QSS 30.06: Race, Incarceration, and Politics: By the Numbers

Instructor: David Cottrell

Spring, 2016

Class Time:	TuTh	10:00am - 11:50am	104a Dartmouth Hall
Class Xhour:	W	3:00pm - 3:50pm	026 Silsby
Office hours:	W	1:00pm - 5:00pm	026 Silsby

Introduction

The 2010 United States Census revealed that over 2 million black men were "missing" from the population due to disproportionately higher rates of incarceration and mortality compared to white men. More than half a century after the height of the Civil Rights Movement, such glaring inequalities between black Americans and white Americans can be observed across a myriad of measures that cover health, employment, income, wealth, education, and incarceration. We will explore racial gaps through the numbers, analyzing their various social and political consequences. Among other things, we will consider how inequalities influence elections and alter the state of representation in Congress and other representative bodies in the United States; how racial segregation transforms our political landscape; and how gerrymandering - including "prison gerrymandering" - affects our political institutions.

Furthermore, since this is a course in quantitative social science, there will be an emphasis on conducting data analysis. An ability to manage and make sense of data is increasingly becoming the expectation for most analytical careers. Therefore, an important component of this class will be dedicated to helping students develop basic skills used for exploratory data analysis. This includes learning to leverage the statistical programming environment, R, to collect, clean, summarize, and visualize data pertinent to the class. As a result, students will gain exposure to quantitative social science as it is applied to the topics of race, incarceration, and politics.

Objectives

The broad objective of the course is for you to gain experience evaluating a social phenomenon using quantitative reasoning and data analysis. By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Use quantitative analysis to assess various racial gaps in the United States and consider how these gaps might alter our political landscape.

- Read empirical research by social scientists who use data to make inferences about racial inequality.

- Recognize those insights that can be gained from the data, as well as those that cannot.

- Conduct quantitative analysis of your own, using the statistical environment, R, to synthesize, summarize, and visualize your findings.

Required Texts

- Pettit, B. (2012). *Invisible men: Mass incarceration and the myth of black progress.* Russell Sage Foundation

- Burch, T. (2013). *Trading democracy for justice: Criminal convictions and the decline of neighborhood political participation.* University of Chicago Press

- Manza, J. and Uggen, C. (2006). *Locked out: Felon disenfranchisement and American democracy.* Oxford University Press, USA

(These books will be available on reserve if you prefer not to purchase them. You can see the books here.)

Grades

10% Participation & Attendance

20% Critical Responses

20% Data Analysis Homework

50% Data Project

Participation & Attendance

You are required to participate regularly in class. Be sure to come to section prepared to discuss the material covered in the readings. Full participation points will be given to students who consistently engage in class discussions and demonstrate that they have thought critically about concepts explored in the readings. Moreover, attendance is mandatory. I will send around a sign-in sheet at the beginning of each class. It is your responsibility to sign it, as it represents the only permanent record of your presence in the classroom. Class will begin at 10:00am. Please try to be on time. If you cannot attend due to illness or emergency, please speak with me prior to class.

Critical Responses

You are required to submit a critical response to each of the five readings that I have marked with a ✍🏼 below. The responses should be no longer than a page (single-spaced and 12pt font) and they must be submitted prior to the beginning of class on the day that we will be discussing the reading. In it, you should provide a thoughtful critique of an empirically supported claim that is made by the author of the piece. This claim can be anything that the author concludes - either explicitly or implicitly - from analyzing data. You should describe how the claim is supported empirically and then you should critique the claim by explaining how you agree and/or disagree with it. After your critique, you should end the response with a description of how you might improve or extend the analysis. You can offer a hypothetical solution to your criticism or you can propose a new analysis that compliments the current one. The purpose of this assignment is for you to engage critically with the readings and think about how you might respond to them as a data analyst or researcher.

Data Analysis Homework

Each week I will give you a task to perform using data. Generally this will involve reading some data set into R, summarizing it, and then presenting it as a table or visual. The assignment will be circulated on Thursdays and will be due by the beginning of the following Thursday's class. Remember, there is no R prerequisite.

Data Project

All students will complete a data project in which you pose a question on a topic related to the course and answer it using data. This is an opportunity for you to gain experience conducting quantitative research on your own. For the project, you will analyze a dataset and present your findings as tables, plots, or other visualizations in a written paper no longer than 12 pages (double-spaced and 12pt font). You may select from several datasets which I will make available to you; or you may choose to use your own dataset, as long as the data pertains to the course in some way. Everyone will be required to submit a one-page research proposal to me by May 1st. This proposal will account for 10% your grade for the project. Final papers will be due by the final examination period at 3:00pm on Friday, June 3rd. We will use that period for students to present their findings to the class.

Resources for R

For data analysis, we will be using R. R is an environment for statistical computing. It is a powerful tool used around the world for manipulating data and producing graphics. Moreover, it is open-source and free to download! Please follow these hyperlinks to download R and RStudio before the second day of class (March 31). You can find just about everything you need for learning R online. Answers to most of your questions will likely be found in online forums, blogs, and various online tutorials. For example, you can get started using R with this short intoduction here. You can find a free introductory book for using R here and some other helpful resources for learning here. I encourage you to check out the R blogging community here.

