Racial and Ethnic Politics (GOVT239)

Professor: Yamil R. Velez

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Office Hours: 1-2 PM on Tuesday and by appointment.

Office Location: Room 213 in the Public Affairs Center.

Course Overview: This course is a historical and contemporary examination of the role of race in American politics and the political behavior of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos in the U.S. Topics will include, but are not limited to, racialization and the persistence of racial segregation in the 21st century, gentrification, racial and ethnic group identities and consciousness in shaping minority political attitudes and behavior, challenges of minority representation, the role of race in campaigns, and the complex relationship between minorities and America’s two major political parties.

Course Structure: This course will involve a mixture of lecture, discussion, and interactive exercises. Students are expected to complete a term paper applying one of the theories we covered in class to a contemporary political phenomenon. Two exams, one covering the first half and the other covering the second half of the course, will be administered. Every week, students are expected to contribute questions to the class NotaBene.

Course Objectives: By the end of the course, students will:

- Have a better conceptual understanding of race and ethnicity
- Have a better appreciation of the role of identity in shaping political attitudes and behavior
- Be more knowledgeable about the history of racial inequality in the United States
- Be better equipped to dissect complex issues and arguments
- Become acquainted with the research process


Course Outline

1. Introduction to Class
   - January 21: Course overview
   - January 26: Race and Ethnicity: what is race? what underlies a racial identity?  
     Delgado and Stefancic (2001)

2. Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity
   - January 28: Mad Scientists: has race always been viewed as fixed and immutable? how have those in power used this to justify discrimination? what does “science” have to do with it?  
     Dennis (1995)

\[All articles will be made available on the course’s NotaBene site.\]
3. Descriptive Theories of Intergroup Dynamics

- **February 2**: Realistic Group Conflict: *is racial conflict grounded in realistic concerns such as competition over resources?*
  - Sherif et al. (1988)
- **February 4**: Symbolic Politics: *how do intangible factors and perceptions play a role in shaping racial antipathy?*
  - Sears (1988)
  - Kunda (1990)

4. The Legacy of Slavery

- **February 9**: “The Great and Foul Stain”: *is slavery built into the constitution? did the founding fathers predict the eventual dissolution of slavery?*
  - McClain and Stewart (2014)
  *Chapter 1*
- **February 11**: Reverberations: *how did the institution impact the development of Southern politics? does the legacy of slavery still affect American politics today?*
  - King and Smith (2005)

5. Racial and Ethnic Inequality

- **February 16**: Institutions and Inequality: *is inequality built into the fabric of American system? how has inequality fluctuated over time?*
  - Pincus (2000)
  - Shapiro (2013)
- **February 18**: From the Bottom Up: *how can individual decisions perpetuate inequality in the absence of explicit government policies?*
  - Pearson, Dovidio, and Gaertner (2009)

6. The Criminal Justice System and Police Brutality

- **February 23**: Origins and Theories: *how has the American criminal justice evolved over time? what is the goal of criminal justice in the age of inequality?*
  - Taibbi and Crabapple (2014)
- **February 25**: Punishment vs. Rehabilitation: *why do citizens and communities vary so much in their approach to crime? what are the political consequences of these policies for minority residents?*
  - Weaver and Lerman (2010)

7. Media, Race, and Politics

- **March 1**: First exam
- **March 3**: Media, Race, and Politics: *how does the media affect the discussion of race in this country? how does this affect public policy?*
8. Citizenship

- **March 22**: The Boundaries of Citizenship: *how has the notion of citizenship changed over time?*
  - Higham (1955)
- **March 24**: Immigration Politics: *what are the determinants of immigration policies and attitudes?*
  - Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014)

9. Political Participation

- **March 29**: Mobilization and Empowerment: *when do minority groups mobilize and engage in electoral politics? what does empowerment have to do with it?*
  - McClain and Stewart (2014)
    * Chapter 3
- **March 31**: Taking to the Streets: *when do minority groups protest and how effective is it as a form of political participation?*
  - Steil and Vasi (2014)

10. Representation

- **April 5**: Who Gets What: *how do minority groups get a say in government? what does having a say even mean?*
  - Mansbridge (1999)
  - Dovi (2002)
- **April 7**: Minority Representation: *when are minority group interests best represented? how do gerrymandered districts facilitate or inhibit representation?*
  - Clifford (2012)
  - Broockman (2013)

11. Partisanship and Policy Making

- **April 12**: Race and Realignments: *how does the two-party system shape racial and ethnic policies?*
  - Baum et al. (2014)
- **April 14**: From Local to Federal: *how do different levels of government interact to produce more/less egalitarian policies?*
  - McClain and Stewart (2014)
    * Chapter 3

