

RUTGERS School of Criminal Justice

Professor: Brenden Beck, PhD (brenden.beck@rutgers.edu)

Class location and time: Tuesdays 3:00pm-5:40pm, Center for Law and Justice room 567

Office hours: Tuesdays 1:00pm-2:30pm or by appointment

Office: Center for Law and Justice room 542

Race, Crime, and Justice, 27:202:537, Spring 2025

Course Description

This course analyzes how race, victimization, and the legal system interact in the United States. It will ask questions like: What explains Black, Latino, and Native American over-representation among crime victims and justice system-involved people? How are current racial inequalities rooted in past exploitation? How can we measure and analyze racism? We will read a broad overview of current thinking on the topic, from a diversity of ideologies and identities.

Course Learning Objectives

Students will:

- 1) Develop and deepen their thinking about how race and racism relate to victimization, policing, the courts, and incarceration in the United States.
- 2) Understand a range of current views on the topic.
- 3) Develop opinions about the best solutions to problems in this area.
- 4) Hone their professional skills including research, presentation, peer review, and writing.

Requirements and Grading

10% of total grade – Attendance

You can miss one class with no penalty. If you miss a second class, your grade will be lowered by 5%, if you miss a third class, it will be lowered by another 5%. If you miss more than three classes, you will fail the course. If you miss no classes, you will receive 5% extra credit. If you cannot attend class in person for health or other reasons, notify me ahead of time to discuss. Classes cannot be attended virtually.

30% – Discussion contributions

This is a reading- and discussion-intensive course. Your close reading of the materials and active participation in class will be essential. Before coming to class, be sure to annotate all the readings. During class, I might ask you to summarize a reading's main idea, share one sentence you thought was important, or share one question you have about the reading. The question could be something you didn't understand, something you want to discuss further, or a critique you have. You might want to write each reading's main idea and question down before class. To earn full credit in this area you will need to

be an active participant and be ready when called upon. Because there are no quizzes or exams, your discussion contributions are how I assess your mastery of the readings.

10% – Research project elements

Leading up to your final research project, you will complete three constituent elements: a research question, an annotated bibliography, and a rough draft. Their due dates are in the schedule below. We will talk more about each in class.

50% – Research Project (Presentation and Paper)

The largest portion of your grade will be to write and present a research paper in which you summarize the academic scholarship on a research question of your choice. You will not do any original data collection for this paper. The paper should be between 10 and 15 pages, double spaced and in 12-point font. Each student will present their paper in a formal presentation with slides, about 10 minutes. I will provide details and a rubric closer to the due date. If instead of a research project you would like to read three books and review them in a synthetic essay, we can discuss that one-on-one.

Letter grades follow the School of Criminal Justice's grading scheme (below). Percentages are not rounded.

A	90% to 100%
B+	87% to 89.99%
B	80% to 86.99%
C+	77% to 79.99%
C	70% to 76.99%
D	60% to 69.99%
F	0% to 59.99%

Required texts

Please buy hard copies (*not* electronic versions) of the two required books. This is to help us literally be on the same page. Each book has used versions at the links below for about \$10. The Rutgers bookstore also has copies. If cost is an obstacle for you, let me know.

- Currie, Elliott. 2020. *A Peculiar Indifference: The Neglected Toll of Violence on Black America*. ISBN: 1250769930
 - [Abe Books link](#)
 - [Bookshop.org link](#)
 - [Amazon link](#)
- Davis, Angela J. (editor). 2017. *Policing the Black Man*. New York: Pantheon Books.
 - [Abe Books link](#)
 - [Bookshop.org link](#)
 - [Amazon link](#)
- All other materials will be posted to Canvas as PDFs.

Time Expectations

A three-credit course like this should take about 160 hours to complete. Over the 15 weeks, you will spend 2.5 hours per week in class (37.5 hours of the total). The required readings for each class will take about **six hours per week** (90 hours of the total). I assign about 100 pages per week of reading. If you're spending longer than six hours per week on the readings, come see me. Researching and writing the final paper and presentation will take the remaining 32.5 hours.

