Racial (In)Justice and Drug (Il) Legalization
POL ####
Syllabus

Date/time of class meetings
Location of class meetings

Instructor: Be Stone
Email: estone@gradcenter.cuny.edu
Office Hours: dates/times

Course Description and Learning Objectives
The purpose of this course is to consider questions of racial justice in the context of U.S. drug policies. We begin by considering different approaches to conceiving of what justice is and how it can be enacted. We will learn about the history of U.S. drug policies and their imbrication with racial injustice. We then investigate alternative approaches to drug policy currently being implemented at the federal, state, and local levels, and consider how these policies address, or fail to address, racial injustices and their long-term effects. We conclude by evaluating attempts to enact justice for racialized groups and people who use drugs via policy in the U.S.

Course Objectives:
• Develop an understanding of several theories and concepts of justice, including racial justice in the United States.
• Acquire knowledge of the history and politics of U.S. drug policymaking.
• Improve writing and critical thinking skills through regular writing assignments and class discussions.
• Improve oral communication skills through class discussions and group presentations.
• Develop the ability to conduct academic research and write a research proposal, including the ability to write persuasively and directly, and according to the conventions of academic writing in political science.

Texts
You do not need to buy a textbook for this class. All of the readings are available on Blackboard. You are required to bring a copy of the readings to each class. It is preferred that you print out hard copies of the readings, but you may also bring a tablet or laptop to class for accessing them. If it becomes clear that you are using your tablet or laptop for something other than accessing the readings, I reserve the right to change this policy. NO CELLPHONES in the classroom.

Grading & Class Requirements
Your grade is based on the five requirements for this course:
1. Class Participation (10% of class grade)
Participation in class discussion is a critical part of the learning process. You are expected to come to every class having read all of the readings, prepared to contribute to class discussion and participate in class activities.

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes and any assignments from a classmate.

You are required to bring a printed or electronic copy of all the readings and your reading response paper to each class. Failure to do so will negatively affect your grade.

2. Weekly Reading Responses (20% of class grade)
   - To foster your thinking outside of class and to facilitate discussion in class you are required to submit weekly reading response papers. Response papers should be between 400–500 words in length and must include four parts. See the handout (available on Blackboard) for details.
   - Unless otherwise noted, reading responses are due via Blackboard at TIME/DATE before class.
   - You are required to bring a printed or electronic copy of your response paper to class. Failure to do so will negatively affect your grade.

3. Discussant (20% of class grade)
   - You will be asked to sign up for TWO readings for which you will serve as the discussant. The role of the discussant is to briefly present a reading, offer critique, and raise questions to facilitate discussion. You will be asked to submit the outline/notes of your presentation prior to class. Specific guidelines can be found on Blackboard.

4. Short Essay Assignment (20% of class grade)
   - You will be responsible for writing a 4–6-page essay on a prompt assigned in advance. This essay will allow you to demonstrate more in-depth knowledge on a political concept discussed the course. A rubric will be distributed with the prompt.

5. Final Paper Proposal (30% of class grade)
   - In lieu of writing a final research paper, you will instead be writing a research paper proposal (approximately 8 pages) as though you are pitching your paper to a conference or a journal for presentation or publication. The purpose of this assignment is to allow you to begin exploring an issue area that interests you as well as to practice expressing your ideas in a concise and convincing way. A handout will be provided detailing the requirements of the assignment.

Classroom Philosophy and Conduct
Discussing political topics can challenge deeply held or unexamined beliefs. Expect to be challenged in this classroom to think critically about the ideas presented in the readings and common assumptions made about historical and contemporary politics. Given the difficult, sensitive, and political nature of the material to be discussed in this course, students will be expected to conduct themselves in a mature and respectful manner. This requires both thoughtfully voicing your own opinion and respectfully listening and responding to the opinions of others. The ultimate goal of this course is to provide you with the knowledge and critical thinking skills to construct informed opinions on complex political issues.
A Note on Gender Pronouns: Please notify me of your gender pronouns and the name you’d like to be called prior to the start of class using the First Day Survey. I use she or they pronouns and you may call me Professor Stone or Professor Be. You are expected to respect the pronouns and gender identities of me, your classmates, and the people we discuss in class.

Weekly Course Schedule
All dates, readings, and assignments are subject to change.
** Indicates a response paper is due at TIME this day

Part I: What is Justice? What is Racial Justice?

Class Meeting 1: Welcome and Introduction
- The Media Bias Chart (in-class viewing).

Class Meeting 2: Justice as Emancipation **

Class Meeting 3: Justice as Fairness **

Class Meeting 4: Oppression and Intimate Justice **

Class Meeting 5: Justice: “The Is” and “The Aught” in Everyday Language **

Part II: Racial Injustice and U.S. Drug Policy

Class Meeting 6: Drug Policy and Racial Oppression **

Class Meeting 7: Drug Policy and Racial Oppression II **
● In-class viewing: Kimberlé Crenshaw. 2016. “The Urgency of Intersectionality.”

Class Meeting 8: Mass Incarceration and the War on Drugs **

**Outline of Short Essay Assignment Due**

Class Meeting 9: Mass Incarceration and the War on Drugs II **

Class Meeting 10: The “Post-War on Drugs” Landscape **

**Short Essay Assignment Due**

Part III: Visions for Racial Justice in the U.S.

Class Meeting 11: Visions for Racial Justice in the U.S. **

Class Meeting 12: Visions for Racial Justice in U.S. Drug Policy **
● Brian Earp et. al. 2021. “Racial Justice Requires Ending the War on Drugs.”

Class Meeting 13: Questioning Racial Justice in Drug Policy **
● Travis Rider. 2021. “Ending the War on Drugs Requires Decriminalization, but Does it Require Legalization?”
• Wayne Hall and Adrian Carter. 2021. “Drug Legalization is Not a Masterstroke for Addressing Racial Inequality.”
• **Outline of Final Paper Proposal Due**

Class Meeting 14: New Approaches to Drug Policy
• Caitlin Hughes and Alex Stevens. 2010. “What Can We Learn from the Portuguese Decriminalization of Illicit Drugs?”

Class Meeting 15: Conclusion **
• Workshop for final paper proposals with Prof. Stone

**DATE: Final Paper Proposals Due**

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