Race, Ethnicity and the American Political System

This course will explore the way that race and ethnicity have helped to shape politics and society in the United States. Constructions of race and ethnicity have been important parts of American society since the founding era and continue to be resonant in the contemporary era. The election of the first African American president and conflicts over immigration and the Mexican border are two of the most recent manifestations of these issues. This course will use a wide variety of primary and secondary sources to explore the place of race and ethnicity in a variety of institutions and sectors of society. We will explore ideas such as the notion of a ‘post-racial’ society and also look at how institutions such as the American welfare state were created in a manner attuned to the politics of race at their founding. In addition, the issue of immigration will often be explored in the context of racial and ethnic politics. Aristide Zolberg has characterized the United States as a ‘nation by design’ and we will be exploring the development of immigration policy in tandem with other issues such as the development of civil rights policy. After beginning with an overview of current issues, the course will take a generally historical trajectory. While we will be exploring these through historical development, a focus on particular institutions or social movements will animate our discussions. As the historical trajectory of race and ethnicity is explored the role of the Supreme Court, the development of the American welfare state and battles over immigration policy will each be explored. An introductory course in American politics is not necessary to take this course and an effort will be made to combine knowledge of the topic with an understanding of how policy and institutions work.

The course will also devote attention to how identity formation inspires political participation and attitudes, exploring the contemporary challenges of an increasingly diverse society. Attention will also be devoted to intersectionality in order to situate race and ethnicity and explore connects with areas such as gender and sexuality.

Students completing this course will gain the ability to critically assess the role of race and ethnicity in shaping American political development. Students will be not only to explore racial and ethnic politics but will also see how race and ethnicity are embedded throughout issues of American politics. In addition, students will also gain an understanding on how race and ethnicity intersects with other forms of difference in American politics and society.

Assignments
1. Participation (20%)-Students are expected to attend class regularly and participate in an informed manner. Quality and quantity of participation are important. This class will be run on the basis of Socratic questioning and discussion and formal lectures will not be given. The instructor will work to assist students in the reading and provide information when necessary but the course will depend on students ability to participate in topic and informed discussions. Since these issues are very controversial and often have a direct impact on the lived experience of people in the course, civility and a respect for the
dignity of every member of the class is absolutely essential. Excessive unexcused absences will result in a reduced participation grade.

2. Blackboard postings (10%)-Each student will be required to post on Blackboard once per week with a 100-200 word reaction to the reading. Students may comment on reading assigned for any class in the given week but must respond at least once per week. These responses should not be summaries of the reading or expressions of personal opinion that fail to show engagement with the readings. They should be well written short statements in which students describe their reaction to the reading. While students should feel free to be critical, please keep your critiques constructive. Blackboard postings will be due at 9pm the day before the class session in which the particular reading is scheduled for discussion. Students who write critiques that show a serious effort to engage the readings will receive full credit.

3. Short Paper (10%)-Students will write a 3 page paper at the beginning of the course regarding their view of the current condition of race, ethnicity and American politics. Students will be asked to reread this paper later in the course to see if their ideas have changed as a result of the course. The instructor will provide extensive feedback on this assignment in order to make clear the writing expectations in the course and also to provide students with an understanding of their areas of strength and areas of growth.

4. Take Home Midterm (30%)-A take home midterm will be distributed in class October 8th and due October 15th. It will consist of a 6-8 page essay answering one question selected from a list of 5 questions. No outside research will be required but students must refer to specific readings in their essays. Essays should be well organized, stylistically strong and show a serious engagement in the topics. The format for the midterm will be discussed extensively in class. The midterm will be open book.

5. Take Home Final (30%)-On the last day of class a take-home final will be distributed. It will consist of one 8-10 page essay from a list of five questions. The final will be due on the day of the classes scheduled final. No outside research will be required but students must refer to specific readings in their essays. Essays should be well organized, stylistically strong and show a serious engagement in the topics. The format of the final will be discussed extensively by the instructor. The final will be open book.

6. All writing assignments must be submitted in order to pass the course.

**Grading**
The grading scale for the course will be as follows:
A: 93-100%
A-: 90-92%
B+:88-89%
B:83-87%
B-:80-82%
C+: 78-79%
C: 73-77%
C-:70-72%
D: 60-69%
F: 59% and Below

**Readings**
The following books are available in the College Bookstore:

Victoria Hattam  *In the Shadow of Race: Jews, Latinos, and Immigrant Politics in the United States.*
Hazel Rose Marcus and Paula M.L. Moya  *Doing Race: 21 Essays for the 21st Century*

Other readings will be made available from Blackboard.

The Hattam book is on reserve from the Mudd Library. The Marcus and Moya book unfortunately is not part of the Mudd collection since it is a new publication.

**Course Policies**
1. The short paper and take home midterm and final are all due on the dates explained in the syllabus. No extensions will be given except in extraordinary circumstances such as documented medical emergencies. Students who do not turn in the short paper and midterm on the due date will be penalized one full letter grade for each class period following the assignment due date. Students who do not turn in the final on time will be penalized one letter grade for each day the final is not turned in.
2. Use of laptop computers and portable internet devices should be minimized.
4. Any student with a documented disability should consult the instructor to arrange appropriate accommodation.

