of a Post- Racial America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Price: \$16)  
<http://www.amazon.com/Obamas-Race-Election-Post-Racial-American/dp/0226793834>
- 2) Harris, Fredrick C. 2012. *The Price of the Ticket: Barack Obama and the Rise and Decline of Black Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. (Price: \$13)  
[http://www.amazon.com/Price-Ticket-Transgressing-Boundaries-Communities/dp/0199325235/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1440769106&sr=1-1&keywords=The+Price+of+the+Ticket%3A+Barack+Obama+and+the+Rise+and+Decline+of+Black+Politics](http://www.amazon.com/Price-Ticket-Transgressing-Boundaries-Communities/dp/0199325235/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1440769106&sr=1-1&keywords=The+Price+of+the+Ticket%3A+Barack+Obama+and+the+Rise+and+Decline+of+Black+Politics)

In addition to these books, there are several required readings that are available via the library's e-journal collection or the course ELMS page. Readings should be read by the date they appear on the syllabus.

### **Class Schedule and Reading Assignments:**

#### **Part 1: Obama's Political Coalition and Political Strategy**

This section examines how Barack Obama became the first African American president of the United States. We also look at whether his election demonstrates we are in a post- racial era. We do this by looking at who voted for Obama. For example, did he build a broad coalition of supporters? We also take a look at Obama's campaign strategy and how he was able to motivate new voters to the polls. Specifically, week 2 focuses on who voted for Obama in 2008. Week 3 looks at Obama's message of hope and change and how it resonated with many new voters.

#### **Week 1 (January 26) Introduction**

#### **Week 2: Who Elected Obama?**

Jan. 31. Obama, Barack 2006. *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*. Chapter 7.

Feb. 2. Kinder, Donald R. and Allison Dale-Riddle. 2012. *The End of Race: Obama, 2008, and Racial Politics in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press Chapter 4.

Feb 3. Calmes, Jackie, and Megan Thee. "Voter Poll Find Obama Built a Broad Coalition." *New York Times*, Nov. 4<sup>th</sup> 2008. [Link to Article Below](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/05/us/politics/05poll.html)  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/05/us/politics/05poll.html>

#### **Week 3: How Obama Got elected?**

Feb 7. Tesler, Michael & David Sears. 2010. *Obama's Race: The 2008 Election and the Dream of a Post- Racial America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 2.

Feb 9. Tesler, Michael & David Sears. 2010. *Obama's Race: The 2008 Election and the Dream of a Post- Racial America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 3.

Feb 10. Thompson, Ginger. "Seeking Unity, Obama Feels Pull of Racial Divide." *New York Times* February 12, 2008. [Link to Article Below](#)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/12/us/politics/12obama.html?pagewanted=all>

## **Part 2: Deracialization**

This part of the course focuses on Obama's strategy of deracialization. Some scholars have argued that for black candidates to win national office (e.g. President) they must run a deracialized campaign. We examine whether Obama deracializing his campaign means that the country has moved past race. We take an in-depth look at how Obama's campaign avoided issues of race by focusing on the economy (week 4) and minimizing his racial identity (week 5).

### **Week 4: It's the Economy, not Race**

Feb. 14. Kenski, Kate, Bruce W. Hardy, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. 2010. *The Obama Victory: How Media, Money, and Message Shaped the 2008 Election*. Oxford Press: Chapter 8

Feb. 16.. Lewis-Beck, Michael S. and Richard Nadeau. 2009. "Obama and the Economy in 2008." *Perspective and Politics* pgs. 479-483.

### **Week 5: Obama's Racial Identity: Is he black?**

Feb 21. . Junn, Jane and David J. Anderson 2010. "De-Racializing Obama: White Voters' Evaluation of Minority Candidates," *American Politics Research*, 38:3 443-470.

Feb. 23.. Carter, Niambi and Pearl Ford Dowe. 2015. The Racial Exceptionalism of Barack Obama. *Journal of African American Studies* 19: 105-119.

