

Dr. José E. Cruz
University at Albany-SUNY
POS 410Z Class # 8883
Spring 2019

Minorities in the Politico-Legal System
MWF 11:30 am-12:25 pm LC 15

NOTA BENE: If there is something in this syllabus that is missing, incorrect, inconsistent, or not clear, check with me immediately. Thanks!

Course Description

This course will examine the African American and Latino experience in the American politico-legal system, with special attention to the relationship between these groups, the dynamics of minority politics, and the affirmative action debate.

Learning Objectives

1. Through lectures, readings, and class discussion students will understand the concept of “minority” and how minorities in the United States have fared politically over time.
2. Students will also acquire historical and contemporary knowledge about specific population groups in American society and they will learn how public policy and the law interact to produce social, political, and economic outcomes.
3. Students will write two five-page papers, each based on a case-study of a minority group in the United States, and one five-page reflective journal to exercise and hone their ability to think critically, write clearly, analytically, and thoughtfully. Students will also apply and refine research skills acquired in either a lower-level writing intensive course or in other courses with writing requirements. They will also exercise critical thinking skills through observation, processing of sense data and ideas, and serious reflection.

Required Texts

Elijah Anderson, The Cosmopolitan Canopy

Arlene Davila, Barrio Dreams. recalled Available online at University library.

David Gutierrez, Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants and the Politics of Ethnicity

Jane Junn and Kerry L. Haynie, New Race Politics in America. Recalled. Once it is available to me I will place on reserve at University library.

Ira Katznelson, When Affirmative Action Was White. Recalled. Once it is available to me I will place on reserve at University library.

Selected Readings available on Blackboard

Course requirements

Class participation - 30% of course grade.

- Class participation will be structured to include two presentations on a class reading (10%) and a presentation of the first of the two five-page papers (15%). After the first presentation students will be given feedback for improvement if necessary. The guiding principles of class participation will be learning objectives 1 and 2 above.
 - Presenters will answer the following questions: 1. What is the main point of the chapter/reading? 2. What did you learn? 3. What did you find particularly interesting or provocative? 4. Is (are) there any value judgment(s), position(s), claim(s) that you disagree with and/or assumption(s) that is (are) unfounded? 5. Is there anything in the chapter/reading that was not entirely clear? These questions must be addressed. Each student will address the class as if he/she was giving a lecture and will make an effort to generate a group discussion. I will turn the answer(s) to question number two into a question(s) and at the end of the review of each book we will go over the resulting set of questions in plenary.
 - Guidelines for presentations: Presenters should speak loudly, projecting their voice so it can reach the far end of the room. They should avoid excessive reliance on reading their presentation, make sure their diction is clear, and their voice attuned to the environment (e.g. if someone coughs at the same time you say something, repeat what you said). They should make good eye contact with the audience and speak at a pace that allows the audience to process the information. The presentation should be dynamic and coherent with a clear sense of a beginning, middle, and end. Powerpoint slides should be concise and readable all the way to the back of the room. The allotted time for presentations will be about ten minutes. In addition to the instructions noted above, these guidelines will be the basis for the evaluation of presentations.
- Participation (asking questions, answering questions, making comments, helping generate class discussion) is also expected from everyone independently of assigned presentations. (5%)

Attendance - 10% of course grade: Students who are absent are responsible for the material missed. If you know you have to miss class in advance, let me know and if you don't know in advance let me know why you were absent in a timely fashion. Please do so in writing, by email. At the end

of the semester, I will look at your record and take into consideration the reasons for absences before assigning the final attendance grade.

Two five-page papers - 20% of course grade each. Each paper will be a critical review of one book of your choosing on minority politics. If you are not sure what a critical review is, let me know. **The books you choose must be other than the required readings and must be approved by the instructor (See Schedule Below).** Students will present the first one of these papers in class as part of the participation requirement. Be advised that it is entirely possible that your grade for the **presentation** may be different than the grade for the **paper presented** as the criteria for evaluating an oral presentation will be different than the criteria to evaluate the written work. The papers and will be evaluated for the quality of the writing and for the quality of the exercise of the critical thinking skills noted in learning objective 3 above.

