

## POSC 306: Identity Politics and Group Behavior in America<sup>1</sup>

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Office Hours: 11am-12pm on Mondays in Willis 414

Leighton 330

MW 9:50-11; F at 9:40-10:40

“We have all been programmed to respond to the human differences between us with fear and loathing and to handle that difference in one of three ways: ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate. But we have no patterns for relating across our human differences as equals.”

–Audre Lorde

### Statement of Course Purpose

The course introduces students to the study of identity and some of the fundamental questions about how it relates to politics in the United States. What is an identity? What are the conditions under which identities become politicized? How do identities work to structure attitudes and affect behavior? This course seeks to provide some answers to these questions. Using an interdisciplinary and cross-subfield approach, students are brought into conversation with scholarship that demonstrates the powerful ways that identities influence all aspects of the political. The primary goal of the course is to provide students a foundation for thinking carefully and creatively about the way that identity and identity-based considerations matter for the various research questions they seek to answer. Students will develop their argumentation skills by focusing on political debates that have powerfully shaped the United States.

Upon completion of **Identity Politics and Group Behavior**, students should be able to:

### Overall Course Objectives

- Cultivate an appreciation for the process, structure, and context of deliberative democracy
- Feel like a more informed citizen of the United States and of the world
- Develop a deeper understanding of the power of the spoken and written word

### Specific Learning Objectives

- Apply knowledge of and readings on identity to American public policy and politics
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to the study of identity by social psychology, sociology, and identity studies
- Complete difficult readings and analyze theories and concepts in verbal and written assignments

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<sup>1</sup> NOTE: All course materials including but not limited to class notes, lectures, handouts, and presentations are the copyrighted materials of the professor. Recordings of any aspect of the course is strictly forbidden without written authorization from the professor. The copying and/or sale of any such materials will subject the involved parties to the provisions of the Federal Copyright Act. This syllabus does not constitute a binding contract and any aspect of the course, including but not limited to assignments, readings, or requirements, may be changed at the discretion of the professor for any reason and at any time.

## Classroom expectations

**Mutual respect:** I highly value class discussion and interaction. Learning from you is one of the joys of my job and I regard it as an integral part of the learning experience. I look forward to hearing your thoughts about how the course material informs our understanding of current events.

Although I will spend some of our class time lecturing, we will have many dialogues, both in class and online. In these discussions, you are encouraged to use your personal experiences and perspectives as well as your understanding of the course material and current events. Let's commit ourselves to treating our colleagues— especially the ones whose ideas are very different from our own—as treasured, even beloved colleagues. Let's keep classroom discussions to ourselves and not disparage one another to others outside the class for things expressed here. Direct attacks or insults toward anyone inside or outside the class based on their identity, including (but not limited to) race, ethnicity, gender identity, age, national origin, sexual orientation, religious affiliation (or lack of one), ideology, political party affiliation, or national background is not permitted. This is not an exhaustive list. Violations of these rules will be reflected in your grade and, if they continue, may result in disciplinary action by the College.

**Attendance and Participation:** Attendance and participation are essential in this course. Each class meeting will be different, with different goals, activities, and outcomes. One of the key components is the opportunity for you to demonstrate your ongoing mastery of the material. Your learning depends on your attentive involvement in class activities and including taking notes, listening carefully to the ideas of your classmates, engaging others in discussion and debate, and reading assigned materials in advance of class discussion.

One of my primary goals is to empower students to claim their own education. I emphasize discussion and limit the number (and length) of my lectures. This discussion-based format means that you, along with your classmates, bear a lot of responsibility for the success of the class. You must hold each other accountable for the claims that you make and the ideas you express. And you must make sure that you come to class prepared with some thoughts/questions so that we can have respectful and productive discussions about the material.

**Pronouns and Identity:** My pronouns are he/him/his. I will happily call you by whatever name and gender pronouns you want me to use and will ensure everyone else does as well. If you feel more comfortable sharing that information with me privately, I am happy to speak with you in a confidential setting. In all cases, I am committed to making this class into an intellectually inclusive space where we respect the diversity of every student. Your intellectual development and your skills as a critical thinker and writer remain my pre-eminent concerns.

**Academic Integrity:** It is assumed that a student is the author of all course work (quizzes, problem sets, online contributions, tests, papers, lab work, etc.) that they submit, whether for a grade or not, and that the work has not been submitted for credit in another class without the instructor's written permission. Images, ideas, data, audio clips, or phrases borrowed from others should be fully identified by standard procedures for making such acknowledgment. All permitted collaboration with others must still be acknowledged. It is recommended that all students consult the College's [Writing Across the Curriculum website](#) for additional guidance on plagiarism and how to avoid plagiarism in their writing.

