

# Special Topics in International Relations

## Race in International Politics

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### Course Description and Goals

In 1903, W.E.B. Du Bois wrote that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men.” How valid and useful was this description of the emerging international order a century ago? And more importantly, does this ‘color line’ still matter in today’s international relations, as we face rising tensions over the stability and legitimacy of the US-led liberal order, resurgence of racialized conflicts at home and abroad, and continued scholarly and public debates on race?

To answer these questions, the course will examine (1) both the traditional and current approaches to race in IR, (2) ongoing cross-disciplinary scholarly debates on race, (3) key theories and concepts of race (e.g., racialization, double consciousness) and their application to international politics, (4) the role of race in inter-state conflict and cooperation, international law, and US grand strategy, and (5) the future of race relations and the concept of ‘race’ itself.

The course will draw from theories and concepts across humanities and social sciences, including philosophy, sociology, political science, and psychology. During each class, students will gain a better understanding of key concepts and theories from the assigned readings through a mix of quizzes, [guided reading](#), [peer instruction](#), open discussion, [in-class experiments](#), and [visual learning](#) (utilizing movie clips, diagrams, maps, etc.). After taking this course, students will be able to form informed opinions on such questions as ‘What explains recurring racialized conflict between human groups?’ and ‘Are we going to have different conceptions of ‘race’ in a future international order?’

### COURSE OUTLINE

- Week 1.** Why Study Race in International Relations?
- Week 2.** What Is Race?
- Week 3.** The Third Wave of Research on Race in IR
- Week 4.** Key Concepts I: *Dehumanization, Exceptionalism & Essentialism*
- Week 5.** Key Concepts II: *Double Consciousness & Linked Fate*
- Week 6.** Key Concepts III: *Racialization & Resentment*
- Week 7.** Race, Conflict, and War
- Week 8.** Race, Alliances, and Cooperation
- Week 9.** Race, International Order, and US Grand Strategy
- Week 10.** Race, Human Rights, and International Law
- Week 11.** Wrapping Up: Predicting the Future

## **Prerequisites**

The class is suitable for students who have taken introductory courses on international relations theory. Knowledge of social scientific research design and methods is recommended.

## **Assignments**

Students are expected to come to class having carefully read the assigned readings for the day and to contribute to discussions through insightful questions and comments. To have a fruitful collective learning experience, it is important that we maintain a respectful atmosphere in the classroom. Arguments also need to be well reasoned and based on evidence. In Week 1, we will discuss best strategies for reading and preparing for class discussions.

Evaluations will be based on weekly in-class quizzes (20%), class participation (10%), a midterm exam (30%), an oral examination\* (10%), and a final project\* (30%).

Final Course Grades: 98-100 (A+), 93-98 (A); 90-92 (A-); 87-89 (B+); 83-86 (B); 80-82 (B-); 77-79 (C+); 73-76 (C); 70-72 (C-); 67-69 (D+); 60-66 (D); F < 60.

## **COURSE READINGS & GUIDELINES**

### **Week 1. Why Study Race in International Relations?**

We will start the course by examining the latest debate in the field of International Relations on whether scholars need to treat race as relevant (or instead epiphenomenal) to international politics—from the formation of individual-level foreign policy opinion to the evolution of inter-state relationship and international order. We will discuss latest events and trends in international politics (e.g, US-China rivalry) that suggest the relevance of racial(ized) identities and worldviews, and then engage critical points raised by Snyder (2023). From this session, you will have a better understanding of why and how race matters in international politics and how IR scholars have approached the subject with diverse perspectives.

#### **Required Readings:**

Lake, David. 2016. "White Man's IR: An Intellectual Confession." *Perspectives on Politics*.

Zvobgo, Kelebogile, and Meredith Loken. 2020. "Why Race Matters in International Relations." *Foreign Policy*.

Snyder, Jack. 2023. "Is Race Central to International Relations?" *Security Studies*.

Kim, D.G., and Kevin Bustamante. 2024. "Is 'Race' Essential to International Relations? A Reply to Snyder (2023)."

Shilliam, Robbie. 2023. "International Security and Black Politics: A Biographical Note Toward an Institutional Critique." *Security Studies*.

#### **Recommended Readings:**

Fisher, Richard. 2024. "[How To Do Mental Time Travel](#)." *Psyche*.

Kelebogile et al. 2023. "Race and Racial Exclusion in Security Studies: A Survey of Scholars." *Security Studies*.