12. Intragroup and Intraminority Relations

- **April 19**: Linked Fates: *how do minority group members perceive others in their group? how does this shape political behavior?*
– McClain and Stewart (2014)
  * Chapters 5-6
– Dawson (1994)

• April 21: Coalitions: *when do minority groups come together to fight injustices? when do we see conflict?*
  – Kim and Lee (2001)
  – Craig and Richeson (2012)

13. Expanding the Terrain

• April 31: Place and Politics: *are theories of racial relations geographically bound?*
  – Hopkins (2010)
  – Enos (2014)

• April 29: Race in Comparative Context: *how do theories of racial and ethnic politics in the United States translate to other contexts?*
  – Valentino et al. (2011)

14. In Conclusion

• May 3: Race, Ethnicity, and the 2016 Election
• May 5: Second Exam

Grading System:

I use the standard grading system at Wesleyan.

Grade Breakdown:

1. Exams (40%): Two exams worth 20% of your grade each. One exam will cover the first half of the course. The other exam will cover the second half.

2. Prospectus (10%): The class consists of two papers. One paper with a detailed outline and another paper that implements the outline. The outline should be 3-5 pages long detailing which theory you wish you explore, why the issue is relevant, and how you will collect and present evidence. Please feel free to contact me at any stage of the process for help. Also, please read ahead if you are interested in topics that will not be covered until after the prospectus is due.

3. Final Paper (30%): The research paper will be 10-15 pages long with an introduction, literature review, theory and hypothesis, description and presentation of evidence, discussion, and conclusion section.

4. Participation (20%): Participation in the course will be determined by your engagement in class and outside of it. Your grade will suffer if you do not participate in class discussions or post to the NotaBene.

Important Dates: Papers are due before class.

• March 1: First Exam
Readings: All of the readings will be posted on the class' NotaBene site. NotaBene is an interactive annotation tool for articles and books. This site will allow you to annotate and ask me questions while you read the material. Every Sunday, I will post answers to your questions. This is a good tool if you do not understand something in the article or if the article gives you a research idea. I strongly recommend using this service as we move through the course.

Extra Help: Students are expected to hand in their own work. Do not hesitate to come to my office during office hours to discuss an assignment or any aspect of the course.

Late Work: Late research paper assignments will lose 2/3 of a letter grade (e.g., a B+ becomes B-) for each day they are late. An assignment is considered one day late if it is submitted more than 10 minutes after the stated deadline. The assignment becomes two days late 24 hours after the deadline, 3 days late after 48 hours, 4 days late after 72 hours, and 5 days late after 96 hours. Assignments over five days late will not be accepted for credit.

Contacting the Instructor: I encourage you to contact me with questions and concerns about the course content and assignments. Please refer to me as Professor Velez in all correspondence. In general, if you have a clarification question you can reach me over e-mail or on my office phone. Questions about course material, grades, or how to structure your research paper are best dealt with in office hours where we can have a more productive conversation than over e-mail. If my office hours do not work for you because of your class schedule, work schedule, or another important commitment, I am also available by appointment. I cannot guarantee that if you e-mail me shortly before an assignment is due that I will be able to answer your questions, so please make sure and e-mail me early if you have a time-specific question.

Contested Grades: If you wish to contest a grade you must submit a written explanation of why you believe the grade is inaccurate within two weeks of getting the assignment back. You must wait 24 hours from the time the assignment is returned before you submit the written explanation. I will not discuss grades until 24 hours after the assignment is passed back. If you ask me to reevaluate your grade then I reserve the right to either raise or lower your grade based on my reevaluation. This policy is meant to address disagreements with my assessment of your work. It does not pertain to calculation errors on my part. If you believe I have made a mistake adding up points, converting your points to a percentage, etc. you can let me know immediately, and I will be happy to correct any mistakes. Grades will not be rounded up.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-2332 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

Technology in the Classroom: You may not use laptops or tablets (unless you contact me about an
exception).

**Academic Integrity**: Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person’s work as your own is always wrong. I expect students to follow the Wesleyan honor code and I will report any cases of academic dishonesty to the Honor Board.

Please read this for more information: [Wesleyan Honor Code](#)

For information on plagiarism: [Plagiarism, Student Handbook](#)

**Title IX**: Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972 states that no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. See [Title IX at Wesleyan](#) for more information.

**Syllabus**: Note that this syllabus is a rough guide and subject to change.