RACE, ETHNICITY, AND ELECTORAL POLITICS IN THE U.S.

MONDAY/WEDNESDAY, 2:00 – 3:20
COURSE LOCATION: SHIFFMAN 201

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

Race and ethnicity have profoundly affected the path of political development and patterns of political behavior throughout American history. This course will introduce students to the historical and social scientific literature on race, ethnicity, and electoral politics in America. Do American campaigns and elections, and US political processes more broadly, facilitate or ameliorate inequalities of race and ethnicity? The course is divided into four sections. We will first analyze how the founders dealt with issues of race, ethnicity, and democratic participation. In Section II, we examine how race affected partisan realignment and party development in the twentieth century. Many felt that the long struggle for civil rights and equal representation was completed with the passage of landmark federal legislation in the 1960s. But are African-Americans are other racial and ethnic minorities fairly represented in US politics today? The readings in Section III examine the racial dynamics of participation and representation in contemporary America. Finally, we discuss the historic election of Barack Obama in 2008 and his reelection in 2012 to evaluate whether Obama’s ascendancy has helped foster greater equality along racial and ethnic lines. Did Obama’s election finally usher in an era of racial equality, or did it merely generate contentious opposition and retrenchment?

We will spend time analyzing and discussing how race and ethnicity influence campaigns and elections taking place during the semester. I recommend checking the following websites on a daily basis for up-to-date information about current elections:


Like many courses that address issues in American politics, we will often discuss and analyze subjects that are sometimes considered controversial. It is imperative that every participant in the class (instructor and students, alike) strive to maintain an environment that facilitates learning. Differences of opinion should be respected and we will maintain a high level of civility when asking questions and making comments.

LEARNING GOALS

The purpose of this course is to acquaint students with the scholarly literature on race, ethnicity, and American electoral politics in order to help students better understand the political process and the practice of democracy. The course has four explicit learning goals:

1. To familiarize students with historical and social scientific research on the subjects of race, ethnicity, and elections, and research design and methodology more broadly. Course readings and assignments will help students develop their analytical reasoning, research, and writing skills.
2. To help students understand how the issue of race affected and continues to influence American political development, party realignment and mobilization strategies, public opinion, political participation, representation, and democracy.
3. To analyze how Barack Obama’s election and his presidency have affected racial politics in America.
4. To encourage critical reading and thinking and engaged analysis of important topics in American government and politics. I hope that this course will contribute to a greater awareness of how race affects American politics and a desire to be an active participant in the democratic process.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE BREAKDOWN

Attendance and Participation – 15% of final grade

This course is not designed as a lecture course. I will likely start each class with an overview of the reading assignments, but given the substantive nature of the course, I hope to facilitate conversation and debate about the course material. The reading load for this course is moderate, with roughly 100 pages assigned per week. Students are expected to come to each class prepared.
prepared to take part in active discussion and interrogation of the day’s readings. Students are required to post at least two brief questions or comments on Latte about the readings each week, which will count toward your participation grade for the course. Please post these questions by 10AM each Monday before class. These comments and questions will help guide our discussions in class. Students are also encouraged to share news stories via Latte related to ongoing campaigns that illuminate themes and concepts covered in class. Posting news stories will improve your participation grade, but you are not required to do so. Students are allowed to use two “personal days” without penalty. More than two absences will lower your attendance and participation grade by two points per absence. Absences for special circumstances may be excused, but you must inform the instructor ahead of time in those cases.

Content Analysis of Party Platforms – 25% of final grade
In Section II of the course, we analyze the realignment of the two major political parties along the issues of race, ethnicity, and civil rights. To supplement course readings and discussion, we will conduct content analyses of party platforms to empirically analyze how the parties addressed issues of race and civil rights over time. We will discuss the method of content analysis and conduct preliminary data analysis in class on 10/15. Students will then be equipped to conduct their own content analysis project, which will culminate in a short paper (3-5 pp.), with supplementary tables and figures, due in class on Wednesday, 11/5. Details regarding the content analysis assignment will be distributed in class and posted on Latte.

Mid-term Exam – 25% of final grade
An in-class mid-term exam will be held on Wednesday, 10/8.