Shilliam, Robbie. 2020. "Race and Racism in International Relations: Retrieving a Scholarly Inheritance." *International Politics Reviews*.

## **Week 2. What Is Race?**

To empirically study how race matters in international politics, we need to define the term first. This week, we will turn to long-standing philosophical and scientific debates on the definition of race and its connection with related, and sometimes overlapping, concepts such as ethnicity, nation, and civilization. Discussions will focus on developing your own informed opinion about the use of the term 'race' and its political and moral implications.

### Required Watch:

["The Origin of Race in the USA"](#)

### Required Readings:

Gannon, Megan. 2016. "[Race Is a Social Construct. Scientists Argue](#)." *Scientific American*.

Blum, Lawrence. 2010. "Racialized Groups: The Sociohistorical Consensus." *The Monist*.

Mallon, Ron. 2012. "Was Race Thinking Invented in the Modern West?" *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*.

Kim, Sunmin. 2024. *The Unruly Facts of Race: The Politics of Knowledge Production in the Early Twentieth Century Immigration Debate*. Chapter 1 ("Race-Thinking").

Heng, Geraldine. 2015. "Reinventing Race, Colonization, and Globalisms across Deep Time: Lessons from the Longue Durée."

Brubaker, Rogers. 2009. "Ethnicity, Race, and Nationalism." *Annual Review of Sociology*.

### Recommended Readings:

["Race"](#). *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Isaac, Benjamin. 2004. *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*. Princeton University Press. Conclusion (pp503-516).

Keevak, Michael. 2011. *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking*. Princeton University Press. Introduction (pp1-22).

Ignatiev, Noel. 2008. *How the Irish Became White*. Routledge. Introduction.

Loveman, Mara. 1999. "Is 'Race' Essential?" *American Sociological Review*.

Brubaker, Rogers, Mara Loveman, and Peter Stamatov. 2004. "Ethnicity as Cognition." *Theory and Society*.

James, Michael R. 2012. "The Political Ontology of Race." *Polity*.

["Alain Locke."](#) *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (6. "Philosophy of Race")

### **Week 3. The Third Wave of Research on Race in IR**

From this week, you will understand the history of how scholars have approached issues of race in international politics (the 'First' and 'Second Waves') and the broader historical, disciplinary, and political background behind growing attention to race as central to both domestic and global politics (the 'Third Wave'). After reviewing some of the latest empirical works, we will discuss continuing debates and challenges on how best we can study--both theoretically and empirically--race in IR.

#### Required Readings:

Getachew, Adom, and Jennifer Pitts. 2022. *W.E.B. Du Bois: International Thought*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters TBD.

Freeman, Bianca, D.G. Kim, and David A. Lake. 2022. "Race in International Relations: Beyond the 'Norm Against Noticing'." *Annual Review of Political Science*.

Vitalis, Robert. 2000. "The Graceful and Generous Liberal Gesture: Making Racism Invisible in American International Relations." *Millennium*.

Green-Riley, Naima, and Andrew Leber. 2023. "Whose War Is It Anyway? Explaining the Black-White Gap in Support for the Use of Force Abroad." *Security Studies*.

Carson, Austin, Eric Min, and Maya Van Nuys. 2024. "Racial Tropes in Foreign Policy: A Computational Text Analysis." *International Organization*.

Kim, D.G. 2024. "Anti-Asian Racism and the Rise of Hawkish Mass Opinion in China." *Political Science Quarterly*.

#### Recommended Readings:

Henderson, Errol A. 2013. "Hidden in Plain Sight: Racism in International Relations Theory." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*.

Freeman, Bianca. 2023. "Race in IR: Toward Empirical Study." *International Politics*.

Doty, Roxanne Lynn. 1993. "The Bounds of 'Race' in International Relations." *Millennium*.

Bustamante, Kevin. 2024. "Waltz with Me: Structural Realism and Structural Racism in International Politics." *Security Studies*.

### **Week 4. Key Concepts I: Dehumanization, Exceptionalism & Essentialism**

For the next two weeks, we will turn to some of the key concepts in the cross-disciplinary scholarship on race and apply the concepts to theories and issues of international politics, starting with the concepts of dehumanization/infrahumanization, exceptionalism, and

psychological essentialism—all key elements of racialized inter-group (and by extension inter-state) conflicts.