You will submit your papers in class typed double space, 12 pt font. Any academic format is acceptable. I will return your first paper with a preliminary grade and suggestions for improvement, unless you receive a grade of A (100-93) or A- (90-92). You will then re-submit a final version of the paper. I will place the papers with the final grades (as scores) in my mail-folder in the contact office for your review. **See deadlines below.**

One five-page minimum reflective journal - 20% of course grade. This journal will be due on **May 11 no later than 5:30 pm**, typed, **single space**, and submitted electronically as a word file.

You will structure your reflections around the question: what does being a minority mean to me and others? Anderson's book provides a model for this requirement.

Reflective journaling is based on observation, participation, and then writing. For this journal, your participation and observation will be in class, in your residential hall or neighborhood, and in any other public or private spaces that you frequent. You should avoid *ad hominen* criticism as well as direct references to individuals but if these are necessary they should be disguised to protect their privacy. As time goes by, make sure you review past entries as this will help you keep a coherent flow and help you save time when putting the complete journal in shape for submission. The final journal can be in the form of a diary or it can be organized topographically, e.g. observations carried out over the course of the semester at a frequent location or locations, or by issue.

You should jot down your reflections while they are fresh. It is important to write regularly so that you can keep your journal organized and also to make sure you have enough material at the end of the course to meet the minimum

page requirement. You can write as many entries as you like but I suggest a minimum of two entries per week.

Remember these steps: 1. keep your journal at close range, whether you use a paper notebook, your smart phone, tablet or laptop computer; 2. make regular entries; 3. participate, observe, and summarize; 4. review regularly.¹

The journal will be evaluated for the quality of its observations, the processing of sense data and ideas, and depth of reflection, as noted in learning objective 3 above.

Late submissions will incur a penalty, up to 5 points depending on the circumstances.

| Timeline for 5-page Papers & Journal | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Selection of two books for approval due | January 30, by email, 5:30pm |
| Submission of draft of first paper | February 18, in class. |
| First draft paper returned for revisions | February 27, in class. |
| Revised first paper due | March 8, in class. |
| First paper graded and returned | March 25, in my mailbox, HU B16 |
| Second paper due | March 29, in class. |
| Second paper graded and returned | April 12, in my mailbox, HU B16 |
| Reflective Journal due | By email, May 11, 5:30 pm. |

Grading

The course is graded A-E. But the course grade will be tabulated according to the percentages for each requirement using the grade scale below.

| Score Grade Scale | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| A 93-100 | B+ 87-89 | C+ 77-79 | D+ 67-69 | E 0-59 |
| A- 90-92 | B 83-86 | C 73-76 | D 63-66 | |
| | B- 80-82 | C- 70-72 | D- 60-62 | |

For example, the five-page papers are 20% each of the course grade. If you earn 90 (A-) and 89 (B+) points for the papers, multiply .20 (20%) by your scores of 90 and 89 and you'll see that you earned 35.8 points out of the total 40 points

¹ Adapted from *How to Write a Reflective Journal with Tips and Examples*
<https://penzu.com/how-to-write-a-reflective-journal> <Accessed August 8, 2017>

possible for this requirement; that is also 35.8 points towards the total of 100 for the course. The course grade will be tabulated according to this procedure.

Policies

The syllabus cannot possibly include every single provision, rule, guideline, or course specification/requirement. Therefore, when in doubt, make sure to ask for clarification or guidance. Otherwise, common sense and my discretion prevail.

There will be no opportunities for extra credit in this class.

Please note that, as indicated in the University's Undergraduate Bulletin: "Each instructor retains the right to modify the syllabus and give notice in class of any modifications in a timely fashion. Students are responsible to apprise themselves of such notices."

Concerning standards of academic integrity, freedom of expression, and attendance and timely completion of course requirements please refer to: http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html

Concerning medical excuses please refer to: http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml

There will be no posting of lecture or discussion notes on Blackboard.

I will alert students to especially significant facts and statements through emphasis and repetition but the burden of proof is on the student to understand the main points, facts, arguments, issues, debates, and interpretations.

Take advantage of my office hours if you wish to follow up on a class discussion, especially if during class time you are uncertain of what you think about a given question or topic or something comes to mind after the fact that you would like addressed or clarified.

I assume that everyone knows how to behave appropriately during class and unless a student's disregard for the basic norms of classroom behavior is flagrant, I will try not to put anyone on the spot. I may call your attention privately but I will do so on a discretionary basis.