\*\*\* Feb. 23.. Quiz 1 in Lecture\*\*\*

Feb. 24. Cilliza, Chris, Is Barack Obama 'black'? A majority of Americans say no. *Washington Post*.

## **Part 3: The New Black Politics**

This section of the course examines what Obama's election means for black politics. For example, we focus on what Obama's victory means for the status of blacks in America. Does his election signify that we are in post-racial America where blacks have the same opportunities as whites? Should blacks move away from a strategy of protest politics to electoral politics? Week 6 focuses on how blacks have moved away from black politics and embrace Obama's message of moderation and coalition building. Week 7 discusses the rise of black politics with the emergence of the Black Lives Matter Movement.

### **Week 6: Is Black Politics on the Decline?**

Feb. 28. Harris, Fredrick C. 2012. *The Price of the Ticket: Barack Obama and the Rise and Decline of Black Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapters 1 and 5.

March 2.. Harris, Fredrick C. 2012. *The Price of the Ticket: Barack Obama and the Rise and Decline of Black Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 6.

March 3. Bai, Matt. "Is Obama the End of Black Politics?" *New York Times* August 6, 2008.

Link Below

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/10/magazine/10politics-t.html?pagewanted=all>

### **Week 7: Blacks Politics on the Rise?**

March 7. Harris, Frederick 2015. *The Next Civil Rights Movement*. Dissent" Link Below

<https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/black-lives-matter-new-civil-rights-movement-fredrick-harris>

March 8. Banks, Antoine, Ismail White, and Brian McKenzie. "Black Politics: How Anger Influence The Political Actions Blacks Pursue to Reduce Racial Inequality" University of Maryland Manuscript

March 9. Packnett, Brittany. *Black Lives Matter Isn't Going Anywhere* TIME January 18, 2016. Link Below  
<http://time.com/4178280/black-lives-matter-2016/>

#### **Part 4: The End of Racism as we know it?**

This section of the course examines whether Obama's election signifies a decline in the impact of racism on American politics. Some pundits and scholars argue that for America to be in a post-racial society – racism should play a much smaller role in electoral politics. We look at whether racism had an effect on people's willingness to support Obama. In this section, we focus on two types of racism – explicit racial bias (a conscious form of prejudice) and implicit racial bias (an unconscious form of prejudice).

#### **Week 8: The Impact of Racism on Vote Choice**

March 14. Piston, Spencer. 2010. "How Explicit Racial Prejudice Hurt Obama in the 2008 Election." *Political Behavior* 32: 431-451.

March 16. Payne, Keith et al. 2010. "Implicit and explicit prejudice in the 2008 American presidential election" *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. 46: 367-374.

\*\*\* March 16. Quiz 2 in Lecture \*\*\*

March 17. Take Implicit Association Test: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>.

#### **Week 9: Spring Break**

March 19-26

#### **Party 5: Tea Party Movement**

During the Obama presidency, we all witnessed the emergence of the Tea Party. Some pundits argued that the Tea Party emerged out of resentment of having a Black president. Others contend that the party is a grassroots movement that emerged from a bad economy and expanding government. This section focuses on why did the Tea Party emerge? We also examine if the emergence of the movement means we are in a post racial era. Week 10 focuses on how the Tea Party came about. Week 11 focuses on who are the Tea Party's strongest supporters.

#### **Week 10: Tea Party Movement**

March 28. Zernike, Kate 2010. *Boiling Mad: Inside Tea Party America*. New York: Times Books. Chapters 1.

March 30. Zernike, Kate 2010. *Boiling Mad: Inside Tea Party America*. New York: Times

Books. Chapters 2.

March 31. Rich, Frank “The Billionaires Bankrolling the Tea Party” New York Times. August 28, 2010.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/29/opinion/29rich.html>

**Week 11: Who’s Drinking the Tea**

April 4. Parker, Christopher and Matt Barreto. 2013. *Change They Can’t Believe In: The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in America*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. Chapter 2.