Final Research Paper and Preliminary Assignments – 35% of final grade
Students will prepare an original research paper of approximately 8-10 pages that draws on course material and original independent research, due during finals week on 12/15. Students may choose to further analyze a topic covered in class or research a new subject not addressed by course readings. Students will submit two preliminary assignments to ensure successful completion of their research paper: A 1-2 pp. paper proposal on their chosen topic on 11/12 and an annotated bibliography on 11/19. Details regarding the final paper and preliminary assignments will be distributed in class and posted on Latte. The grade breakdown for the final paper and preliminary assignments is as follows:

- Paper Proposal and Consultation (Due 11/12): 5%
- Annotated Bibliography (Due 11/19): 5%
- Final Paper (Due 12/15): 25%

REQUIRED TEXTS

- All other course materials will be made available in a coursepack that you can purchase from Rosanne Colocouris in the Politics Department office (Olin-Sang 204).

DISABILITIES AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, please contact me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as possible. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations, you should contact Beth Rodgers-Kay in Academic Services (x6-3470 or brodgers@brandeis.edu). Letters of accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations, and absolutely before the day of an exam or test. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity (see http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai). Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person provided the source is properly acknowledged. This means that you must use citations and quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by any student. Violations of University policy on academic integrity, described in Section 3 of Rights and Responsibilities, may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, and could end in suspension from the University. Please note you are required to properly cite sources in all assignments for this class. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, it is your
responsibility to ask for clarification. Any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty will be referred to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including but not limited to, failing grades being issued, educational programs, and suspension.

A NOTE ON LAPTOPS, TABLETS, SMARTPHONES, AND OTHER TECHNOLOGICAL DEVICES

In class meetings, you may not use a laptop, tablet, cell phone, or any other similar device. When people use these devices, they distract not only themselves, but also the instructor and others around them. Exceptions will be granted for students who can produce written documentation of such an accommodation.

SUBJECT OUTLINE

I. Race, Democracy, and the American Founding
   • 9/3 The Constitution and Democratic Principles
   • 9/8 The Constitution and the Right to Vote
   • 9/10 Race and the American Political Tradition
   • 9/15 Historical Obstacles to African-American Participation I
   • 9/17 Historical Obstacles to African-American Participation II

II. Race and Party Realignment
   • 9/22 Party Realignment: Concepts and Theories
   • 9/24 Race and Party Realignment: 1928 and 1948
   • 9/29 Civil Rights and the 1960s I
   • 10/1 Civil Rights and the 1960s II
   • 10/6 Mid-term review
   • 10/8 Mid-term exam
   • 10/15 Content Analysis Workshop
   • 10/20 Race and Electoral Capture I
   • 10/22 Race and Electoral Capture II
   • 10/27 Race and Electoral Capture III

III. Contemporary Obstacles to Equality for Minority Voters
   • 10/29 Inequalities of Political Voice
   • 11/3 Race, Redistricting, and Representation
   • 11/5 Voter Identification and Minority Voters
   • 11/10 Changing Demographics: Latino/as
   • 11/12 Changing Demographics: Asian-Americans

IV. Obama’s Election, Racial Resentment, and Tea Party Opposition
   • 11/17 Obama’s Ascendancy: 2008
   • 11/19 Obama’s Reelection
   • 11/24 Obama and Racial (In)Equality
   • 12/1 Final Paper Workshop
   • 12/3 Racial Resentment and Priming
   • 12/8 The Tea Party and Conservative Opposition

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC &amp; READING ASSIGNMENT</th>
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<td>9/3 Wednesday</td>
<td>The Constitution and Democratic Principles</td>
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<td>1. The U.S. Constitution, especially Article I, Sections 1-3; Article II, Section 1; Amendments 1, 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22, 23, 24, 26.</td>
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<td>9/9 Tuesday</td>
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<td>9/17 Wednesday</td>
<td>Historical Obstacles to African-American Political Participation I</td>
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<p>| 9/29       | Race and Party Realignment: Civil Rights and the 1960s I            |                                                                                                                                           |</p>
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<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
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<td>Skills Workshop: Content Analysis</td>
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2. Larry M. Bartels, Hugh Heclo, Rodney E. Hero, and Lawrence Jacobs, “Inequality and American Governance,” in Lawrence R. Jacobs and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Inequality and American Democracy: What We Know and What We Need to Learn* (New York, NY: Russell Sage, 2005), Read pp. 131-137; skim the rest.


**Recommended**


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**11/4 Tuesday**

**Election Day (No Class)**

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**11/5 Wednesday**

**Voter Identification Laws and Minority Voters**


**Recommended**


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**11/10 Monday**

**Changing Demographics: Latino/as**


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**11/12 Wednesday**

**Changing Demographics: Asian-Americans**


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| 12/1       | Final Paper Workshop                       |                                                                                                                                          |
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<th>12/8 Monday</th>
<th><strong>The Tea Party and Conservative Opposition</strong></th>
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