

Race & Ethnicity Syllabus

SOCI 270 – Fall 2026

“Prejudice is not intrinsic to a particular skin color or racial type, and, indeed, many immigrants never experienced it in their native lands. It is by virtue of moving into a new social environment, marked by different values and prejudices, that physical features become redefined as a handicap.”

- Portes and Zhou (1993: 83)

Professor: Dr. Erick Axxe (he/they)

Email: axxe@hendrix.edu

Office: Mills 220

Office phone: 501.450.1445

Class time: MWF 11:10AM-12:00PM

Class location: Mills B

Student hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00–3:00 p.m. Feel free to stop by anytime during these hours. [Appointments](#) are encouraged and will receive priority.

Course Description

This course examines race and ethnicity through a sociological lens. Rather than treating racial and ethnic categories as fixed characteristics of individuals or groups, we will examine how these categories are *socially constructed* and how they acquire meaning through laws, policies, institutions, organizations, markets, and everyday interactions. We will also examine how these processes distribute opportunities and resources unequally and shape how people understand racial and ethnic differences.

The course is organized around a central sociological question: **How are race and racial inequality produced, reproduced, and changed?** We will begin by examining the social construction of race and sociological theories of racism. We will then consider how immigration and citizenship policies contribute to racialization; how racial, religious, and national boundaries define belonging; and what happens when explicitly racial rules change but institutional inequalities persist. Later sections examine education, housing and wealth, organizational diversity, and the criminal legal system.

Arkansas provides an important recurring case throughout the course. We will examine white nationalism in twentieth-century Arkansas, the Little Rock integration crisis, urban renewal and the transformation of Little Rock’s West Ninth Street, and contemporary racial patterns in the state. These cases will be considered alongside national and comparative examples to identify broader sociological processes.

Throughout the semester, we will repeatedly ask a simple question: **What social processes produce the racial patterns we observe?** Answering this question requires moving beyond descriptions of group differences to identify the historical, political, institutional, and economic processes that produce them.

This course meets in person three times a week (see above for specific details). Throughout the semester, you will complete journal responses, participate in reading polls and in-class activities, complete four quizzes and a mapping analysis, and take a cumulative final exam. Course materials will be available via Microsoft Teams; the materials will be organized within the “Classwork” channel within Teams.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain race and ethnicity as socially constructed categories whose meanings change across historical and institutional contexts.
- Apply sociological concepts and theories to explain historical and contemporary processes of racialization and racial inequality.
- Analyze how policies and institutions contribute to the creation and reproduction of racial categories and racial inequalities.
- Explain how formally race-neutral policies, markets, organizations, and individual choices can reproduce racialized outcomes.
- Use sociological evidence to distinguish between descriptions of racial group differences and explanations of the social processes that produce those differences.
- Compare different forms of racial change, including representation, inclusion, resilience, institutional reform, and structural transformation.

Classroom Etiquette

Please do your best to support each other and the instructor by giving your full attention and participation during class. Avoid engaging in distracting behaviors. You are strongly encouraged to ask questions and participate in discussions. For productive discussions, it is essential that both students and the professor come prepared by having completed the assigned readings. Differing points of view should be treated with respect. Disagreements are expected, and expressing different viewpoints is encouraged, provided it is done respectfully. Hostile or derogatory comments or behaviors will not be tolerated. **Technology (phone, laptop, tablet, etc.) is not permitted during class time unless otherwise stated.**

Required Materials and/or Technologies

- Golash-Boza, Tanya Maria. 2022. *Race and Racisms: A Critical Approach*. 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
 - Do not purchase the “brief edition”

- Please purchase the edition that you can afford—only the statistics are outdated in older editions. (The page numbers will be different, but the chapter numbers are the same.)
- Contact Dr. Axxe if you have trouble accessing the textbook.
- All other materials (readings, videos, podcasts, etc.) will be posted on Teams.

Organization of the Course

The course is organized into seven sections, each centered on a sociological question:

1. Constructing race: How are racial categories and meanings socially constructed, and how do they become consequential for social inequality?
2. Immigration policy and racial scripts: How do state policies shape racial categories, migration, and the meanings attached to racialized groups?
3. Belonging and nationalism: How are racial, religious, and national boundaries used to define who belongs?
4. Education, policy, and racial meanings: What happens when formal racial rules change but institutions and interpretations of inequality do not change at the same pace?
5. Race, place, housing, and wealth: How do policies and markets embed racial inequality in places, property, health, and wealth?
6. Diversity and organizations: When does racial representation alter organizational power, and when can inclusion reproduce inequality?
7. Racial history, resilience, and change: How do people respond to racialized institutions, and what distinguishes resilience from structural transformation?

