

Race, Racism, and Public Policy at the SPP

The murder of George Floyd, the devastating effects of COVID-19 in Black, Latinx, and Native communities, and heightened bias and violence against Asian Americans have thrust a spotlight on the enduring and systemic racism embedded within American society and throughout the world. The Cornell School of Public Policy (SPP), formed at this moment in history, must confront the role of public policy in producing, perpetuating, and addressing this racism and related forms of injustice — both past and present. It also must equip the next generation of public leaders with the knowledge and policy tools to create more just and equitable policies and public institutions.

Several common objectives guide these efforts. First, SPP students should have the opportunity to develop a comprehensive, multilayered understanding of race and racism that includes insights from multiple disciplinary traditions in the social sciences and beyond. Second, the SPP should foster an approach to public policy that is both historically grounded and action-oriented by educating students about past and present instances of injustice and resistance. Third, a domestic focus on race and racism should be supplemented with international perspectives that incorporate broader diasporic and global forces. Finally, public engagement on these topics with policymakers and other civic and community leaders and members should play a central role in both research and pedagogy within the SPP, so that faculty and students have opportunities to engage directly with the pressing racial justice issues of our time.

To achieve these goals, the SPP will intentionally weave a consideration of race, racism, and social justice throughout all facets of the new institution, including its teaching, research, public engagement, and governance. This will include:

- Foundational courses that engage with race, racism, and public policy for entering students across all degree programs, and intentional focus on race and racism in subsequent coursework.
- Regular mechanisms to evaluate how SPP coursework connects with race and racism, including consultation with an internal committee on race in the public policy curriculum and other academic and instructional resources across campus.
- Promoting research excellence through hiring and retention of faculty whose research focuses directly on race itself, on racism in the policy process, and/or on the racialized effects of public policies in the United States and around the world, particularly as it relates to areas of SPP strength.
- Capitalizing on existing strengths in race and racism at Cornell by inviting existing faculty with related expertise who currently have a primary appointment outside of the SPP to affiliate with the SPP or to have a joint appointment with the SPP.
- Prioritizing the recruitment, retention, and support of a diverse student body for its undergraduate, master's, and Ph.D. programs.
- Promoting and supporting public engagement of faculty and students with an emphasis on racial equity and anti-racism.