**Schedule**

**Part I: Introduction**

September 8th  Introduction

September 10th  **What is Race and Ethnicity?**
Doing Race, Pg. 1-32

September 13th  **Why and How Should We Study Race and Ethnicity?**
Doing Race, Pg 32-62

September 15th  **Race, Ethnicity and the Politics of Everyday Life**
Doing Race, Pg. 62-93

September 17th  **Historical Conceptions of Race and Ethnicity**
Matthew Snipp, “Defining Race and Ethnicity: The Constitution, the Supreme Court and the Census.” Marcus and Moya, Pg. 105-122

**Part II: Race, Ethnicity and American Political Institutions and Behavior**

September 20th  **A Nation by Design?: Immigration Policy and Politics**
Aristide Zolberg, Introductory Chapter  *A Nation by Design*

**Short Paper 1 Due**
September 22nd **Modes of Incorporation**

September 24th **Interrogating the Race/Ethnicity Distinction**
Victoria Hattam, *In the Shadow of Race*, Chapter 1

September 27th **Ethnicity, Americanism and Immigration**
Victoria Hattam, *In the Shadow of Race*, Chapter 3

September 29th **Jews and Latinos: The Boundaries of Race and Ethnicity**
Victoria Hattam, *In the Shadow of Race*, Chapter 4

October 1st **Race and the Welfare State: Social Security, Unemployment and Welfare**
Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative was White*, Chapter 2

October 4th **Internment, Restriction and the Paradox of the Model Minority**
Gordon Chang, “Eternally Foreign: Asian Americans, History and Race.” Marcus and Moya, Pg. 216-233

October 6th **Civil Rights and the Courts: Voting, Education and Access**
*Smith v. Allwright*
*Brown v. Board of Education*

October 8th **Protected Classes**
*Hernandez v. Texas*

Take Home Mid-Term Distributed

October 11th **Weak State, Strong Policy?**
Robert Lieberman, Chapter 8 “Weak State, Strong: Paradoxes of Antidiscrimination Policy” *Shaping Race Policy* Pg. 174-201

October 13th **Immigration Reform and the Politics of Labor and Demography**
Aristide Zolberg *A Nation by Design* Chapter 9

October 15th **Civil Rights Leaders: Movement Politics and Directions**
Adolph Reed, “The Allure of Malcolm X and the Changing Character of Black Politics.” In *Stirrings in the Jug*, Pg. 197-224

Take Home Mid-Term Due

October 18th **Racial and Ethnic Classifications**
Victoria Hattam, *In the Shadow of Race*. Chapter 5

October 20th **Political Incorporation, Political Economy and the “Underclass”**
October 22nd **Political Incorporation and Political Coalitions**
Victoria Hattam, *In the Shadow of Race*. Chapter 6

November 1st **National Politics: Barack Obama, Sonia Sotomayor and the Post-Racial Era**

November 3rd **Affirmative Action and Its Discontents**
*Regents of California v. Bakke*
*Grutter v. Bollinger*

November 5th **Race, Ethnicity and Education**
Linda Darling-Hammond. “Structured for Failure for Failure: Race, Resources, and Student Achievement.” Markus and Moya, Pg. 295-31

November 10th **Race, Institutions and Disenfranchisement: the case of the Criminal Justice System**

November 12th **Contemporary Intergroup Relations, Political Economy and Racial/Ethnic Succession**
Albert M. Camarillo. “Going Back to Compton: Real Estate, Racial Politics, and Black-Brown Relations.” Markus and Moya Pg. 274-294

**Part III. Identity, Transnationalism and Intersectionality**

November 15th **Politics of the Everyday: Identity Formation**
Hazel Rose Marcus. “Who am I? Race, Ethnicity and Identity.” Markus and Moya Pg. 359-389

November 17th **Arabs, Islam and the Politics of Immigration in the Post-9/11 World**
Joel Beinin. “Knowing the “Other”: Arabs, Islam and the West.” Markus and Moya Pg. 199-215

November 19th **Backlash, Whiteness and Changing Demographics**

November 22nd **Cultural Politics: The Case of Native Americans**
Stephanie A. Fryberg and Alissa Watts. “We’re Honoring You, Dude.: Myths, Mascots and American Indians.” Markus and Moya, Pg. 458-480

November 29th **Intersectionality: Situating Gender and Sexuality with Race and Ethnicity**
December 1<sup>st</sup> **Post-Racial, Biracial and Multiracial: Contemporary Identity Challenges**
Michele Elam, “The “Ethno-Ambiguo Hostility Syndrome”: Mixed Race, Identity and Popular Culture.” Markus and Moya, Pg. 528-546

December 3<sup>rd</sup> **Contemporary Immigration: Transnationalism and Nativism**
Hattam, *In the Shadow of Race*, Chapter 7

December 6<sup>th</sup> **Contemporary Immigration: New Possibilities and a New Civil Rights Movement?**
Victoria Hattam and Carlos Yescas. “From Immigration and Race to Sex and Faith: Reimagining the Politics of Opposition.” *Social Research* Spring 2010

December 8<sup>th</sup> **Contemporary Challenges and International Implications of Race and Ethnicity**

December 10<sup>th</sup> **Visual Politics: A Library Session**
Readings to be announced

December 13<sup>th</sup> **Conclusion of the Course**
**Take Home Final Distributed**

**Finals are due Monday December 20<sup>th</sup> at 2pm by e-mail to matt.gritter@oberlin.edu. I will supply an e-mail receipt to all students when they send their exam.**