[Course Schedule](#) [click link to see, subject to change]

Grading and Faculty Response

How Your Grade is Calculated

Assignment Category	Weight
Class participation	10%
Quizzes	30%
Journal responses	30%
Mapping analysis	20%
Final exam	10%
** Three unexcused absences will lead to a 10 percentage-point reduction in your final grade. After three, each unexcused absence will reduce your final grade by 1 percentage-point.	

Class participation: Much of the learning in this course will take place through lecture, discussion, short polls, data demonstrations, films, and in-class activities. On most days when a reading is assigned, you will complete a short poll (1–2 questions) addressing major concepts from the reading. These questions will help you identify important ideas, prepare for class discussion, and review for quizzes. Other class meetings will ask you to apply course concepts to historical documents, data, films, or contemporary cases. You are excused from daily participation grades when you follow the appropriate absence procedures described below.

Quizzes: There will be four quizzes throughout the semester. Quizzes will emphasize major sociological concepts and your ability to recognize and apply those concepts to course materials and examples. They will not emphasize memorization of minor details from individual readings. Quizzes will be completed in class using Scantron forms, which I will provide. Please refer to the course schedule for quiz dates.

Journal: Throughout the semester, you will respond to journal prompts on Teams. Journals give you an opportunity to apply concepts from the course, make connections among readings and other materials, and develop sociological explanations for racial and ethnic patterns. Journal responses will be evaluated on how effectively they address the prompt, use relevant course evidence and concepts, develop sociological reasoning, and communicate ideas clearly. Responses are typically due Fridays at 11:00 a.m., before class.

Mapping analysis: During our unit on housing and wealth, you will examine historical and contemporary patterns of racial inequality in Little Rock using maps and publicly available data.

We will work on the analysis during class across two Fridays. The goal of this assignment is not to conduct advanced statistical analysis. Instead, you will practice identifying empirical patterns and using course concepts and historical evidence to develop a sociological explanation for those patterns. Additional instructions will be provided in class and on Teams.

Final exam: A cumulative final exam will be administered on *December 11, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.* The exam will ask you to identify, compare, and apply major sociological concepts from across the semester. Questions will emphasize connections among course sections rather than memorization of minor details from individual readings.

Late Assignments: Please refer to Teams for due dates. Due dates are set to help you stay on pace and to allow timely feedback that will help you complete subsequent assignments. Unexcused, late assignments will receive a maximum of 85% of the original grade. Assignments will not be accepted a week after the original deadline.

Instructor Feedback and Response Time:

- **Preferred contact method:** If you have a question, please contact me first through our course's [discussion board Q & A on Teams](#). If your question is specific to you, please email my Hendrix email address (axxe@hendrix.edu). I will reply to emails within 48 hours on days when class is in session at the university.
- **Class announcements:** I will send all important class-wide messages through the [General](#) tab on Teams.
- **Grading and feedback:** For assignments submitted before the due date, you can expect feedback and grades within **seven days**. Assignments submitted after the due date may have reduced feedback, and grades may take longer to be posted.

Grading Scale

89.5–100: A
79.5–89.49: B
69.5–79.49: C
59.5–69.49: D
Below 59.49: F

Why this grading structure?

The grading structure reflects the different kinds of sociological thinking you will practice in this course. Quizzes assess your understanding of major concepts and your ability to recognize and apply them. Journal responses give you repeated opportunities to use course materials to develop sociological explanations in writing. The mapping analysis asks you to move from empirical patterns to sociological interpretation by connecting data with historical evidence and course concepts. Class participation recognizes that discussion, collaborative activities, films, and data demonstrations are also important parts of the learning process.

The final exam is cumulative but carries less weight because this course emphasizes developing your sociological thinking throughout the semester rather than demonstrating it through a single high-stakes assessment.

Hendrix Resources

Academic integrity: Our academic integrity policy may be found in the Catalog in section [D.6.c.Academic Integrity](#). Assignments must reflect your original work. Properly cite any sources used.

Generative AI: Assignments in this course are designed to help you practice sociological thinking: interpreting evidence, applying concepts, making connections, and developing explanations. Work you submit should reflect your own thinking and understanding. Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot may be used as learning tools unless an assignment specifically prohibits their use. Appropriate uses include asking for another explanation of a concept, generating study questions, receiving feedback on grammar, or helping you understand instructor feedback. You are responsible for evaluating AI output, which may be inaccurate or misrepresent course materials.

