

Racial and Ethnic Minorities in American Politics

Lafayette College, Spring 2014

Professor Brittany Perry

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Course Information:

Time: MW: 12:45-2:00pm

Location: Kirby Hall 204

Office Hours: MW 2:15-3:30pm or by appointment

Office Location: Kirby Hall 110



Course Description:

This course examines the role of racial and ethnic minority groups in United States politics. We will focus on four main minority groups (Blacks, Latinos/Hispanics, Asian Americans and American Indians) assessing their access, engagement, and influence in governmental processes historically and today.

The class will begin with discussions on the social construction of race and move to examine how race has shaped American political institutions over time. Next, we will examine theoretical frameworks for assessing racial and ethnic politics and begin to apply these theories in an effort to explain political attitudes, behavior, and influence of minority groups at various levels of government (local, state and federal). A great deal of attention will be paid to the salience of race in the post-Obama era and key policy debates surrounding race and ethnicity (including affirmative action, voting rights, and immigration policy) that are ongoing among politicians and the public today.

Course Prerequisites: GOVT 101 or permission of instructor

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students should be able to:

- Trace the social origins of race in the United States
- Describe how issues of race and ethnicity have shaped American institutions, laws, and practices over time
- Understand and apply theories of racial and ethnic politics and political behavior
- Analyze current policy debates concerning race and politics in the 21st century

Expectations and Assignments

- **Exams**
 - Exams will be in-class and will consist of both short-answer/identification style questions and longer essay length questions.
 - **Midterm: March 12th**
 - **Final: TBA**
 - **Note: Please do not make any arrangements to leave campus prior to the announcement of the final exam date**

- **Quizzes**
 - In addition to exams, I will give a number of pop quizzes throughout the semester to gauge whether students are completing the assigned readings and understanding key concepts. At the end of the semester, I will drop the lowest quiz score.

- **Two Analytical papers:**
 - (5-6 pages, excluding the bibliography) will address major concepts covered in the course. You will choose to write on **two** of a choice of three paper topics. A detailed description of the assignment will be posted on Moodle and discussed in class. All papers are due at 11:55pm to Moodle (MS Word Doc) on the due date.

 - **Students MUST meet with me during my office hours prior to submitting each of these papers.**
 - Paper 1: Due February 26th
 - Paper 2: Due April 9th
 - Paper 3: Due May 7th

- **Participation**
 - You will be graded on participation in this class. Your grade will be based on the **quality** of your contribution to in-class discussions, debates, and assignments (this may include paper assignments, small group activities, and discussion of current events).
 - To receive an “A” for participation, you must be active in class, asking challenging questions and going the EXTRA mile to understand and analyze material

 - *Note on Attendance: You may have **one** unexcused absence without penalty. Beyond this, each unexcused absence will result in a 5-point deduction from your final participation grade. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from your classmates, as I will not post lecture slides.*

 - In addition to activities in class, students are expected to attend and engage in a number of out-of-classroom activities. These will include campus/local events related to the material discussed in this course, out-of-class film viewings, and required office hour visits. These activities contribute to the four credit hour requirement for this course.

- If you have an excused absence for a scheduled out-of-class activity, you must meet with me to discuss a make-up assignment.

Required Texts

- Paula D. McClain and Joseph Stewart, Jr., "*Can We All Get Along?*" *Racial and Ethnic Minorities in American Politics*, 6th edition. Boulder: Westview Press, 2013.
- All other readings will be posted on Moodle. I will also post relevant news articles, data, etc. as they come up in class. **You will also be responsible for this material.**

Grading

- **Final Grade**

Participation	10%
Quizzes	10%
Analytical Papers	30% (15% each)
Midterm Exam	20%
Cumulative Final Exam	30%
- **Notes on Grading**
 - Any student who is not satisfied with a grade on a given assignment must submit, in writing, a description of the issue in dispute (i.e. what is allegedly mis-graded and why you believe your work is correct). If necessary, I will set up a meeting with the student to discuss the issue. I will then decide whether to raise, lower, or leave the grade unchanged.
 - **VERY IMPORTANT!!! All late assignments will be docked one full letter grade for every day they are late. I will not accept any papers that are more than 4 days late.** Make sure you turn in everything on time.

Grading Scale

A+ 100-98	B+ 89-88	C+ 79-78	D 69-60
A 97-93	B 87-83	C 77-73	F <60
A- 92-90	B- 82-80	C- 72-70	

Other Requirements/Course Information

- I expect everyone in this class to be **RESPECTFUL OF THE OPINIONS OF OTHERS**. During class discussions, I ask that you be courteous of other students and the instructor at all times.
- **The Academic Honesty policy is taken seriously in this class.** Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism or cheating, is a violation of College policy and may result in a failing grade and/or other disciplinary measures. Please review the guidelines on "Principles of Intellectual Honesty" (available in the Student Handbook at:

http://studentlife.lafayette.edu/files/2011/08/studenthandbook_1112.pdf), which elaborate College policy on plagiarism and academic integrity.

