

Mexican Americans and Politics

Political Science 126A / Chicano/Latino Studies 143

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Course Overview

In the wake of the 2000 and 2004 elections, the President and the political parties are reaching out to Mexican Americans in an unprecedented manner. Although this outreach has declined somewhat since September 11, it will likely be a continuing characteristic of U.S. politics for the foreseeable future. Mexican Americans are also organizing in ways that they have not in the past. In several states, particularly California, Mexican Americans have achieved unprecedented levels of representation and political influence.

The centrality of Mexican Americans and other Latinos in national, state, and local politics has both substantive and symbolic dimensions. Even at the symbolic level, the outreach represents a significant improvement over the neglect that Mexican Americans have experienced in most previous elections. In this course, we will examine the foundations and contradictions of contemporary Mexican American politics.

This course examines the role of Mexican American and other Latino communities in shaping state and national politics in the United States. After we review the political history and political organizational strategies of Mexican Americans, we will examine their contemporary modes of political organization; analyze public policy issues that concern them; evaluate the successes and failures of Mexican American empowerment strategies; and measure the electoral impact of Mexican American votes.

Course Readings

Readings are taken from three sources. I will ask that you read two books as well as a collection of articles that are available for purchase from Anteatr Publishing.

The books are:

Louis DeSipio. 1996. *Counting on the Latino Vote: Latinos as a New Electorate*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia.

David Gutierrez. 1995. *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants and the Politics of Ethnicity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

The books are available from local bookstores. I identify readings from the reading packet with a “**.” These are also available on reserve in the Library.

I also may distribute some additional readings in class. If you miss a class, check with a classmate and the class website to see if any readings were distributed.

Course Requirements and Grading

I will evaluate your performance in the class in three ways. These include: 1) three analytical essays on course readings; 2) a midterm exam; and 3) a quiz on the last day of class that will ask you to identify the theses and methods of course readings.

Essays: I will assign three analytical essay questions throughout the semester. You will be required to complete *two* of these. Each essay should be between six and eight pages. You may complete whichever two you prefer and I would encourage you to pick assignments that do not conflict with assignments in other classes. If you are dissatisfied with a grade that you receive on one of these essays, you may complete the third essay; I will only count the grades of the highest two when I calculate your final class grade. Note that to take advantage of this offer, you must complete the first essay.

These essays will ask you to evaluate arguments made in course readings and, to a lesser degree, themes raised in class discussions. You will be able to answer the essay based on the course readings and I will not expect you to do additional research. The essays will be due on the following dates:

<i>Due date:</i>	<i>Covers readings for:</i>
1) February 2	January 12 - January 31
2) February 23	February 7 - February 23
3) March 14	February 2 - March 14

Each essay will contribute 25 percent to your final grade for a total of 50 percent.

Midterm exam: The midterm exam is on March 2. The exam will include short answer and essay questions that will ask you to analyze and synthesize class readings, discussions, and lectures. We will discuss the exact format prior to the exam and I will welcome your input on how to design an exam that best tests your knowledge of the material.

The midterm will account for 40 percent of your final grade.

Quiz: During the last class session, you will take a quiz that will ask you to identify the theses and methods used in class readings. The objective of this exercise is to ensure that you identify the purpose of each of the readings and consider the different types of evidence that scholars use to defend their theses. In our class discussions, we will examine authors’ theses and

discuss various methods used to analyze Mexican American politics. *I would encourage you to prepare for this quiz throughout the quarter by keeping a list of theses and methods for each of the readings as you first read each assignment.*

The quiz will take place at the beginning of class on March 16 and will make up 10 percent of your final grade.

Course Schedule and Assigned Readings

January 10 – Introduction and Overview

Part One:

Territorial Foundations and Roots of Political Demand Making

January 12 – How do you Start History? Are There Consequences to When you Begin the Story?

Gutierrez, introduction and Chapter 1

** Griswold del Castillo, Richard. 1989. *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict*, chapters 3 and 5, pp. 30-42 & 62-86.

January 17 – Destruction and Rebirth (1860-1920)

Gutierrez, chapter 2

** Arellano, Anselmo. 2000. "The People's Movement: Las Gorras Blancas" In Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and David R. Maciel, eds. *The Contested Homeland: A Chicano History of New Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, pp. 59-82.

January 19 – Laying the Foundation for Contemporary Mexican American Politics ... and its Core Debates (1920-1940)

Gutierrez, chapter 3

Video shown in class: *The Lemon Grove Incident* (also available at the Library: LC2688.L47 L466 1985)

January 24 – Opportunities and Limits of Pluralism Before the Latino Era (1940-1965)

Gutierrez, chapter 4

** Ruiz, Vicki. 2005. "Luisa Moreno and Labor Activism." In Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol, eds. *Latina Legacies: Identity, Biography, and Community*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 175-192.