Late Work

If you submit work late, the late assignment's grade will be reduced by one letter grade (10%) for every business day it is late. Presentations cannot be made up. Technical difficulties are not an excuse for missing deadlines, so allow extra time before the deadline in case you need switch computers or contact [IT Support](#). If there is an emergency life situation, email me 24 hours in advance of the assignment due date.

Rutgers tech help desk
833-OIT-HELP (833-648-4357)
help@newark.rutgers.edu

Content Warning

As with any course on crime, we will sometimes read about and discuss intense, emotionally difficult subjects. These include sexual assault, intimate-partner violence, abortion, suicide, and violence against children. If you feel any reading or class discussion might be too difficult for you, do not hesitate to email me, and we can work together to find an alternative.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism of any kind will result in you failing the course. For more information, review the university's academic integrity policy [here](#). I may use plagiarism- and A.I.-detection software to assess your assignments. You may consult large-language models like Chat GPT or Google Gemini for reference, but you may not include any of their outputs in your work. Remember, large-language models "hallucinate" or make-up sources, so they are especially bad for research.

Contacting Me

The best way to contact me is by email. I respond faster there than via Canvas messages. My email addresses are at the top of this syllabus. If I don't respond in 48 hours, feel free to nudge me with another email.

Course Schedule

(This is preliminary. See Canvas modules for latest.)

Class	Required Readings	Assignments Due
Week 1 Introduction 1/21		

Week 2 Race, Ethnicity, Racism 1/28	<p>Baldwin, James. 1963 Fifth Avenue Uptown. <i>Nobody Knows My Name</i>.</p> <p>Western, Bruce, Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Yamrot Negussie, and Emily Backeset. 2023. "Key Terms and Concepts," in <i>Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice</i>, National Academies report, pages 22-32.</p> <p>Conley. 2015. "Race" in <i>You May Ask Yourself</i>.</p> <p>Sharkey, Patrick. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, and Yaryna Serkez. 2020. "The Gaps Between White and Black America, in Charts." <i>The New York Times</i>. Link. If you do not have access, create a free account with the library.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Fields, Karen E. & Barbara J. Fields. 2012. <i>Racecraft</i>.</p> <p>Clair & Denis. 2020. "Sociology of Racism," <i>The International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences</i>.</p> <p>Lai, K.K. Rebecca, Jennifer Medina. 2023. "An American Puzzle: Fitting Race in a Box," <i>The New York Times</i>. Link.</p>	
Week 3 Crime, Part 1 2/4	<p>Muncie. 2001. "The Construction and Deconstruction of Crime." <i>Key Readings in Criminology</i>.</p> <p>Western et al., "Racial Disparities in Victimization, Offending, and Involvement with the Criminal Justice System," in <i>Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice</i>, National Academies report, 2023, pages 45-56.</p> <p>Currie, Elliott. 2020. "Introduction: An Enduring Emergency" and "Chapter One: Dimensions," in <i>A Peculiar Indifference</i>, pages 1-46.</p>	
Week 4 Crime, Part 2 2/11	<p>Currie, Elliott. 2020. "Chapter Four: Explanations, II: Contemporaries," in <i>A Peculiar Indifference</i>, pages 135-177.</p> <p>Sampson, Wilson, and Katz. 2018. "Reassessing 'Toward a Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality.'" In <i>Du Bois Review</i>.</p>	
Week 5 Policing 2/18	<p>Bell, Monica. 2017. "Police Reform and the Dismantling of Legal Estrangement." <i>Yale Law Journal</i>. Pages 2054-2089. You can skip the footnotes and note the pages are not the entire article.</p> <p>Baluran. 2025. "Docile or dangerous? An intersectional analysis of Asian-descent adults' policing experiences," <i>Ethnic and Racial Studies</i>.</p> <p>Ewulonu, Nneka. 2023. "Without Political Change, Police Brutality Footage Has Become Trauma Porn." <i>The Appeal</i>.</p> <p>Washington Post. 2025. "Police Shootings Database," <i>Washington Post</i>. Link. If the link is paywalled, we'll look at it in class.</p> <p>Skim: Western et al., "Differences in Arrests and Criminal Offending,"</p>	Email your research question to Brenden before 11:59pm