Ethics

- Please be respectful. We will be covering a number of sensitive issues that may resonate personally with students in the class. Be mindful of the perspectives of others. It is very important that we engage in discussions about these issues in a considerate and collegial manner. Please do not dominate the floor, or talk over one another, or talk down to one another. Please do not engage in personal attacks.

- All students are expected to adhere to Dartmouth's standards for academic integrity. Please familiarize yourself with the academic honor principle here.

Accessibility Needs

Students with disabilities who may need disability-related academic adjustments and services for this course are encouraged to see me privately as early in the term as possible. Students requiring disability-related academic adjustments and services must consult the Student Accessibility Services office (205 Collis Student Center, 646-9900, Student.Accessibility.Services@Dartmouth.edu). Once SAS has authorized services, students must show the originally signed SAS Services and Consent Form and/or a letter on SAS letterhead to me. As a first step, if you have questions about whether you qualify to receive academic adjustments and services, you should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

Agenda

Week 1: Introduction to the Course and to Computing in R

Tuesday, March 29

- Introduction
- Review Syllabus

Thursday, March 31

- Introduction to R

Week 2: Income Gap

Tuesday, April 5

- Simms, M. C., Fortuny, K., and Henderson, E. (2009). Racial and ethnic disparities among low-income families. *The Urban Institute LIWF Fact Sheet* here
- Brad Plumer. "These ten charts show the black-white economic gap hasn't changed in 50 years." *Washington Post.* 28 August, 2013 here
- ✍ Paul Jargowsky Architecture of Segregation: Civil Unrest, the Concentration of Poverty and Public Policy. The Century Foundation. here

Thursday, April 7

- R lab with Michael Herron

Week 3: Wealth Gap

Tuesday, April 12

- (Chapters 1 and 5) Oliver, M. L. and Shapiro, T. M. (2006). *Black wealth, white wealth: A new perspective on racial inequality.* Taylor & Francis

Thursday, April 14

- Urban Institute's "Nine Charts About Wealth and Inequality in America" here
- Pew Research Center 2011 Report. "Wealth Gaps Rise to Record Highs Between Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics" here

Week 4: Health Gap

Tuesday, April 19

- Parker-Pope, Tara. "The Cancer Divide: Tackling a Racial Gap in Breast Cancer Survival." New York Times. December 20, 2013. here
- Geronimus, A. T., Bound, J., and Colen, C. G. (2011). Excess black mortality in the united states and in selected black and white high-poverty areas, 1980–2000. *American Journal of Public Health*, 101(4):720 here
- Orsi, J. M., Margellos-Anast, H., and Whitman, S. (2010). Black-white health disparities in the united states and chicago: a 15-year progress analysis. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(2):349–356 here

Thursday, April 21

- ✍ Rodriguez, J. M., Geronimus, A. T., Bound, J., and Dorling, D. (2015). Black lives matter: Differential mortality and the racial composition of the us electorate, 1970–2004. *Social Science & Medicine* here

Week 5: Race and the Criminal Justice System

Tuesday, April 26

- (Chapter 2) Alexander, M. (2012). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness.* The New Press
- Anwar, S., Bayer, P., and Hjalmarsson, R. (2011). The impact of jury race in criminal trials. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 127(2):1017 here

Thursday, April 28

- LaFraniere, Sharon and Lehren, Andrew W. "The Disproportionate Risks of Driving While Black." The New York Times. October 24,2015 here
- ✍ Baumgartner, F. R., Epp, D. A., and Shaub, K. (2016). Targeting young men of color for search and arrest during traffic stops: Evidence from north carolina, 2002-2013. *Working Paper* here

Week 6: Mass Incarceration

Tuesday, May 3

- (Chapters 1-4) Pettit, B. (2012). *Invisible men: Mass incarceration and the myth of black progress.* Russell Sage Foundation

Thursday, May 5

- ✍ (Chapters 4-7)

Week 7: Incarceration and Disenfranchisement

Tuesday, May 10

- (Chapters 1-3) Manza, J. and Uggen, C. (2006). *Locked out: Felon disenfranchisement and American democracy.* Oxford University Press, USA

Thursday, May 12

- (Chapters 7-8)

Week 8: Incarceration and Political Participation

Tuesday, May 17

- ✍ (Chapters 1-4) Burch, T. (2013). *Trading democracy for justice: Criminal convictions and the decline of neighborhood political participation.* University of Chicago Press

Thursday, May 19

- (Chapter 5-7)

Week 9: Alternative Forms of Disenfranchisement

Tuesday, May 24

- Barreto, M. A., Nuno, S. A., and Sanchez, G. R. (2009). The disproportionate impact of voter-id requirements on the electorate - new evidence from indiana. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42(01):111–116 here

Thursday, May 26

- Fraga, B. L. (2016). Redistricting and the causal impact of race on voter turnout. *The Journal of Politics*, 78(1):19–34 here
- Chen, J., Rodden, J., et al. (2013). Unintentional gerrymandering: Political geography and electoral bias in legislatures. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 8(3):239–269 here

Week 10: Prison Gerrymandering

Tuesday, May 31

- "How Does Prison Gerrymandering Work?" Priceonomics.com here
- Ho, D. (2011). Captive constituents: Prison-based gerrymandering and the current redistricting cycle. *Stanford Law & Policy Review*, 22(2):355