AI may assist your learning, but it may not perform the learning being assessed. You may not use AI to answer an assignment prompt, analyze a reading, interpret evidence or data, develop your argument, or generate writing that you then submit as your own. If an assignment asks you to interpret, apply, compare, or explain, I need to see your reasoning. If you use generative AI for an assignment, include the receipts. At the end of your submission, provide:

- A brief statement explaining how you used AI.
- Your complete prompt(s).
- The complete AI output(s).

These materials do not count toward the word limit. Disclosure does not make prohibited AI use acceptable; if AI performed the intellectual work being assessed, the assignment may still violate course requirements. You do not need to disclose ordinary tools such as spellcheck or citation-management software. If you are unsure whether a use of AI is appropriate, ask me. Using AI in a prohibited way or failing to disclose its use may constitute academic dishonesty under the Hendrix College Academic Integrity Policy. If time pressure, uncertainty, or difficulty getting started is leading you to consider inappropriate AI use, contact me instead.

Statement on diversity: Hendrix College values a diverse learning environment as outlined in the College's Statement on Diversity. All members of this community are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the community. If you believe you have been the subject of discrimination, please contact the Dean of Students Office (JB Banks, banksa@hendrix.edu or the submit a [Title IX report](#). If you have ideas for improving the inclusivity of the classroom experience please feel free to contact Dr. Axxe. For more information on Hendrix non-discrimination policies visit Hendrix.edu/nondiscrimination.

[Title IX Reports of Discrimination Based on Sex, including Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Stalking, Dating Violence, or Gender-Based Harassment.](#) (Follow link to see details.)

Health and wellbeing: Hendrix recognizes that many students face mental and/or physical health challenges. If your health status will impact attendance or assignments, please communicate with me as soon as possible. Students should contact the Office of Advising & Academic Success (AcademicSuccess@hendrix.edu) to begin the accommodation process. To maintain optimal health,

please utilize campus resources like Hendrix Medical Clinic or Counseling Services (501.450.1448). Your health and wellbeing are important.

Class attendance: Our attendance policy may be found in the Catalog in section [D.6.e. Class Attendance](#). **If students must be absent from class, they are expected to email Dr. Axxe before class.** Without prior notification, absences are unexcused (barring true emergencies). Students will be excused for absences resulting from observance of religious holidays, cases of illness, and athletic competition, as well as any additional reasons as determined by the classroom teacher (e.g., conference travel, Model UN). Students do not need to present third-party documentation for absences related to physical or mental illness. Misrepresenting reasons for an absence to a classroom teacher is a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy.

The Writing Center: The Writing Center is a community of peers ready to assist you with your writing and communication projects, in all genres and fields, and at any stage of development. We work with you in one-on-one meetings that you can book in advance, or you can just drop in at our office in Bailey Library. Virtual appointments are available by special arrangement. To book appointments and for more information, visit www.hendrix.edu/writingcenter/, follow us on Instagram @hdxwritingcenter, or contact pruneda@hendrix.edu. We look forward to working with you!

Hendrix Bailey Library: Bailey Library's mission is to collaborate and empower all members of our community so that they become their best selves, cherish the scope of human knowledge, and positively contribute to the world. Whether face-to-face or remote, librarians are happy to help locate quality resources supporting research and classroom work and to assist with the critical evaluation of academic information. Librarians provide individual research assistance by appointment. The library building is open seven days a week, and access to the library's online resources is available 24/7. You can visit the library's website at <https://www.hendrix.edu/baileylibrary/> for more information, to book an appointment, and to access the library's Discovery search, Class Guides, and full-text article databases.

ADA accommodations: As your instructor, it is my legal obligation to ensure that all students have equal access to course materials and equal opportunity to perform well in the course. In addition, "It is the policy of Hendrix College to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Students should contact the Office of Advising & Academic Success (AcademicSuccess@hendrix.edu) to begin the accommodation process. Any student seeking accommodation in relation to a recognized disability should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course."

Technology: Much of the technology we interact with is made to be addictive. I suggest you find and use resources that will help you resist distractions. [Here's](#) a website with a list of website blockers. Similar software exists for apps on phones and tablets. Technology (phone, laptop, tablet, etc.) is not permitted during class time unless otherwise stated.

Additional Resources

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess.

- **Local housing shelters and women's shelters:** [Research](#) indicates that a number of low-income college students face homelessness or transient/insecure housing accommodations. [Affordable](#)

[Colleges Online's website](#) provides statistics about college homelessness as well a way to locate local services.

- **Food Pantries:** [Here's](#) a list of local food pantries.
- **Zotero:** [Zotero](#) is a free citation management software.
- **Grammarly:** [Grammarly](#) is a free software that checks and suggests fixes to grammatical errors.
- An [inclusive data resource hub](#).