	<p>"Interactions with Police Officers," and "Evidence Concerning Public Safety Delivery" in <i>Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice</i>, National Academies report, 2023, pages 56-87.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Cole, Teju. 2015. "Death in the Browser Tab." <i>The New York Times</i>.</p> <p>Fairfax Jr., Roger. 2016. "The Grand Jury and Police Violence against Black Men" in <i>Policing the Black Man</i>, ed. Angela J. Davis.</p> <p>Brunson, Rod. 2007. "'Police Don't Like Black People': African-American Young Men's Accumulated Police Experiences." <i>Criminology and Public Policy</i>.</p> <p>Rios, Victor. 2011. <i>Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys</i>.</p> <p>Weitzer. 2014. "Police Race Relations," <i>Oxford Handbook on Policing</i>.</p> <p>Ray, Rashawn. 2024. "The Sociology of Police Behavior," <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>. Link.</p>	
<p>Week 6 Courts and incarceration 2/25</p>	<p>Lee, Hedwig. 2024. "How Does Structural Racism Operate (in) the Contemporary US Criminal Justice System?" <i>Annual Review of Criminology</i>.</p> <p>Clair, Matthew. 2020. "Introduction," in <i>Privilege and Punishment</i>.</p> <p>Forman Jr. 2017. "Introduction," in <i>Locking Up Our Own</i>.</p> <p>Skim: Western et al., Various sections on courts and incarceration in <i>Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice</i>, National Academies report, 2023, pages 87-110.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Cunneen & Tauri. 2019. "Indigenous Peoples, Criminology, and Criminal Justice," <i>Annual Review of Criminology</i>.</p>	
<p>Week 7 Historical perspectives 3/4</p>	<p>Western & Travis. 2015. "Poverty, Violence, and Black Incarceration" in <i>Policing the Black Man</i>, ed. Angela J. Davis.</p> <p>Stevenson, Bryan. 2017. "A Presumption of Guilt: The Legacy of America's History of Racial Injustice." in <i>Policing the Black Man</i>, ed. Angela J. Davis.</p> <p>Hinton & Cook. 2021. "Mass Criminalization of Black Americans," <i>Annual Review of Criminology</i>.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Western et al., "Historical Roots of Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice," in <i>Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice</i>, National Academies report, 2023, pages 32-38.</p> <p>Kunzru. 2020. "Wages of Whiteness." <i>The New York Review of Books</i>.</p> <p>Weaver. 2007. "Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime</p>	

	<p>Policy” Studies in American Political Development.</p> <p>Sarah Tosh will be presenting her book “The Immigration Law Death Penalty: Aggravated Felonies, Deportation, and Legal Resistance” at the Research and Professional Development workshop in SCJ 567 on Monday, March 10th.</p>	
<p>Week 8 Spring break 3/11</p>	No class.	
<p>Week 9 Implicit bias, whiteness, and privilege 3/18</p>	<p>Russell-Brown, Kathryn. 2017. “Making Implicit Bias Explicit: Black Men and the Police” in <i>Policing the Black Man</i>, ed. Angela J. Davis.</p> <p>Take the Implicit Assumptions Test. Navigate to: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html then click on “Race IAT”</p> <p>Goff et al. 2008. “Not Yet Human: Implicit Knowledge, Historical Dehumanization, and Contemporary Consequences,” <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>.</p> <p>Haney López. 2001. “White Lines,” <i>White by Law</i>. Pages 1-26.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>McIntosh. 1989. <i>White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack</i>.</p>	<p>Annotated bibliography due via Canvas before class. Be prepared to discuss your research process in class.</p>
<p>Week 10 Intersectionality, gender, and “culture” 3/25</p>	<p>Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1993. “Mapping the Margins,” <i>Stanford Law Review</i>. Pages 1241-1278 & 1296-1299. You can skip the footnotes.</p> <p>Miller, Jody. 2008. “Perspectives on Gender and Urban Violence,” <i>Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality, and Gendered Violence</i>. Pages 1-31.</p> <p>MacDonald, Heather. 2015. “The Myth of Criminal Justice Racism.” <i>City Journal</i>.</p> <p>Lopez, German. 2016. “Confronting the myth that ‘black culture’ is responsible for violent crime in America.” <i>Vox</i>.</p> <p>Groff, Lauren. 2021. “The Wind,” <i>The New Yorker</i>. Feel free to listen to the audio version available here and on the Writer’s Voice podcast.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Gonzalez & Deckard. 2024. ““We Got Witnesses’ Black Women’s Counter-Surveillance for Navigating Police Violence and Legal Estrangement.” <i>Social Problems</i>.</p> <p>Miller, Jody. 2005. “Up It Up: Gender and the Accomplishment of Street Robbery,” <i>Race, Crime, and Justice: A Reader</i>, eds. Gabbidon & Greene.</p>	

