

June 2020

Department of Political Science, University of Utah

Statement on Anti-Racism

As political scientists, we unequivocally assert that black lives matter, and we stand in uniform support against ongoing acts of oppression and violence toward all Black, Indigenous, and other Peoples of Color. The department reaffirms its commitment to create an environment where all individuals treat each other with respect and dignity. Racism cannot be tolerated and it has no place in our communities, including our classrooms and our campus.

The following represent meaningful and substantive measures that the Department of Political Science has done, is doing, and will do in the future to combat racism in all its forms.

- We reaffirm our classrooms as spaces for open and honest conversations about difficult topics, including the inequalities, oppression, and violence associated with racism. Our classrooms are inclusive and safe environments where BIPOC students must be welcomed. We will continue to seek a more *equitable* distribution of the labor associated with confronting the topic of racism and commit to handling these discussions in a manner that balances respect with frankness.
- We reiterate the vital importance of protest and civil disobedience as forms of political and civic action. We are inspired by the courageous, disciplined, focused, and sustained demonstrations that continue across the United States and indeed the world. We support the sustained work of our local Utah Black Lives Matter chapter: <https://www.blacklivesmatterutah.com/home.html>
- Education is a key tool towards combatting ignorance. Ignorance about racism results in part from the *neglect* of particular subjects and disciplines in US education. We thus call attention, yet again, to the *urgent* importance of the social sciences and humanities, including in our own institution of higher education. The fields of political science and public administration in particular have long explored the historical and contemporary effects of racism and studied the systemic and institutional structures that perpetuate white supremacy. Scholars in our community have studied these issues, and contributed work on protest, the militarization of US society, criminal justice reform, and the reform of policing. Meaningful and sustained change is only possible with robust support for these disciplines and their pedagogical and civic contributions to an anti-racist future.
- The department has made strides to diversify its community, centralized this purpose as a goal in its Strategic Plan, and devoted resources towards this end. **We must do better.** We will redouble our efforts to recruit, support, and retain BIPOC students, staff, and faculty.

- On an individual and department level, we will reflexively examine our own commitments as scholars, instructors, service providers, and mentors. Political science is not only a scholarly vocation, but an ethical one. As moral agents, we will examine how in embodying these various roles we may even (and especially) inadvertently contribute to systemic racism, and reverse those practices going forward.
- To carry out the above, we will have conversations during our first and subsequent faculty meetings in the Fall of 2020 to discuss implementing initiatives and measures we can take to insure *lasting* and *sustained* changes to our department and programs. Such measures might include, but are not limited to:
 - a department-level Diversity and Inclusion Committee that focuses on supporting underrepresented students in Political Science
 - revised curriculum that foregrounds the study of racism and anti-racism
 - town halls and open forums where these issues can be addressed
 - revising and including statements of anti-racism in our syllabi. promote, provide resources, and support efforts by faculty to “decolonize” and diversify syllabi and courses
- The Department’s ‘Campus Community Dialogue’ series was founded in 2017 to create regular opportunities for civil and constructive dialogue among differing perspectives dedicated to the pursuit of mutual understanding and the consideration of practical solutions to national and global challenges. In April of that year, the Series hosted a discussion on ‘Diversity and Disparity: Race, Class, and Gender Inequities in the U.S.’. In the Fall of 2019, the series held a discussion on Protest. We will revisit these topics by centralizing the disparities of Race as one of the dialogue series meetings in 2020-2021.
- We encourage the Political Science undergraduate and graduate Student Advisory Committees (SAC and GSAC) to hold inclusive discussions on this topic and then share their findings and suggestions to our department in Fall 2020.