Required Readings:

Smith, David L. 2011. *Less Than Human: Why We Demean, Enslave and Exterminate Others*. St. Martin's Press. Chapters 2,4, and 6.

Haslam, Nick, and Steve Loughnan. 2014. "Dehumanization and Infrahumanization." *Annual Review of Psychology*.

Krebs, Ron, Halvard Leira, Hilde Restad, and Ole Jacob Sending. 2024. "Comparative Exceptionalisms."

Quoidbach, Jordi, Daniel T. Gilbert, and Timothy D. Wilson. 2013. "[The End of History Illusion](#)." *Science*.

Newman, George E., and Joshua Knobe. 2019. "The Essence of Essentialism." *Mind and Language*.

["How the West Became WEIRD."](#)

Recommended Readings:

Johnston, Alastair Iain., and D.G. Kim. 2024. "Exceptionalism and the US-China Security Dilemma."

Bailey, April H., Joshua Knobe, and George E. Newman. 2021. "Value-based Essentialism: Essentialist Beliefs About Social Groups with Shared Values." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.

James, Michael R. 2020. "Essentialism or Threat Perception: On Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity*." *Philosophy and Public Issues*.

**Week 5. Key Concepts II: Double Consciousness & Linked Fate**

This week will continue delving into the key concepts in the race scholarship: double consciousness, first popularized by W.E.B. Du Bois in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and linked fate, a concept in the study of group consciousness and solidarity first proposed by Michael Dawson. The class will focus on applying these concepts to the context of international politics.

Required Readings:

Itzigsohn, Jose, and Karida Brown. 2015. "Sociology and the Theory of Double Consciousness: W.E.B. Du Bois's Phenomenology of Racialized Subjectivity." *Du Bois Review*.

Getachew, Adom, and Jennifer Pitts. 2022. *W.E.B. Du Bois: International Thought*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters TBD (on Pan-Africanism and solidarity with Asia).

Dawson, Michael C. 2020 [1994]. *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics*. Princeton University Press.

Landry, Alexander P, Elliott Ihm, and Jonathan W. Schooler. 2021. "Hated But Still Human: Metadehumanization Leads to Greater Hostility Than Metaprejudice." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*.

Zarakol, Ayse. 2010. *After Defeat: How the East Learned to Live with the West*. Cambridge University Press.

Crean, Jeffrey. 2023. *The Fear of Chinese Power: An International History*. Chapters 1 & 10

### Recommended Readings:

["Double Consciousness."](#) *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma*. Chapter 1.

["The Wen Ho Lee Case."](#) *Science* (also check [this video](#))

PBS. 2023. ["Plague at the Golden Gate."](#)

Han, Enze, and D.G. Kim. 2024. "The Chinese Exclusion Act." *East Asia in the World, Vol II*.

Gilroy, Paul. 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Harvard University Press.

Walker, Sheena Myong. "Empirical Study of the Application of Double-Consciousness Among African-American Men." *Journal of African American Studies*.

Logel et al. 2009. "The Perils of Double Consciousness: The Role of Thought Suppression in Stereotype Threat." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*.

Thomas, James M. *The Souls of Jewish Folk: W.E.B. Du Bois, Anti-Semitism, and the Color Line*. University of Georgia Press. Introduction.

Getachew, Adom. 2021. "The New Black Internationalism." *Dissent*.

### **Week 6. Key Concepts III: Racialization & Resentment**

This week, we will wrap up the (engaged) survey of key concepts in race scholarship by examining a comprehensive framework of racialization and its application to international politics. The related concept of resentment will also be discussed in detail, synthesizing latest studies on racialized resentment in political science, philosophy, and psychology.

### Required Readings:

Johnston, Alastair Iain, and D.G. Kim. 2024. "Racialization and the Security Dilemma."

Wilson, David, and Darren W. Davis. 2021. *Racial Resentment in the Political Mind*. The University of Chicago Press. Chapters 3 & 8.

Katsafanas, Paul. 2023. ["How Nietzsche's Insights Can Help Fight Fanaticism."](#) *Psyche*.

Dower, John. 1987. *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. Pantheon. Chapter 10 (pp 262-292).

Ward, Steven. 2013. "Race, Status, and Japanese Revisionism in the Early 1930s." *Security Studies*.

Gries, Peter H. 2004. *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy*. University of California Press.