An act of academic dishonesty is a serious offense in a college community. By seeking credit for work that is not their own, a student takes unfair advantage of fellow students—who accept their limitations—and of their professors who trust their work. Dishonesty in academic work, particularly in the form of plagiarism, cheating, or prohibited collaboration, defeats the process of self-discovery that is the heart of a liberal education. Persons establish their integrity and personality as they learn to distinguish what is significantly their own from what belongs to others and as they learn to value their own work, including its limitations, in relation to the work of others. Scholars should be generous and welcoming in acknowledging the work of other scholars: their work makes ours possible too.

At Carleton College, an act of academic dishonesty is therefore regarded as conflicting with the work and purpose of the entire College and not merely as a private matter between the student and an instructor; all cases involving such dishonesty are referred for appropriate action to the Academic Standing Committee (ASC) via the Associate Dean of Students or the Associate Dean of the College. Please visit [https://apps.carleton.edu/handbook/academics/?policy\\_id=21359](https://apps.carleton.edu/handbook/academics/?policy_id=21359) for more information.

**Grading:** More than anything, I value fairness in grading. I want you to know why you earned the grade that you did. If you don't, please ask! In an effort to be fair to those who complete assignments on time, I generally do not accept late papers/assignments will be accepted for credit without advanced approval; explicit instructions from OAR; or an emergency. Of course, I will make special arrangements to accept late assignments if you experience the death of a family member or if you are seriously ill. In the event of an emergency, please email me as soon as is practical and we'll make arrangements. As a matter of policy, please assume all assignments are due on the date listed in the syllabus without exception. You are strongly encouraged to print one copy of all papers for your own records before handing them in and to print drafts as you write and/or to make frequent backups in multiple locations. "Lost paper," "the printer didn't work" and "computer crash" claims will not be considered if you are unable to produce immediately an advanced draft of your paper.

If you believe your grade is inaccurate, you must wait at least 24 hours before contesting it. If you want to contest a grade, you need to write a brief letter explaining why you believe a mistake was made in grading your assignment. After I have received and read the letter, we will schedule an

appointment to discuss the matter; however, if you ask for a paper to be reevaluated, I reserve the right to reevaluate the entire contents of the assignment, and your grade can go up or go down as a result. Whenever possible, I encourage you to ask questions and clarifications about course assignments *before* turning them in.

**Growth Mindset:** Recognize that we ALL are learning, that we ALL make mistakes, that ALL of us say silly, uninformed, controversial, and rash things at one time or another. Engaging with your classmates who have views different from your own keeps **you** sharp. You should treat all with respect and appreciation even when you vigorously disagree with their arguments. I urge you to adopt a growth mindset for this course and all Carleton courses.

- Recognize that failure and disappointment frequently occur when we take on new intellectual challenges and develop new skills. Old skills and knowledge almost certainly won't be fully sufficient for your new endeavors.
- Feel free to seek new and stronger scholarly evidence for your arguments in the face of such disappointment
- Empower yourself to be an active facilitator of your education
  - Talk to your professors to understand their points of view and remember that we're often wrong ourselves!
  - Seek out the support of colleagues and trusted friends to read drafts of your papers. Ask questions and listen to the answers
  - Make appointments with the staff in the [Academic Support Center](#) to get help with your work.
  - Remember these steps aren't indicators of weakness; they're indicators of strength
- Develop structures for yourself so that you do not continually repeat prior writing errors so you train yourself to look for them and to self-correct
- Embrace an attitude of "progress, not perfection" rather than what writing scholars derisively call a one and done
- Treat yourself with kindness when feedback you receive doesn't turn out to be what you thought. View this kind of feedback as an opportunity to grow
- In short, **KEEP TRYING**.

**Campus Resources:**

**Disability services:** Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Office of Accessibility Resources (Henry House, 107 Union Street) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, vision, hearing, mobility, or speech impairments), please email [OAR@carleton.edu](mailto:OAR@carleton.edu) or call Sam Thayer ('10), Director of the Office of Accessibility Resources (x4464), to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

**Gould Library:** Library staff can help you find and evaluate articles, books, websites, statistics, data, government documents, and more. [You can make an appointment with a librarian](#), get help via chat 24/7 from any page on the library's website, [email, or call](#). The Library building has lots of great study spaces too! For more information and hours, visit the Gould Library website at [carleton.edu/library](http://carleton.edu/library).