January 26 – The Chicano Movement (1965-1975)
Gutierrez, chapters 5 and 6

Video excerpt shown in class: *Chicano! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (also available at the Library: E184.M5 C4 1996)

January 31 – From Mexican American/Chicano to Latino: Community and Competing Conceptions of Politics
DeSipio, chapter 1

Part Two **Mexican Americans and the Politics of Pan-Ethnicity**

February 2 – Pan-ethnicity and the Challenge to Mexican American Politics
** Padilla, Felix. 1984. "On the Nature of Latino Ethnicity." *Social Science Quarterly* 65, pp. 651-664.

Essay #1 due at the beginning of class

February 7 – Mexican American Community Attitudes
** de la Garza, Rodolfo, et al. 1996. "Will the Real Americans Please Stand Up: Anglo and Mexican-American Support of Core American Political Values." *American Journal of Political Science*, 40 #2, pp. 335-51.
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0092-5853%28199605%2940%3A2%3C335%3AWTRAPS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-V>
DeSipio, chapter 2

February 9 – The Voting Rights Act and the Protection of Mexican American Electoral Participation

** DeSipio, Louis. 2004. "The Pressures of Perpetual Promise: Latinos and Politics, 1960-2003." In David Gutierrez, ed. *The Columbia History of Latinos Since 1960*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 421-465.

February 14 – Mexican Americans at the Fulcrum of Anti-Latino Political Organizing

** Tolbert, Carolyn, and Rodney Hero. 1996. "Race/Ethnicity and Direct Democracy: An Analysis of California's Illegal Immigration Initiative." *The Journal of Politics* 58 (3):806-818.
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-3816%28199608%2958%3A3%3C806%3ARADDAA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-N>

Video shown in class: *Fear and Learning at Hoover Elementary* (also available at the Library: JV6926.L67 F4 1997)

February 16 – Electoral Participation: Opportunities and Limits

DeSipio, chapters 3 and 4

** Sinclair, D.E. “Betsy,” and R. Michael Alvarez. 2004. “Who Overvotes, Who Undervotes, Using Punchcards? Evidence from Los Angeles County.” *Political Research Quarterly* 57 (1) (March): 15-25.

February 21 – Mexican Americans/Latinos and National Elections

** DeSipio, Louis, and Rodolfo O. de la Garza. 2005. “Between Symbolism and Influence: Latinos and the 2000 Elections.” In Rodolfo O. de la Garza and Louis DeSipio, eds. *Muted Voices: Latinos and the 2000 Elections*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 13-60.

** Leal, David; Matt A. Barreto; Jongho Lee; and Rodolfo O. de la Garza. 2005. “The Latino Vote in the 2004 Election.” *PS* (January): 41-49.

February 23 – Mexican Americans/Latinos and State and Local Elections, Particularly in California

** DeSipio, Louis, and Natalie Masuoka. 2006. “Opportunities Lost? Latinos, Cruz Bustamante, and California’s Recall.” In Shaun Bowler and Bruce E. Cain, eds. *Clicker Politics: Essays on the California Recall*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, pp. 112-127.

Essay #2 due at the beginning of class

February 28 –

1) Review for Midterm

2) Naturalization and Mexican American Empowerment

DeSipio, chapters 5 and 6.

** Barreto, Matt A. 2005. “Latino Immigrants at the Polls: Foreign-born Voter Turnout in the 2002 Election.” *Political Research Quarterly* 58 (1) (March): 79-86.

March 2 – Midterm

Looking to the Future:

Mexican American Empowerment and Inter-Group Cooperation

March 7 – Immigration, “Immigration Reform,” and the Restructuring of Mexican American (and Latino) Politics

Review Gutierrez, chapter 6

DeSipio, chapter 7

March 9 – No class

March 14 – 1) Mexican Americans/Latinos and Multi-Racial Coalitions: Is Los Angeles a Model that Can Be Followed in Other Areas?

2) Concluding thoughts

3) Review for final quiz

** Abrajano, Marisa A.; Jonathan Nagler; and R. Michael Alvarez. 2005. "A Natural Experiment of Race-Based and Issue Voting: The 2001 City of Los Angeles Elections." *Political Research Quarterly* 58 (2) (June): 203-218.

** Lopez, Linda, and Adrian D. Pantoja. 2004. "Beyond Black and White: General Support for Race-Conscious Policies Among African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Whites." *Political Research Quarterly* 57 (4) (December): 633-642.

Essay #3 due at the beginning of class

March 16 – Quiz on theses and methods in class readings