### Recommended Watch:

[Origin \(2023\)](#)

### Recommended Readings:

Gans, Herbert J. 2017. "Racialization and Racialization Research." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.

Maass, Richard W. 2023. "Racialization and International Security." *International Security*.

Johnston, Alastair Iain. "Is Chinese Exceptionalism Undermining China's Foreign Policy Interests?" in *The China Questions*.

Kinder, Donald, and Lynn M. Sanders. *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*. The University of Chicago Press. Chapter 5 (Subtle Prejudice for Modern Times).

Katsafanas, Paul. 2022. "Group Fanaticism and Narratives of Resentment." In *The Philosophy of Fanaticism*.

Fukuyama, Francis. 2018. *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

## **Week 7. Race, Conflict, and War**

For the next four weeks, we will apply the theories and concepts from the previous sessions to some of the key questions in International Relations, starting with the origins and consequences of inter-state conflict and war.

### Required Readings:

Copeland, Dale C. 2000. *The Origins of Major War*. Cornell University Press.

Barber, Alexander D. *Global Race War: International Politics and Racial Hierarchy*. Oxford University Press.

Dower, John. 1987. *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. Pantheon. Chapter 1 (pp 3-14).

Mercer, Jonathan. 2023. "Racism, Stereotypes, and War." *International Security*.

Buzas, Zoltan I. 2013. "The Color of Threat: Race, Threat Perception, and the Demise of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902-1923)." *Security Studies*.

### Recommended Readings:

Dresser, Sam. 2024. "[Chastising Little Brother: Why Did Japanese Confucians Enthusiastically Support Imperial Japan's Murderous Conquest of China, the Homeland of Confucius?](#)" Aeon.

Johnston, Alastair Iain. 2023. "Racism and Security Dilemmas." *International Politics*.

Streich, Philip, and Jack S. Levy. 2016. "Information, Commitment, and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905." *Foreign Policy Analysis*.

Weingartner, James. 1996. "War against Subhumans: Comparisons between the German War against the Soviet Union and the American War against Japan, 1941-1945." *The Historian*.

## **Week 8. Race, Alliances, and Cooperation**

Extending our discussion from the previous week, we will focus on how racialized identity can facilitate alliance-formation and cooperation between states, focusing on the rare historical case of the peaceful power transition between Great Britain and the United States. You will also be introduced to the latest psychological works and debates on race and human coalition-building.

### Required Readings:

Vucetic, Srdjan. 2011. "A Racialized Peace? How Britain and the US Made Their Relationship Special." *Foreign Policy Analysis*.

Edelstein, David M. 2017. *Over the Horizon: Time, Uncertainty, and the Rise of Great Powers*. Cornell University Press. Chapter 3 "The Rise of the United States".

Bell, Duncan. 2014. "Before the Democratic Peace: Racial Utopianism, Empire, and the Abolition of War." *European Journal of International Relations*.

Hemmer, Christopher J., and Peter J. Katzenstein. 2002. "Why Is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism." *International Organization*.

Lake, David A. 2024. *Indirect Rule: The Making of US International Hierarchy*. Cornell University Press.

### Recommended Readings:

Kurzban, Robert, John Tooby, and Leda Cosmides. 2001. "Can Race Be Erased? Coalitional Computation and Social Categorization." *PNAS*.

## **Week 9. Race, International Order, and US Grand Strategy**

How best can the U.S. promote the "universal" values of human freedom—both at home and abroad, while securing its global military and economic dominance? Do hegemony inevitably face the dilemma of promoting its own "superior" cultures and simultaneously alienating (or "racializing") potential hegemonic challengers? This week will focus on how race matters in the rise and fall of great powers and resultant international order, touching on power transition theory and the ongoing US grand strategy debate.

### Required Readings:

Buzas, Zoltan I. 2020. "Racism and Antiracism in the Liberal International Order." *International Organization*.



Flaherty, Thomas M., and Ronald Rogowski. 2021. "Rising Inequality as a Threat to the Liberal International Order." *International Organization*.

Adler-Nissen, Rebecca, and Ayse Zarakol. 2020. "Struggles for Recognition: The Liberal International Order and the Merger of Its Discontents." *International Organization*.

Gilpin, Robert. 1981. *War and Change in World Politics*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 & 5.

Reus-Smit, Christian. 2017. "Cultural Diversity and International Order." *International Organization*.

