

"Structural Racism Explained" Video Teaching Guide

The video and prompts provided here are designed and developed primarily for high school students, but can also be used by upper-level middle school systems or undergraduate university students, with tailoring.

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Explanatory Background Notes for Teachers:

The "Structural Racism Explained" video draws upon many varied sources in formulating specific definitions for different types of racism. The video and prompts provided here are designed to help students clarify and sharpen their understanding of the material, spur and support classroom discussion of the video and ideas, and provide ideas and leads for further research. Teachers should feel encouraged to prod students to read and engage with source materials (some of which are listed below).

The Applied Comprehension and Classroom Dialogue Prompts are designed to be "debatable," meaning that there is no perfect or completely correct answer. Rather, the definitions and frameworks presented in the video are largely heuristics – frameworks or ways of understanding the conceptualization of racism. But they may or may not hew perfectly to real world examples. Thus, the prompts are designed to promote critical thinking skills, argumentation skills, and force students to develop their answers to the best of their abilities.

The prompts are also designed to spur particular kinds of conversations. For example, the second Applied Comprehension question may cause students to debate the conceptual validity of the category of "race-neutral" altogether, to interrogate whether a policy can be "race-neutral" and to also better understand that there are multiple and nuanced ways of thinking about such categories.

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A Cautionary Note:

Discussions on race are often deeply felt and can be as highly charged as those of other sensitive subjects, such as religion or sexuality. As with those subjects, classroom discussions on race and racism requires careful moderation and certain safeguards to generate a positive and illuminating educational experience and to avoid harming students. This challenge is greater due to the politically-charged nature of these issues in society at large.

In particular, it is likely that some students in your classroom may have personally experienced racism at an interpersonal level at some point in their educational journey or have witnessed racially charged events or circumstances, such as epithets in the community or in school events or contexts, such as sporting events or field trips.

Prompts to discuss race and racism have a natural tendency to surface these experiences, and students may be inclined to discuss them if prompted. Alternatively, students may not wish to discuss them, but feel pressured to do so based upon certain prompts. In either case, personal sharing of racist experiences or racially-charged events can lead to extremely tense or possibly harmful classroom dialogues.

For example, if a student who was the target of a racial epithet recalls and describes that experience and accuses another classmate of precipitating it, or perhaps another person in the school community, that could lead to a series of events that re-traumatize the individual and potentially other students as well. It may also immediately polarize the debate in the class, and undermine any productive potential from the video, video prompts or classroom discussion.

Although it cannot eliminate this danger, the prompts provided with the video are designed to minimize this risk potential and reduce the chance of harm in this regard by focusing on concepts and ideas rather than personal experiences. Questions and research prompts focus on law, policy and history rather than on individual experiences or personal reflection. This is partly pedagogical as well: most of the forms of racism described in the video are not interpersonal, and the video is designed to help students see the less visible ways that racism manifests.

Instructors considering the use of these materials should bear in mind these risks and evaluate whether any of these prompts are appropriate for their students and select prompts tailored to the maturity of their students in consultation with school guidance counselors and administrators. In addition, instructors may wish to individually consult with students using personal reflection prompts, and report any events or experiences that relate to the climate in the school.

Materials for Further Reading:

- Dorothy A. Brown, *The Whiteness of Wealth: How the Tax System Impoverishes Black Americans—And How We Can Fix It* (Crown, 2021).
- Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2016).
- Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005).
- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. (New York, The New Press, 2010).
- Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017).
- Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: the Politics of Liberation in America*. (1967).
- Myron Orfield, *American Metropolitics: The New Suburban Reality* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2002).
- David D. Troutt, *The Price of Paradise: The Costs of Inequality and a Vision for a More Equitable America* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2013).
- Robert J. Sampson, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).
- Daria Roithmayr, *Reproducing Racism: How Everyday Choices Lock In White Advantage* (New York, NY: New York University Press).
- Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).
- Patrick Sharkey, *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Toward Racial Equality* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).
- Douglas Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

"Structural Racism Explained" Video

Review Teaching Prompts

Comprehension & Understanding

These questions are designed to test and strengthen student understanding of video content.

1. Identify the four (4) types of racism described in the video. In your own words, what are the main differences between them?
2. What is a racist "belief"? In your own words, define this term and provide an example.
3. In the "interpersonal racism" model, what is the relationship between racist ideas and racist actions? Describe this relationship in your own words.
4. Provide one (1) example of each type of racism described in the video.
5. What is a "race-neutral" policy? Explain, in your own words, what the video implies by this term and provide one (1) example.