**Student Well-Being:** Your health and well-being should always be your first priority. At Carleton, there are a wide-array of resources to support students. It is important to recognize stressors you may be facing, whether they are personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. Sleep, exercise, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you flourish at Carleton. For more information, check out [Student Health and Counseling](#) (SHAC), the [Office of Health Promotion](#), or the [Office of the Chaplain](#). For information on how to support mental health, visit [this site](#) full of good resources.

**The Writing Center:** The Writing Center is a space with peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours and more information can be found on the [writing center website](#). You can reserve specific times for conferences by using their [online appointment system](#).

**Speech Coaching:** A speech coach can help you practice and prepare for class presentations, comps talks, participation in class discussions, and speech-related events unrelated to coursework. The speech coach can work with you on tailoring your content for a particular audience, organization, clarity, persuasive impact, body language and eye contact, and dealing with stage fright. To request a meeting, visit the [Speech Coaching website](#).

**Title IX:** Carleton is committed to fostering an environment free of sexual misconduct. Please be aware all Carleton faculty and staff members, except for Chaplains and SHAC staff, are "responsible employees." Responsible employees are required to share any information they have regarding incidents of sexual misconduct with the Title IX Coordinator. Carleton's goal is to ensure campus community members are aware of all the options available and have access to the resources they need. If you have questions, please contact Laura Riehle-Merrill, Carleton's Title IX Coordinator, or visit the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response website: <https://www.carleton.edu/sexual-misconduct/>

## READINGS<sup>2</sup>:

Required books (also on reserve at the library):

1. Davis, Heath Fogg. 2017. *Beyond Trans: Does Gender Matter?* New York, NY: NYU Press. ISBN-13: 978-1479858088.

**[\*\*AVAILABLE ONLINE THROUGH THE LIBRARY. DON'T PURCHASE\*\*]**

2. Jardina, Ashley. 2019. *White Identity Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN-13: 978-1108468602

3. McDermott, Monika L. 2016. *Masculinity, Femininity, and American Political Behavior*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN-13: 978-0190462819

\*\*Other readings will be posted on Moodle.

**Writing policies:** Unless otherwise noted, all written assignments must be typed, doubled spaced with one-inch margins, and in a reasonably-sized font. Please number your pages and if you turn in a hard copy, be sure that your paper is **stapled** before you turn it in. The clarity of your writing will affect the strength of your argument and therefore students should proofread and spell-check their work carefully. You must cite any information and/or ideas that you take from someone else's work. Also note, you should limit your use of direct quotations (someone else's words surrounded by "") to the rare occasion when the original author has stated your point perfectly and it cannot be improved. Otherwise, you are generally better off stylistically using your own words and citing the ideas and facts provided by other authors. For citations, I prefer that students use the American Psychological Association (APA). However, any citation method is acceptable if it is used correctly and consistently. For additional information on APA style, visit <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> or <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>.

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<sup>2</sup> Course Materials Assistance (statement provided by TRIO): I recognize the potential financial burden of additional course fees, supply requirements, and travel costs. If you need assistance to cover course expenses, please speak with me by the second week of the term.

**Assessment and Evaluation:** Most of your assessment will come from individual work but you will have discussion leadership done with a partner. Additional detail will be provided for each assignment below.

- 3 identity papers (70% total). *Done individually.* You will choose one element of American political life (a policy issue, a public opinion stance, a voting trend, etc.) and apply it to two different identity groups.
  - Paper 1 (20%): Analysis of identity group #1
  - Paper 2 (20%): Analysis of identity group #2
  - Paper 3 (30%): Cross-pressures paper (Identities 1+2)
- Discussion leadership & discussion questions (15%): Construct specific questions and lead discussion of one class meeting. *Done with a partner.*
- Participation and engagement (15%) include short writing assignments or other in-class activities. *Done individually.*

**Due dates:**

Paper #1: Due Friday, January 28

Paper #2: Due Wednesday, February 21

Paper #3: Due Friday, March 11

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**Week 1: Introduction**

- Wednesday, January 5 Syllabus, introductions  
**READ** (in class): Lewis, Helen. The Mythology of Karen.  
[https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/08/karen-meme-coronavirus/615355/?utm\\_source=copy-link&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=share](https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/08/karen-meme-coronavirus/615355/?utm_source=copy-link&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=share)
- Friday, January 7  
**READ:** Egan, Patrick J. 2020. "Identity as Dependent Variable: How Americans Shift Their Identities to Align with Their Politics." *American Journal of Political Science*.  
  