Avey, Paul C., Jonathan N. Markowitz, and Robert J. Reardon. 2018. "[Disentangling Grand Strategy: International Relations Theory and U.S. Grand Strategy](#)." Texas National Security Review.

### Recommended Readings:

Farrell, Henry, and Abraham L. Newman. 2021. "The Janus Face of the Liberal International Order: When Global Institutions Are Self-Undermining." *International Organization*.

Adler, Emanuel, and Alena Drieschova. "The Epistemological Challenge of Truth Subversion to the Liberal International Order." *International Organization*.

Brown, Owen B. 2024. "The Underside of Order: Race in the Constitution of International Order." *International Organization*.

Deborah W. Larson, Thazha V. Paul, and William C. Wohlforth. 2014. "Status and World Order," in *Status in World Politics*.

Wohlforth, William C. 2011. "Gilpinian Realism and International Relations." *International Relations*.

Johnston, Alastair Iain. 1995. *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*. Princeton University Press. Chapters 6 & 7.

Posen, Barry R., and Andrew L. Ross. 1996. "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy." *International Security*.

Moser, Cody, and Paul E. Smaldino. 2023. "[Innovation-facilitating Networks Create Inequality](#)." *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*.

## **Week 10. Race, Human Rights, and International Law**

Building on the previous week's focus on international order, we will focus on the centrality of race to the origins and evolution of international legal and human rights regimes. Through this session, you will have a better understanding of how racialized hierarchy and worldviews have shaped the legal foundations and contemporary challenges of the US-led liberal international order.

### Required Readings:

Pitts, Jennifer. 2018. *Boundaries of the International: Law and Empire*. Harvard University Press.

Buzas, Zoltan I. 2018. "Is the Good News About Law Compliance Good News About Norm Compliance? The Case of Racial Equality." *International Organization*.

Buzas, Zoltan I., and Lotem Bassan-Nygate. 2024. "Race, Shaming, and International Human Rights." *American Journal of Political Science*.

### Recommended Readings:

Buzas, Zoltan I. 2020. *Evading International Norms: Race and Rights in the Shadow of Legality*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Getachew, Adom. 2019. *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*. Princeton University Press.

Terman, Rochelle. 2023. *The Geopolitics of Shaming: When Human Rights Pressure Works-and When It Backfires*. Princeton University Press.

Getachew, Adom. 2019. "The Limits of Sovereignty as Responsibility." *Constellations*.

Freeman, Bianca. 2023. Racial Hierarchy and Jurisdiction in U.S. Status of Forces Agreements. *Security Studies*.

## **Week 11. Wrapping Up: Predicting the Future**

We will wrap up the course by engaging some of the most stimulating debates in both race and IR literatures: What is the future status of 'race' as a human social category? If the eliminativists are wrong, what will 'race' mean in the future? What does the future look like for the relationship between the 'West' and the 'Rest'? Are we heading towards a racialized world of inter-civilizational conflicts? Or are we all inherently prone to the 'end of history illusion' (Week 4)?

### Required Readings:

Buzan, Barry, and Richard Little. 2000. *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations*. Oxford University Press.

Pitts, Jennifer. 2017. "Irony in Adam Smith's Critical Global History." *Political Theory*.

Huntington, Samuel P. 1993. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*.

Katzenstein, Peter K (ed). 2010. *Civilizations in World Politics: Plural and Pluralist Perspectives*. Routledge. Introduction.

Fukuyama, Francis. 1989. "The End of History?" *The National Interest*.

### Recommended Readings:

Fisher, Richard. 2024. "[How To Do Mental Time Travel](#)." *Psyche*.

Allinson, Jamie C., and Alexander Anievas. 2009. "The uses and Misuses of Uneven and Combined Development: An Anatomy of a Concept." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*.

Zarakol, Ayse. 2022. *Before the West: The Rise and Fall of the Eastern World Orders*. Cambridge University Press.

Morris, Ian. 2010. *Why the West Rules-For Now: The Patterns of History, and What They Reveal About the Future*. Macmillan.

Parker, Geoffrey. 1988. *The Military Revolution: Military Revolution and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800*.

North, Douglass C. 2005. *Understanding the Process of Economic Change*. Princeton University Press.

Larson, Deborah Welch. 2022. "Is the Liberal Order on the Way Out? China's Rise, Networks, and the Liberal Hegemon." *International Relations*.

["Sapiens in the Mist"](#)