Applied Comprehension

1. As originally adopted, the Social Security Act of 1935 excluded "agricultural workers" and "domestic workers" from its benefits. In the American South, African-Americans disproportionately worked as domestic or agricultural workers. Which type of racism described in the video best characterizes this Act as originally adopted? Explain your reasoning.
2. Until 2004, the state of California's Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, which operates the state's prison system, had an unwritten policy of segregating incarcerated persons by race. It defended the practice on grounds of security and safety within state prisons, and to reduce racial violence. Which type of racism described in the video best characterizes this practice? Explain your reasoning.
3. Relative to married white couples, both spouses in married Black households are more likely to participate in the labor force (meaning that they are either seeking employment or employed), more likely to have similar incomes, and therefore contribute more evenly to household income. As a result, research indicates that from the mid-20th century until at least 2017, married Black couples were more likely to suffer a "marriage penalty" when filing joint federal income taxes (meaning that they pay more in federal income taxes than if they were single and filed separately), whereas white married couples were more likely to receive a "marriage bonus." Which type of racism best characterizes the effects of federal tax policy in this regard? Explain your answer. Assume that both economic forces and cultural norms contribute to the documented higher incidence of Black women participating in the labor force.

Classroom Discussion Prompts

These questions are designed as open-ended for classroom discussion rather than comprehension or understanding.

1. Which forms of racism described in the video rely upon racist “actors” (meaning people who are making harmful decisions on the basis of racist beliefs or ideas, and are motivated by them), and which forms of racism do not necessarily require a racist actor?
2. One of the themes of the video is that seemingly fair and neutral rules, practices or policies can have unequal effects on different groups. Can you think of examples of a rule, policy or practice that may have a “disparate impact” on a group on the basis of gender, religion, (dis)ability, or age?
3. Many people think that racist ideas lead to racist actions or policies, but Ibram X. Kendi asserts that racist policies come before racist ideas. What do you suppose he means by this, and can you think of an example that might illustrate how this dynamic could work in practice?
4. If after collecting and analyzing data, an institution such as a hospital or school discovers that there are significant racially unequal outcomes (such as higher rates of Black maternal mortality) among people it serves, and that these outcomes are a product of structural or systemic forces and not interpersonal racism, what should it do about this?
5. Think of one form of racism or an example of a racist act or policy you've observed, and suggest some remedies to address it.
6. To what extent would addressing one form of racism help or prove inadequate to ending another type? What could we do to reduce or end certain forms of racism?
7. How do these forms of racism interact with sex and gender dynamics?

Research Assignment Prompts

These questions are designed as outside-of-classroom research assignments.

1. Using the definitions provided by the video, identify one (1) additional example of either institutional, systemic, or structural racism, and which was found to have disadvantaged people of color on the basis of their race. Describe the policy, action, decision or program at issue, and find and provide at least one additional source (and use it as a citation) describing the operation of the policy and another source (with citation) describing the effects for a total of two (2) additional sources. Your report should be at least 2 pages long with a separate Works Cited page.

2. Using one or more of the four types of racism described in the video, research a scholar or activist who played a critical role in formulating and conceptualizing that form of racism. Provide a brief biographical sketch, identify their key writings or speeches, and describe what led them to conceptualize that form of racism. Provide at least two additional sources (with citations) as part of your answer. Your report should be at least two pages long with a separate Works Cited page.
3. The video mentions “redlining” and “restrictive covenants.” What do these terms mean, what policies or practices do they describe, and what are the differences between them? Provide at least two additional sources (with citations) as part of your answer. Your report should be at least two pages long with a separate Works Cited page.

Journal or Reflection Prompts

Either as an in-class reflection or take-home assignment, ask students to journal in a response to at least one of the two following questions:

1. Using the definitions provided by the video, identify one (1) additional example of either institutional, systemic, or structural racism, and which was found to have disadvantaged people of color on the basis of their race. Describe the policy, action, decision or program at issue, and find and provide at least one additional source (and use it as a citation) describing the operation of the policy and another source (with citation) describing the effects for a total of two (2) additional sources. Your report should be at least 2 pages long with a separate Works Cited page.
2. Using one or more of the four types of racism described in the video, research a scholar or activist who played a critical role in formulating and conceptualizing that form of racism. Provide a brief biographical sketch, identify their key writings or speeches, and describe what led them to conceptualize that form of racism. Provide at least two additional sources (with citations) as part of your answer. Your report should be at least two pages long with a separate Works Cited page.

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