

PSCI AMER 307-A: Topics in Political Science:  
Minority Politics in the U.S. (Section 01)  
Spring 2009 Instructor: Russell Benjamin  
Class Location SCI 240 Office Location: CLS 2079  
Office Hours: TWR 11:00 - 11:50 p.m.; TR 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.  
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#### **SYLLABUS FOR MINORITY POLITICS IN THE U.S.**

**PURPOSE:** This course is designed to investigate the problems and political activities of various minority groups in the United States. The course first addresses the historical and political ways in which racial and ethnic minorities have been discriminated against. The course then addresses strategies used by minorities for change, including voter registration drives, running for public office, litigation, and protest. A very important component of this exploration is the role of class in minority group empowerment strategies and in official responses to minority demands. With Black Americans as the primary group being analyzed, this investigation addresses minority issues such as the history and ongoing legacy of civil rights empowerment efforts. Next is an in-depth examination of issues related to Latinos and Native Hawaiians. The course concludes with an exploration of intergroup relations, the role of gay and lesbian issues in minority politics, as well as of the future of ethnicity in the U.S. While this course makes reference to several minority groups in the U.S., the focus is on the experiences of Black Americans, Hispanic Americans and Latinos, Asian and Pacific Island Americans, Native Americans, and on Native Hawaiians.

**FORMAT:** The course will consist of two class meetings each week. In addition to lectures by Dr. Benjamin, student involvement is emphasized. Therefore, it is essential to the success of this course that students complete assigned readings promptly in order to be prepared for discussion. Students are expected to attend each class. Class begins at 9:25 a.m. For purposes of evaluation, there will be regular quizzes and an article review (in lieu of a mid-term examination), a class paper and a cumulative final exam. Quizzes are short answer in nature. The final exam has an essay format. Missed assignments, quizzes, and exams can be made up if they are missed for **documented** medical or legal reasons (supported by a medical facility or court).

Additionally, it is expected that students turn off all cell phones, pagers, text messaging instruments, and all other electronic devices before they come to class. These devices are to remain off during the entire class period.

**COURSE EVALUATION:** Letter grades for this course are calculated using the guidelines from page 36 in the 2008-2009 Northeastern Illinois University Academic Catalog.

To determine one's final course grade, the criteria will be weighed in this manner:

Article review	15%
Quizzes	20%
Paper	25%
Final Exam	25%
Discussion	15%

**COURSE READINGS:** Following is a listing of the required books for the course. They are available at Beck's Book Store.

Aguirre, Adalberto, Jr., and Jonathan H. Turner. 2009. American Ethnicity: The Dynamics and Consequences of Discrimination. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc. (Sixth edition)

Rodriguez, Elaine. 2008. The National Voter Registration Act: Impact and Implications for Latino and Non-Latino Communities. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America.

Other required readings will also be assigned during the semester. These are noted elsewhere on the course syllabus. These will be available to students through JSTOR, or via on-line reserve system of Northeastern Illinois University Library.

#### TOPICAL OUTLINE

- I. Overview (Weeks 1-2)
  - A. General introduction and basic concepts. Alternate explanations of racial and ethnic relations. Social and political underpinnings of racism, sexism, and discrimination in the U.S. Political socialization of minorities. The role of physical identifiability in discrimination. Core culture.  
  
Aguirre and Turner: Chs 1-3.
  
- (Week 3)
  - B. Overview of government actions toward European immigrant groups. Dynamics of discrimination against Italian Americans, Irish Americans, and Jewish Americans and other white ethnics. Conflict and accommodation issues regarding white ethnic groups.  
  
Aguirre and Turner: Ch. 4.

- II. African Americans (Week 4) Anti-black racism, slavery, and the Jim Crow system. Negative beliefs about African Americans. Present stratification issues. Recent black immigrants.
- Aguirre and Turner: Ch. 5.
- III. Native Americans (Week 5) Exclusion of Native Americans from the American system. American expansion, genocide, and removal from homelands to reservations. Native American responses to discrimination.
- Aguirre and Turner: Ch. 6
- IV. Latinos and Hispanic Americans (Week 6) Historical immigration. U.S. takeover of Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other areas. Political discrimination. Diversity among Latinos and Hispanics. Identification issues. Negative beliefs about Latinos.
- Aguirre and Turner: Ch. 7.
- V. Asian and Pacific Island Americans (Weeks 7-8) Immigration. Stereotyping and prejudice. Policies that have discriminated against Asian Americans and Pacific Island Americans over time. Social issues regarding Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Filipino and other Asian and Pacific Island-Americans. Issues related to recent Asian and Pacific Island immigration. The "model minority" stereotype. Ways in which these Americans have responded to discrimination.
- Aguirre and Turner: Ch. 8.
- Andrew L. Aoki and Don T. Nakanishi, "Asian Pacific Americans and the New Minority Politics," PS: Political Science and Politics, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 605-610 (2001).
- James S. Lai, Wendy K. Tam Cho, Thomas P. Kim, and Okiyoshi Takeda, "Asia Pacific-American Campaigns, Elections, and Elected Officials," PS: Political Science and Politics, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 611-617 (2001).