- **You may NOT use your cell phone to email or text message in class.** Before you come to class, make sure that your cell phone is turned off and put away.
- You may use laptops in this class, however, if I see you emailing, surfing the Internet, or checking Facebook, I will ask you to put it away and take notes by hand.
- **Accommodations for Students with Disability:** In accordance with Lafayette College policy, reasonable academic accommodations and support services will be available to students who have a documented disability. Students with disabilities should review the information available at: <http://attic.lafayette.edu/disability-services/>.

Federal Credit Hour Statement

The student work in this course is in full compliance with the federal definition of a four credit hour course. Please see the Registrar's Office web site (<http://registrar.lafayette.edu/additional-resources/cep-course-proposal/>) for the full policy and practice statement.

Tentative Class Schedule and Reading Assignments:

Please read in order of assignments. This schedule is subject to slight modifications. New video nights and other events will be included as the semester proceeds. You will have advance notification of any changes.

M: Reading posted on Moodle

Week 1: Jan 27-29: Introduction

M: Introduction

W: McClain and Stewart Chapter 1

Visit from Kaleidoscope(?)

Week 2: Feb 3-5: The Concept of Race

M: Audrey Smedley. 2001. "Social Origins of the Idea of Race." In *Race in the 21st Century*. (M)

W: Melissa Nobles. 2000. *Shades of Citizenship*. Chapters 1 & 2. (M)

Required Film: *Race the Power of an Illusion. "The Story We Tell."* PBS, Watch online by Feb 10th!

Week 3: Feb 10-12: Resources and Status of America's Racial Minorities

M: McClain and Stewart, Timelines (Appendix) and Chapter 2

W: Voting Rights Act (4 sections: Introduction, Before, The VRA, and The Effect on Department of Justice Website- link on Moodle) and Swartz. 2013. "Between the Lines of the Voting Rights Act Opinion." (M)

Week 4: Feb 17-19: Theoretical Frameworks

M: McClain and Garcia (1993). "Expanding Disciplinary Boundaries: Black, Latino and Racial Minority Groups in Political Science." (M)

W: Hero, Rodney E. 1992. *Latinos and the U.S. Political System: Two-Tiered Pluralism* Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Chapter 2 and Chapter 11.

Required Presentation: "Suppressing Citizen Voices? The Impact of Felon Disenfranchisement and Voter ID Laws" Professor Mitchell, February 20, 7:30pm, Kirby 104

Week 5: Feb 24-26: Racial Attitudes: Identity, Ideology and Partisanship

M: McClain and Stewart Chapter 3 (p. 73-100)

W: McClain et al. 2009. "Group Membership, Group Identity and Group Consciousness: Evolving Racial Identity in American Politics." (M)

Required Film: *Walkout (2006)* **or** *Chicano! Taking Back the Schools (1996)*, February 24, 7pm

Required Reading for Film: Chicano Civil Rights Movement TBA (M)

Week 6: March 3-5: Political Participation

M: McClain and Stewart Chapter 3 (p. 100-140)

W: Wong et al. 2008. "Activity amid Diversity: Asian American Political Participation" (M) and

Barreto. 2007. "¡Si se Puede! Latino Candidates and the Mobilization of Latino Voters" (M)

Week 7: March 10-12: Finish-up and Midterm

M: Finish-up and Review

W: Midterm

Week 8: SPRING BREAK!!!!

Week 9: March 24-26: Representation of Racial and Ethnic Minorities: Congress and The Presidency

M: McClain and Stewart. Chapter 4

W: Barbas and Jerit. 2004. "Redistricting Principles and Racial Representation" (M)

Week 10: March 31-April 2: Representation of Racial and Ethnic Minorities: Congress and The Presidency

M: Rouse and Swers. 2011. "Descriptive Representation: Understanding the Impact of Identity on Substantive Representation of Group Interests." (M)

W: Hunt and Wilson. 2009. "Race/Ethnicity, Perceived Discrimination, and Beliefs About the Meaning of an Obama Presidency." (M)

Week 11: April 7-9: Race, Ethnicity and the Supreme Court: A Focus on Affirmative Action

M: Readings on Affirmative Action TBA (M)

W: "Understanding Fisher v. University of Texas"

Week 12: April 14-16: Race and State Politics

M: Hero. 2003. "Racial and Ethnic Diversity and States' Public Policies" In *Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform*. (M)

W: Guest Speaker: State Representative Robert Freeman

Week 13: April 21-23: Race and Urban Politics

M: McClain and Stewart Chapter 5

W: McClain et al. (2007) "Black Americans and Latino Immigrants in a Southern City: Friendly Neighbors or Economic Competitors?" (M)

Week 14: April 28-30: Racial Politics in the 21st Century

M: McClain and Stewart Chapter 6

W: Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich. 2011. "The Sweet Enchantment of Color-Blind Racism in Obamerica" (M)

Required Film: *Crash (2004)*

Week 15: May 5-7: Racial Politics in the 21st Century Cont.

M: TBA: Topic to be determined by class OR Discussion of Crash (reading TBD)

W: TBA