

Decriminalizing Blackness: A Syllabus from the History Department of the University of North Texas

Course Description: This “course” presents a curriculum on the history of racism in the American system, how it presents in America today, and practical steps towards decriminalizing blackness and becoming an Antiracist country. The field of history is too often confined to an analysis of the past. However, the utility of historical study reveals the roots and patterns of problematic aspects of the present, making the past incredibly relevant within the current status quo of black lives in America. Civil rights activist and scholar Michelle Alexander hones in on the singular foundation of problems like police violence and mass incarceration: racism. History Department faculty designed this syllabus to reach beyond UNT to any continuing learner. Learners can use it to devise methods to critically understand racism, to effectively attack it, and to undermine violence and complacency within racist structures. This process begins with education and listening to those who are most affected. The list of course materials here (readings, videos, and “getting involved” activities) amplifies Black voices while placing the work of education in the hands of individuals. Provided below are accessible histories on the criminalization of blackness, as well as sources on how to become an intentional, productive ally in uprooting the entrenched ideologies that cast race as a crime in the United States.

Course Learning Objectives:

After engaging with the resources listed below continuing learners:

1. Will be able to explain how and why racism has played a pivotal role in shaping the American system.
2. Will recognize and be able to describe their personal position and measure of privilege within this American system.
3. Will have holistic understanding from historical course activities to apply to do active antiracist and ally work.

Course Materials:

Reading List

*You can use this reading list to economically benefit the black community by supporting black-owned bookstores. Follow these links to company websites: [<http://aalbc.com/>]; <https://www.knowledgebookstore.com/>; <http://mahoganybooks.com/>; <http://www.eyeseeme.com/>; <http://pyramidbooks.indielite.org/>; <http://www.semicolonchi.com/>; <https://unclebobbiess.indielite.org/>; <https://www.harrietsbookshop.com/>; <https://bookshop.org/shop/thelitbar>]

Histories of American Racism as an Idea and a System

- Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*
- Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*
- Justin Leroy, *Freedom’s Limit: Racial Capitalism and the Afterlives of Slavery*

- Katherine McKittrick, “Mathematics Black Life” (*The Black Scholar*)
- Nicholas Guyatt, *Bind Us Apart: How Enlightened Americans Invented Racial Segregation*
- Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*

Racism and Policing

- Alfred McCoy, *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State*
- Christian Parenti, *The Soft Cage: Surveillance in America from Slavery to the War on Terror*
- David M. Anderson and David Killingray, *Policing the Empire: Government, Authority and Control, 1830–1940*
- Sharon E. Moore, A. Christson Adedoyin, and Michael A. Robinson, *Police and the Unarmed Black Male Crisis: Advancing Effective Prevention Strategies*
- Simon Balto, *Occupied Territory: Policing Black Chicago from Red Summer to Black Power*

Racism and Incarceration

- Dan Berger, *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights*
- James Forman, Jr., *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America*
- Khalil Muhammed, *Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern America*
- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*

Protesting Racism

- Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-First Century*
- Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline*
- Jennifer E. Cobbina, *Hands Up, Don't Shoot: Why the Protests in Ferguson and Baltimore Matter, and How They Changed America*

- Marc Lamont Hill, *Nobody: Casualties of America's War on the Vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and Beyond*
- Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939*
- Keisha N. Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom*
- Robin D. G. Kelley's *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*
- Ibram X Kendi, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972*

Antiracism and Allyship

- bell hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*
- Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*
- Layla Saad, *Me and White Supremacy*
- Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*
- Resource Websites regarding Antiracism and Allyship: (Thank you to Sarah Sophie Flicker and Alyssa Klein for compiling this list of additional resources. To view their entire compilation of Antiracism resources, visit: bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCES)
 - [75 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice](#)
 - ["A Collective Response to Anti-Blackness"](#)
 - [Anti-Racism Project](#)
 - [Jenna Arnold's resources \(books and people to follow\)](#)
 - [Rachel Ricketts' anti-racism resources](#)
 - [Resources for White People to Learn and Talk About Race and Racism](#)
 - [Save the Tears: White Woman's Guide by Tatiana Mac](#)
 - [Showing Up For Racial Justice's educational toolkits](#)
 - ["Why is this happening?" — an introduction to police brutality from 100 Year Hoodie](#)
 - [Zinn Education Project's teaching materials](#)

Video List

- *13th* (Netflix)
- Franchesca "Chescaleigh" Ramsey: "Decoded: How to Be an Ally" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dg86g-QIM0>
- Megan Ming Francis: "Let's get to the root of racial injustice"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aCn72iXO9s>

- Peggy McIntosh: “How Studying Privilege Systems Can Strengthen Compassion”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-BY9UEewHw&feature=youtu.be>
- “The Rise of Black Lives Matter”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgFI0phqRIY>
- Robin DiAngelo: “Deconstructing White Privilege”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7mzj0cVL0Q&feature=emb_rel_pause
- “Slavery by Another Name”
<http://greaterdiversity.com/slavery-by-another-name-the-re-enslavement-of-black-americans-from-the-civil-war-to-world-war-ii/>

Course Activities: Getting Involved

Local Community Projects

- “St. John's Community Project”: created and built by UNT undergraduates and grad students, which is on the long history of an African American community in Denton County: <https://omeka.library.unt.edu/s/stjohns/page/welcome>

National Projects

- Chain Reaction: Alternatives to Policing
<http://www.alternativestopolicing.com/home-adversary>
- Hands Up United
<http://www.handsupunited.org/>
- National Police Misconduct Reporting Project
<https://www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0022443/>
- Project NIA
[Talking About Policing and Violence with Youth: A Resource and Activity Guide](http://www.projectnia.org/talking-about-policing-and-violence-with-youth-a-resource-and-activity-guide)
- Talking About Race (Smithsonian/African American History Museum):<https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race>

Organizations to Join/Follow (Listed in Flicker and Klein’s compilation of Antiracism resources: bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCES)

- [Communities United for Police Reform](http://www.comunitiesunitedforpolice.org/)
- [We Charge Genocide](http://www.wechargegenocide.org/)
- <http://www.october22.org/>
- Antiracism Center: [Twitter](https://twitter.com/antiracismcenter)
- Audre Lorde Project: [Twitter](https://twitter.com/audrelordeproject) | [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/audrelordeproject) | [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/audrelordeproject)
- Black Women’s Blueprint: [Twitter](https://twitter.com/blackwomenblueprint) | [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/blackwomenblueprint) | [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/blackwomenblueprint)

- Color Of Change: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- Colorlines: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- The Conscious Kid: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- Equal Justice Initiative (EJI): [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- Families Belong Together: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- The Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- MPowerChange: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- Muslim Girl: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- NAACP: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- National Domestic Workers Alliance: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- RAICES: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ): [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- SisterSong: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)
- United We Dream: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)