- VI. Arab Americans  
(Week 9)
- Immigration. Stereotyping and prejudice. Policies which have discriminated against Arab Americans over time. Impact of the September 11, 2001 attacks upon Arab Americans. Ways in which Arab Americans have responded to discrimination.
- Aguirre and Turner: Ch. 9
- VII. Minority Political Empowerment Issues  
(Weeks 10-11)
- A. Overview of minority attempts to become empowered over time. Influences of the black civil rights movement on efforts by other groups to gain political power. Class issues in minority empowerment strategies. Influences of class on official responses to minority group protest. Mobilizing minorities in politics. Affirmative action issues.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter From Birmingham City Jail," in A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther, King, Jr., edited by James M. Washington (1986, Harper San Francisco).
- Malcolm X. "Educate Our People in the Science of Politics," in February 1965: The Final Speeches, edited by Steve Clark (1992, Pathfinder).
- B. Election and political issues facing Latinos in Arizona and elsewhere. Latino voting rights issues. Barriers to Latino voting.
- Rodriquez: Chapters 1-2.
- VIII. Oppression and Resistance: Native Hawaiians and Latinos  
(Weeks 12-13)
- A. Issues related to the American takeover of Hawaii. The ouster of Queen Liliuokalani. Gendered racism and Native Hawaiians. Impact of tourism on Hawaiian culture. Sovereignty in the international context and in the Hawaiian context. Hawaiian reactions to racial oppression.
- Julie Kaomea, "A Curriculum of Aloha? Colonialism and Tourism in Hawai'i's Elementary Textbooks," Curriculum Inquiry vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 319-344 (2000).

Haunani-Kay Trask, "Feminism and Indigenous Hawaiian Nationalism," Signs vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 906-916 (1996).

- B. Latino efforts to change election laws in Arizona and other locations. The National Voter Registration Act and its impacts on Latinos. Latino activism in regard to other issues.

Rodriguez: Chapters 3-4.

IX. Assessments of  
Minority Politics,  
and Conclusions  
(Weeks 14-end)

Prospects for multiracial coalitions in politics. An assessment of whether minority-led governments have been responsive. Limits on minority political power. Gay and lesbian issues in minority politics. Racial and ethnic relations in the future. U.S. racial and ethnic issues in a global context.

Aguirre and Turner: Ch. 10.

Rodriguez: Conclusion

Elijah G. Ward, "Homophobia, Hypermasculinity, And the U.S. Black Church," Culture, Health & Sexuality vol. 7, no 5, pp 493-504 (2005).

**FINAL EXAM: TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2009, 8:00 - 9:50 A.M.**

## Research Paper

Each student will write a paper on some recent (within the past ten years, and preferably within the past five years) aspect of racial or ethnic politics in the U.S. The purpose is to give the student a better understanding of minority group politics in this country. The focus must be upon a racial or ethnic group other than that of the student. The project may involve student participation or observation beyond library research. However, some library research is required, with a minimum of seven (7) library sources. Internet sources which are acceptable are limited to government sites such as [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov). Also, please note that **WIKIPEDIA** is not considered a valid Internet or other source for this research paper or for other assignments in this course. Each student should select a topic of interest to her/him which can be carried out this semester. Students are urged NOT to choose a project which would endanger them in any way.

Any information that is not your own must be cited in both the body of the paper **and** in the bibliography. Please note that plagiarism or any other type of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in regard to the research paper, or in any other aspect of this class. Any student found to have engaged in any form of cheating will fail the course and be referred to the university administration for other possible action.

Possible project areas would be:

The drawing of districts to help black or Latino candidates win election to Congress;

The relationship between Hispanics and the Republican Party;

The placing of hazardous waste sites in minority areas;

Affirmative action policy and its impacts on college admissions;

The politics of Hawaiian sovereignty;

Native American politics;

Voting patterns by specific Asian American groups;

Political relationships between blacks and Latinos/Hispanics;

Racial profiling of Middle Eastern Americans since the attacks of September 11, 2001;

Discrimination against women of color at the top levels of private industry;

Federal government policies which grant refugee status to Cubans;

The election of members of specific minority groups to statewide office;

Minority group support of institutionalized racial profiling of Middle Eastern Americans;

The extent to which other minority groups believe that Asian Americans are the "model minority"; or

Minorities and the issue of gay marriage.

This list is not exhaustive. Students are encouraged to be innovative in selecting topics and in carrying out their projects. Students must give a typed one-page outline to the instructor by February 3, 2009. This paper is limited to a maximum of ten (10) typed, double-spaced pages (excluding reference pages). The paper is due on April 9, 2009. Late papers will lose one letter grade each class day after the due date.

The format for the paper is as follows:

- 1) Describe the project. Why did you choose this project?  
How did you carry out this research?
- 2) Report the results of your experience. What did you find out? Give enough details for the reader to have a solid idea about the results of your research.
- 3) Conclusion. What new knowledge did you gain from having done this project? Relate what you learned to at least two major ideas or concepts from the course.

In writing these papers, students should: be sure that all sources listed in the bibliography actually are used in the paper; use a consistent style of writing (e.g. APA); avoid typographical errors; and use correct grammar and complete sentences. These projects are evaluated in terms of quality of research (number and variety of sources, and depth of research). Projects should also address these questions: (1) were the results what you expected? And (2) is the conclusion based upon information described in the rest of the paper?