Use of laptop computers, tablets or any other hand held devices in the classroom will be limited to taking notes or to reference class readings.

If you must eat, be discreet.

If you are late, sit close to the door to avoid disruption. Also, if you must leave class early, let me know in advance, preferably in person rather than by e-mail, and sit close to the door.

Office Hours

MW, 1-2:30 pm, HU B16. If you are unable to meet during scheduled office hours, we can meet at a mutually convenient day and time by appointment. Contact information: jcruz@albany.edu E-mails sent after business hours will be answered the following day or Monday, if possible. Business hours are 9am-5pm.

Course Schedule

January

23 - Review of syllabus; Assignment of chapter presentations; Discussion: "What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Minorities?"

25 - Background lecture on Slavery; Reading on Blackboard: "Battle Scars"

28 - Discussion of "The Originalist Perspective" and "The Incoherence of Antonin Scalia." Readings available on Blackboard

30 - Junn and Haynie, Chs. 1,2,3; **Book choices due by email no later than 5:30 pm.**

February

1 - NO CLASS-Cruz at Intercultural Learning Workshop

4 - Junn and Haynie, Chs. 4,5

6 - Junn and Haynie, Chs. 6,7

8 - Junn and Haynie, Ch. 8,9

11 - Coalition Politics: Discussion of Cruz on interminority relations in urban settings. Reading available on Blackboard.

13 - Coalition Politics: Discussion of Cruz on interminority relations in legislative settings. Reading available on Blackboard.

15 - Gutierrez, Ch. 1-2

18 - Gutierrez, Chs. 3-4; **Draft of first paper due in class.**

20 - Gutierrez, Ch. 5-6

22 - Puerto Ricans and liberal democracy: Discussion of Cruz, chapters 1,2 of *Puerto Rican Identity, Political Development, and Democracy in New York, 1960-1990*. Chapters available on Blackboard; Book available on reserve.

25 - Puerto Ricans and liberal democracy: Discussion of Cruz, chapter 9 of *Puerto Rican Identity, Political Development, and Democracy in New York, 1960-1990*. Chapter available on Blackboard; Book available on reserve.

27 - Cruz, "*Pluralism and Ethnicity*." Reading available on Blackboard. **First paper draft returned to students for revisions.**

March

1 - Cruz, "*Barriers to Political Participation*." Reading available on Blackboard.

- 4 - Dávila, Chs. 1-2
- 6 - Dávila, Chs. 3-4
- 8 - Dávila, Chs. 5-6; **Revised first paper due in class.**
- 11 - Anderson, Chs. 1-2
- 13 - Anderson, Chs. 3-4
- 15 - Anderson, Chs. 5-6
- 18-22 - Spring Break
- 25 - Anderson, Chs. 7-8; **First paper graded and returned in my mailbox HU B16.**
- 27 - Anderson, Ch. 9.
- 29 - Book Review Presentations; **Second paper due in class.**

April

- 1 - Book Review Presentations
- 3 - Book Review Presentations
- 5 - Book Review Presentations
- 8 - Book Review Presentations. Watch NYT OpDoc on Race on Blackboard. Reading on Blackboard: "You Will Not Replace Us."
- 10 - Discussion of NYT OpDoc on Race and "You Will Not Replace Us."
- 12 - Katznelson, Chs. 1,2; **Second paper graded and returned.**
- 15 - Katznelson, Chs. 3,4
- 17 - Katznelson, Chs. 5,6
- 19 - *The Affirmative Action Debate*, reading on Blackboard.
- 22 - NO CLASS Classes resume 12:35 pm
- 24 - Review of Affirmative Action Cases. Powerpoint.
- 26 - Review of Affirmative Action Cases. Powerpoint.
- 29 - *Fisher v. Texas* (2013). Powerpoint.

May

- 1 - *Fisher v. Texas* (2013), continued. Powerpoint.
- 3 - *Fisher v. Texas* (2013), continued. Powerpoint.
- 6 - Harvard case: "AA Bans, What Can We Learn?," "Admissions on Trial," "Defending Harvard." Readings on Blackboard.
- 8 - Group Reflection on the meaning of minority status. Last day of classes.
- 11 - **Reflective journal due 5:30 pm by email.**