

## Political Science 121 - Democracy in America

Spring Term 2021 – MW 11:50-1:05

Instructor: James Johnson

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Teaching Assistants

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I will start with an apology. This is not the course you signed up for. I designed Political Science 121 as a seminar for (mostly) first year students and have always taught it that way. That is how the course was advertised when you registered. This version of the course has (at the time of this writing) approximately 50 students. Hardly a seminar. That is not my doing. The decision to lift the cap on the course was made by departmental deciders way above my pay grade and despite my objections. The decision was made just before registration in the fall and for reasons that remain opaque to me. I am sorry.

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This is a course about democracy in contemporary America. This year we will start from a discussion of persistent, dire racial injustice. Our premise will be that racial minorities will not, on their own, successfully remedy the tangle of injustices captured by the idea of 'structural racism.' It is commonly recognized that real progress will require a multi-racial coalition. So, we will spend most of the course talking about white people, specifically 'white working class,' people. This is a difficult task because many of us have no access to working class life. And the very idea of treating others as an object of study is itself an inauspicious basis for making political progress. Hence our predicament. Nearly everyone recognizes significant racial injustice in the US. Sophisticated analyses also recognize progresin







## Course & Instructor Policies – The Fine Print

Policy on Attendance: Class . If you need to miss class for some reason, please let me know.

Statement on Academic Honesty: I operate on the assumption that every student in the course is familiar with and abides by the College policies on Academic Honesty. If you are not familiar with those policies, please go to the Board on Academic Honesty web page and familiarize yourself. You can find that page here: <http://www.rochester.edu/College/honesty/>. Ignorance of the policy is no excuse.

I will provide specific instructions for each course assignment. In any event, I take a very dim view of cheating and plagiarism of any sort. It makes me very cranky. So, I will refer any and all suspected instances to the Board on Academic Honesty. The easiest way to avoid such unpleasantness is to not succumb to temptations to cheat, plagiarize, bend the rules, exploit loopholes, and so forth. As a default, if you are unsure in any way about whether something is “allowed” ask me.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability of any sort that might impact your ability to meet the expectations laid out in this syllabus I encourage you to speak with me in person as early in the term as is possible. If you are not comfortable speaking to me directly, you should contact the Office of Disability Services who can assist you in making your needs clear to myself and your other teachers. You can find them here: (

Week One

Feb 1 - Introduction

Feb 3 - Anderson

Week Two

Feb 8 - Holmes

Feb 10 - Taylor (Chaps 1-4)

Week Three

Feb 15 - Taylor (Chaps 5-7)

Feb 17 - Reynolds; M4BL; Smith

Week Four

Feb 22 - Carnes/Lupu

Feb 24 - Texiera/Rogers

Week Five

March 1 -