	Jason Silver will be presenting his research “Stereotypes of Asian Women and Perceptions of Anti-Asian Hate Crime” at the Research and Professional Development workshop in SCJ 567 on Monday, March 31 st .	
Week 11 Capitalism and social class 4/1	<p>Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2007. “Introduction,” <i>Golden Gulag</i>. Pages 5-29.</p> <p>Clegg & Usmani. 2019. “The Economic Origins of Mass Incarceration,” <i>Catalyst</i>.</p> <p>Norton & Stein, “Materializing Race,” <i>Spectre Journal</i>, 2020</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Clegg & Usmani. 2021. “Reifying Racism,” <i>Spectre Journal</i>. https://spectrejournal.com/reifying-racism/</p> <p>Torres, Mo. 2024. “Separate from Class? Toward a Theory of Race as Resource Signal,” <i>Social Problems</i>. https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spae044</p> <p>Kelley, Robin D.G. 2017. “What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?” <i>Boston Review</i>. https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/robin-d-g-kelley-introduction-race-capitalism-justice/</p> <p>Bouie, Jamelle. 2020. “Beyond ‘White Fragility,’” <i>The New York Times</i>. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/26/opinion/black-lives-matter-injustice.html</p> <p>Soss & Weaver. 2017. “Police are our government: Politics, political science, and the policing of race–class subjugated communities,” <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>.</p>	
Week 12 Space and place 4/8	<p>Simes, Jessica, Brenden Beck, and John M. Eason. 2023. “Policing, Punishment, and Place: Spatial-Contextual Analyses of the Criminal Legal System.” <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>.</p> <p>Krivo, Lauren J., Ruth D. Peterson, & Danielle C. Kuhl. 2009. “Segregation, Racial Structure, and Neighborhood Violent Crime,” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>.</p> <p>Bratton, Bill & George Kelling. “Why We Need Broken Windows Policing,” <i>City Journal</i>.</p> <p>Fortner, Michael Javen. 2022. “‘The Message’: Order Maintenance and Its Discontents,” <i>Vital City</i>.</p> <p>Stuart, Forrest. 2016. “Introduction,” <i>Down and Out and Under Arrest</i>. You can skim pages 23-33.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Bell, Monica. 2020. “Anti-segregation Policing,” <i>NYU Law Review</i>.</p> <p>Braga, Anthony, Rod K. Brunson, and Kevin M. Drakulich. “Race, Place, and Effective Policing,” <i>Annual Review of Criminology</i>. Link.</p> <p>Sampson, Robert. 2012. “The Place of Context: A Theory and Strategy</p>	Email your research paper draft to Brenden and your peer-review group by 11:59pm.