April 6. Parker, Christopher and Matt Barreto. 2013. *Change They Can’t Believe In: The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in America*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. Chapter 5.

**April 7.** Thernstrom, Abigail. 2010. Racial Epithets and the Tea Partiers cont’d.

<http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/197423/racial-epithets-and-tea-partiers-contd/abigail-thernstrom>

**Part 6: Public Policy During the Obama Era**

This part of the course focuses on Obama’s top policy initiatives as president – health care reform and immigration. We discuss whether America is in a post racial society given the challenges the Obama administration has faced trying to implement policies to reduce racial and ethnic inequality. Specifically, we examine whether racial/ethnic bias or views about government played a significant role in people’s opposition to his policy agenda. Week 12 focuses on the health care reform bill and various changes it proposes to the health care system. This week also covers the roadblocks the Obama administration has experienced trying to get the bill passed in Congress. Week 13 discuss people’s opposition to bill and some of the factors driving their frustrations. Weeks 14 examines Obama’s stance on immigration. In week 15, we focus on Trump’s victory and whether it is a response to Obama’s policies.

**Week 12: Health Care Reform**

April 11. Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Theda Skocpol. 2010. *Health Care Reform and American Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press. Introduction, Chapters 1 and 4

April 13. Tesler, Michael. 2012. “The Spillover of Racialization into Health Care: How President Obama Polarized Public Opinion by Race and Racial Attitudes and Race.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 56: 690–704.

\*\*\* April 13. Quiz 3 in Lecture \*\*\*

**Week 13: “Obamacare”**

April 18. Tesler, Michael. Post-Racial or Most Racial? Race and Politics in the Obama Era. Chapter 5

April 20. Banks, Antoine J. 2014. “The Public’s Anger: White Racial Attitudes and Opinions Toward Health Care Reform” *Political Behavior*, 36: 493-514.



April 21. *Spector Town Hall Gets Rough and Rowdy*, Huffington Post, May 25, 2011. Link Below

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/08/11/crowds-get-rough-and-rowd\\_n\\_256475.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/08/11/crowds-get-rough-and-rowd_n_256475.html)

#### **Week 14: Immigration During Obama's Presidency**

April 25. Pew Hispanic Center, *As Deportations Rise to Record Levels, Most Latinos Oppose Obama's Policy*. December 28, 2011

April 27. Valenzuela, Ali , & Michelson, Melissa (2016). Turnout, Status, and Identity: Mobilizing Latinos to Vote with Group Appeals. *American Political Science Review*.

April 28. **Group Presentations in Discussion Section:** Groups will give a 20-minute presentation discussing whether they think we have entered or not have entered a post racial society. And, why?

#### **Week 15: Is Donald Trump a Response to the Policies of Obama?**

May 2. Schaffner, Brian, Matthew MacWilliams, and Tatishe Nteta. 2016. *Explaining White Polarization in the 2016 Vote for President: The Sobering Role of Racism and Sexism*. University of Massachusetts Manuscript

May 4. Tesler, Michael. *Views About Race Mattered More in Electing Trump Than In Electing Obama*. Nov. 22, 2016. Link to Article Below  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/11/22/peoples-views-about-race-mattered-more-in-electing-trump-than-in-electing-obama/?utm\\_term=.0d440df299ba](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/11/22/peoples-views-about-race-mattered-more-in-electing-trump-than-in-electing-obama/?utm_term=.0d440df299ba)

May 5. **Group Presentations in Discussion Section:** Groups will give a 20-minute presentation discussing whether they think we have entered or not have entered a post racial society. And, why?

#### **Week 16: Recap**

May 9. This class is a recap of how the course has made you think about whether we have entered a post-racial society with the election of Barak Obama.

**Final Exam- During Final Exam Week.**