

WILLIAMS COLLEGE
WILLIAMSTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 01267

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
24 HOPKINS HALL DRIVE

July 1, 2020

Dear Williams Students,

We've all witnessed, and some of us have joined, the ongoing mass protests against police violence and anti-Black racism. I join many of you in condemning the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, Chantel Moore, and so many others. These protests come against the backdrop of the still-unfolding pandemic, which has underscored the vast inequalities within our society, as COVID-19 disproportionately affects Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and working-class communities while intensifying racism against Asian-Americans. Speaking out is important, but it's all too easy to stop at keyboard denunciations. Racism and structural injustice are not just "out there," but here, too, both within the discipline of political science (in which, nationally, Black, Latinx, and Native American scholars remain underrepresented, and men remain overrepresented) and at Williams, an institution still struggling to come to terms with the inequities that have shaped it from the beginning. In this time of struggle and transformation, I want to emphasize the seriousness with which the Political Science Department takes systemic racism, sexism, and injustice. They're crucial topics for the work we do—profoundly important to what, as students of politics, we examine together—but also challenges my colleagues and I must confront as we assess our department, the major, and how we can best make studying political science at Williams equitable, inclusive, and relevant to the key issues of our time. We, too, have work to do. We will be launching a scheduled self-study this year, and these issues will be central in our conversations. Your views and your reflections on your experiences here will be essential to our efforts to make the department better. We will solicit your insights in a variety of ways.

For the moment, I am pleased to announce two projects for the coming academic year that, though modest, should enhance the Department's engagement with key issues. The first is a fellowship to support a semester-long independent student research project on race and inequality. The Willingham 2020 Fellowship, open to any Williams student, comes with a stipend of \$1,700 for an inquiry that is meaningful to a student and conducted outside of formal coursework. We believe a year when only three courses per semester are required is an especially good time for such a program. The funding is designed to free up student time that might otherwise be spent on employment, as well as to cover any research expenses. Additional details and an application will be posted to this website by July 15, and will be due no later than August 15.

Our second initiative involves the Class of 1960 Scholars Program. This year's programming will center on the theme of race and structural injustice. The 10-12 junior and senior majors selected as Scholars will shape the programming and select the speakers. Our cohort of 10-12 junior and senior majors to serve as Scholars, and we will invite the cohort in consultation with a faculty advisor. The application process will be posted to this website shortly.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mark Reinhardt". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

Mark Reinhardt
Class of 1956 Professor of American Civilization
Chair, Department of Political Science