	for Criminology's Hard Problems," <i>Criminology</i> .	
Week 13 Measurement, peer review 4/15	<p>Kohler-Hausmann, Issa. 2019. "Eddie Murphy and the Dangers of Counterfactual Thinking About Detecting Racial Discrimination," <i>Northwestern University Law Review</i>.</p> <p>Hu, Lily. 2020. "Direct Effects," <i>Phenomenological World</i>.</p> <p>Kent, Stephanie & David Jacobs. 2005. "Minority Threat and Police Strength in Large Cities," <i>Criminology</i>.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Neil, Roland & Christopher Winship. 2019. "Methodological Challenges and Opportunities in Testing for Racial Discrimination in Policing," <i>Annual Review of Criminology</i>.</p> <p>Zuberi, Tukufu & Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (eds.). 2008. <i>White Logic, White Methods</i>.</p> <p>Kitsuse & Cicourel, 1962. "A Note on the Uses of Official Statistics." <i>Social Problems</i>.</p> <p>Western et al. 2023. "Data and Research Opportunities," in <i>Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice</i>, National Academies report, pages 331-340.</p>	
Week 14 What is to be done? 4/22	<p>Currie, Elliott. 2020. "Chapter Five: Remedies," in <i>A Peculiar Indifference</i>, pages 178-231.</p> <p>Choose one of the following:</p> <p>Bell, Bell, Monica. 2017. "Police Reform and the Dismantling of Legal Estrangement." <i>Yale Law Journal</i>. Pages 2126-2148.</p> <p>Lum, Cynthia and Daniel Nagin. 2017. "Reinventing U.S. Policing." <i>Crime & Justice</i>. Pages. 339-343.</p> <p>Movement for Black Lives. 2016. <i>Vision Statement</i>.</p> <p>Duffy Rice, Josie. 2020. "The Abolition Movement," <i>Vanity Fair</i>.</p> <p>Sharkey, Patrick. 2020. Why Do We Need the Police?" <i>Washington Post</i>.</p> <p>Meares, Tracy & Tom Tyler. 2015. "Policing: A Model for the 21st Century," in <i>Policing the Black Man</i>, ed. Angela J. Davis.</p> <p>Western et al. 2023.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. "Introduction to Part II." 6. "Community-Driven Safety and Reducing Harm," 7. "Non-Criminal Policy Approaches to Reduce Racial Inequalities in Crime and Justice," 8. "Criminal Justice System Reforms to Reduce Racial Inequality," 9. "The Federal Role." <p>in <i>Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice</i>, National</p>	Be ready to verbally summarize the article you read and lead a short discussion of it.

	<p>Academies report, pages 197-331.</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Davis, Angela Y. 2011. <i>Are Prisons Obsolete?</i></p> <p>Kaba, Mariame. 2020. "Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police," <i>The New York Times</i>. Link.</p> <p>Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2014. "The Case for Reparations," <i>The Atlantic</i>.</p> <p>Beck, Brenden. 2024. "Local Government Spending: Policing Versus Social Services," <i>Annual Review of Criminology</i>.</p>	
Week 15 Research Presentations 4/29	No readings.	Research presentations in class.
Week 16 5/6	No class. Research papers due at 5pm.	Research papers due via Canvas, 5/6 at 5pm.

Accommodation and Support Statement

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

For Individuals Experiencing Disability: The Office of Disability Services (ODS) works with students with medical, physical, and/or mental conditions who encounter disabling barriers in order to determine reasonable and appropriate accommodations for access. Students who have completed the process with ODS and have approved accommodations are provided a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) specific to each course. To initiate accommodations for their course students must both provide the LOA to and have a conversation with the course instructor about the accommodations. This should occur as early in the semester as possible. More information can be found at the [RU-N ODS website \(ods.newark.rutgers.edu\)](https://ods.newark.rutgers.edu). Contact ODS at (973) 353-5375 or via email at ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-5063 or via email at TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Short-term Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to [University Policy 10.2.7](#) Students requesting a letter of verification should submit information using the following link: <https://go.rutgers.edu/Verification>.

For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries: The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: <https://go.rutgers.edu/RUNReportingForm>.

For support related to Interpersonal Violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA) can provide any student with confidential support. The office does **not** have a reporting obligation to Title IX. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based helpline available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support. Students do not need to be a victim/survivor of violence; any student can receive services, information and support.

For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a plan of support plan and address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Connect with the CARE Team by using the following link: <https://go.rutgers.edu/RUNReportingForm> or emailing careteam@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Psychological Support (Stress, Mood, Family Issues, Substance Use concerns and other personal challenges): The Rutgers University-Newark Counseling Center provides individual therapy and support groups for students dealing with psychological issues. To schedule an appointment, email counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or call (973) 353-5805. Additional support is available through Uwill services:

- Uhelp: Crisis support at 833-646-1526 (available 24/7/365).
- Urise: Wellness-based video collection with a free account.
- Umatch: Teletherapy with flexible scheduling, starting with a free account.

Access Uwill@RUN at <https://my.rutgers.edu> using your netid. Services are confidential and free.

For emergencies, call 911 or Rutgers University Police Department at (973) 353-5111.