**READ:** Lowery, Wesley. 2020. "Why Minneapolis Was the Breaking Point." *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/06/wesley-lowery-george-floyd-minneapolis-black-lives/612391/>





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#### Week 4: Political Consequences of Group Identification

- Monday, January 24  
**READ:** White, Ismail K., Chryl N. Laird, and Troy D. Allen. 2014. "Selling Out?: The Politics of Navigating Conflicts Between Racial Group Interest and Self-Interest." *American Political Science Review* 108(4): 783-800.
- Wednesday, January 26  
**READ:** Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2012 "Putting Inequality in its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 517-532.
- Friday, January 28 **Paper #1 due**  
**READ:** Gay, Claudine, and Katherine Tate. 1998. "Doubly Bound: The impact of Gender and Race on the Politics of Black Women." *Political Psychology* 19(1): 169-184.  
**LISTEN:** "Are Workplace Diversity Programs Doing More Harm Than Good?," *The Argument*; <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-argument/id1438024613?i=1000531687642>

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#### Week 5: Race & Ethnicity I

- Monday, January 31  
**READ:** Jardina, Chapters 1-2
- Wednesday, February 2  
**READ:** Jardina, Chapters 3-4
- Friday, February 4  
**READ:** Jardina, Chapters 5-6  
**LISTEN:** *The People in the Neighborhood, Still Processing*; <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-people-in-the-neighborhood/id1151436460?i=1000521634656>

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### Week 6: Race & Ethnicity II

- Monday, February 7:

NO CLASS

- Wednesday, February 9  
**READ:** Jardina, Chapters 7-9

- Friday, February 11  
**READ:** Gay, Claudine. 2002. Spirals of trust? The effect of descriptive representation on the relationship between citizens and their government." *American Journal of Political Science*, 4: 717-732.

**LISTEN:** Educators Ungagged: Teaching Truth in the Era of Racial Backlash, *Intersectionality Matters with Kimberlé Crenshaw*;  
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/42-educators-ungagged-teaching-truth-in-the-era/id1441348908?i=1000541999771>

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### Week 7: Partisanship

- Monday, February 14

**READ:** Iyengar, Shanto, Yphtach Lelkes, Matthew Levendusky, Neil Malhotra, Sean J. Westwood. 2019. "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States." *Annual Review of Political Science* 2019 22:1, 129-146

- Wednesday, February 16

**Paper #2 due**

**READ:** Mason, Lilliana, Julie Wronski, and John V. Kane. 2021. "Activating Animus: The Uniquely Social Roots of Trump Support." *American Political Science Review*, 115: 1508-1516.

- Friday, February 18

**READ:** Kane, John V, Lilliana Mason, and Julie Wronski. 2021. "Who's at the Party? Group Sentiments, Knowledge, and Partisan Identity." *The Journal of politics* 83.4: 1783-1799.

**LISTEN:** "Why Jan. 6<sup>th</sup> Was Not a Turning Point," *FiveThirtyEight Politics*;  
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/fivethirtyeight-politics/id1077418457?i=1000546955066>

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### Week 8: Gender, Expectations, and Performance

- Monday, February 21  
**READ:** McDermott, Chapters 1-2
- Wednesday, February 23  
**READ:** McDermott, Chapters 3-4
- Friday, February 25  
**READ:** McDermott, Chapters 5-7  
**LISTEN:** "Playing the Gender Card," Hidden Brain;  
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/hidden-brain/id1028908750?i=1000528655168>

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### Week 9: Sexuality and LGBTQ identity

- Monday, February 28  
**READ:** Fogg Davis book *Beyond Trans: Does Gender Matter?*, chapters 1-4
- Wednesday, March 2  
**READ:** Hunter, Marcus Anthony. 2010. "All the Gays are White and all the Blacks are Straight: Black Gay Men, Identity, and Community." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 7 (2): 81-92.  
  
**READ:** Harrison, Brian F., and Melissa R. Michelson. 2019. "Gender, Masculinity Threat, and Support for Transgender Rights: An Experimental Study." *Sex Roles* 80(1-2): 63-75.
- Friday, March 4  
**READ:** Harrison, Brian F. and Melissa R. Michelson. 2019. "More Than a Game: Football Fans and Marriage Equality. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 49 (4): 782-787.  
  
**LISTEN:** Immigration Policies for Queer Community, LGBTQ Nation;  
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/immigration-policies-for-queer-community/id1544558724?i=1000511541129>

