

Department of Political Science
PSC 305: The Politics of Cultural Diversity
Spring 2012
9:45 AM - 10:50 AM
MC 307A

Dr. Martin J. Plax
Office Hours: MWF 8:30-9:30; 11-12
or by appointment

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GENERAL INFORMATION

General Education

This Course meets one University Education Requirement: Social Diversity, specifically, Diversity in the United States.

Grading:

Your grades will be determined *solely* by your performance on three exams, one following each of the sections of the course. Exams will consist of a mixture of true/false, multiple choice and short answer questions. There will be “extra credit” arrangements.

You will be expected to attend all classes, neither come in late nor leave early.

The following grading scale will be used for all assignments:

98-100 = A+	78-79 = C+
94-97 = A	74-77 = C
90-93 = A-	70-73 = C-
88-89 = B+	68-69 = D+
84-87 = B	64-67 = D
80-83 = B-	60-63 = D-
<60 =F	

Academic Integrity

I believe that academic honesty --the fair and straightforward representation of what one has learned, researched, and/or written — is the foundation of a healthy environment for learning. Instructors, administrators, staff, and students alike are responsible for upholding high ethical standards of academic honesty in all academic endeavors.

The academic community supports the policy that any form of academic dishonesty is a serious breach of ethics and shall be dealt with appropriately through the student judicial and shared governance systems. Academic dishonesty includes claiming someone else’s work as one’s own (e.g., plagiarism), seeking an unfair advantage over other students in taking a test or fulfilling an assignment, and committing fraud. Violators will be subject to the Policy on Academic Misconduct (3.2.1) of the University’s Code on Student Conduct.

Students with Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychological, vision, hearing, etc.) who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of that disability should contact the Office of Disability Services at (216) 687-2015. The office is located in MC 147. Once this is accomplished, I will arrange with that office to make accommodations for you regarding your tests.

Argument if the Course

Diversity has been an issue that has been a part of American politics for a long time. Throughout our history, there have been differences of opinion, even serious political conflicts, about how one group or another

should be treated politically. Diversity may be a universal fact, but the acceptance or “celebration” of diversity is not a universal value. Some Americans argue that cultural diversity might contribute to civil discord or even civil war in America, so the question has arisen as to whether diversity should be a universal value. This course will therefore examine a diversity of arguments about diversity.

One of its fundamental arguments is that American history has and continues to be filled with contradictions and ironies. Ironies are revealed when incongruities that excite laughter prove that what appears to be a virtue, proves to be a vice; what appears to be a strength proves to be a weakness, and what appears to offer security, proves to invoke insecurity;

A key concept that serves as a foundation of the analysis of cultural diversity in America is the idea of brown thinking – a topic that will introduce this course and close it. Brown thinking may best be characterized by what it isn’t. It is neither white nor black. Rather than being clear and distinct, it is diverse and ambiguous. While diversity is most often used as a euphemism for racial divisions, this course will demonstrate that diversity is more than about race, which is not to say that race is not a key element in any discussion of divisions in our society and politics.

Nowhere is the debate about the value of diversity more significant than in the change of our society from a manufacturing and service society to a knowledge-based society, a change brought about by the power of new technologies – in electronics and biology. These technologies are creating new opportunities for the accumulation of massive wealth, and thus affecting the conditions of equality, which affects the politics of diversity. But they are also forcing us to ask if the politics of cultural diversity as we know it now will or will not soon become a dinosaur. One of the arguments of this course is that technology is contributing to a decentralization of American political life, where what goes on in Washington will be competing with what goes on in other parts of the world. What will this mean for the future of diversity politics as we are experiencing it today?

Readings for the Course

Three books will be required reading and are available for purchase:

1. ***Dreams from my Father*** by President **Barack Obama**.
Written before he became a political figure, it examines his growing awareness of being black in America, what he tried to accomplish by being a community organizer in Chicago, and how he experienced road blocks, not by white politicians alone, but by black politicians as well.
2. ***Brown: The Last Discovery of America***, by **Richard Rodriguez**.
This book introduces the idea of “brown thinking,” that is, thinking outside the box, and discovering new ways of understanding old categories of thought. Brown thinking is the key to creating success in the market state and the role multicultural can play in that success.
3. ***The Empire Wilderness***, by **Robert D. Kaplan**. Kaplan narrates his experiences in a variety of locations west of the Mississippi River to exhibit just how diverse America is and to demonstrate that changes are taking place that are not necessarily visible to most Americans.

All of the articles and portions of books are available as Assignments on Blackboard.

I will also use Blackboard for announcements, posting of assignments and grades, and communications between the instructor and class. Please be sure that you have an active account and a working knowledge of this resource.

Course Schedule

PART 1: Introduction: The Challenge of Diversity in American Political Life

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>
1/18	Introduction to the Course

I. Diversity Politics Today

- 1/20 “Mormons’ Ad Campaign May Play Out on the ’12 Campaign Trail” (E.R.)
“Muslim woman sues Abercrombie & Fitch over *hijab*” (E.R.)
“Disenfranchise No More”
“What Gay Rights Activists Can Teach the Left About Winning”

II. Diversity and the National Idea of American Politics

- 1/23 Samuel H. Beer, *To Make a Nation* “Introduction” pp. 1-25

III. Diversity and the Politics of Conscience: The Supreme Court and Religion

- 1/25 *W. Va. State Bd. of Educ. v. Barnette* (1947)
1/27 *Everson v. School Bd.* (1947)

IV. Diversity and Affirmative Action: Racial and Gender Equality

- 1/30 Congressional Research Service: *Federal Affirmative Action Law*

V. Ironic Thinking About One’s Own Group

- Cornel West, *Race Matters* (E.R.)
2/1 Introduction/ Ch. 2: The Pitfalls of Racial Reasoning
2/3 Ch. 3 The Crisis of Black Leadership
2/6 Ch. 5: Beyond Affirmative Action
2/8 Ch..8 Malcolm X and Black Rage

2/10 FIRST EXAM

Part 2: The Experience of Diversity

VI. Diversity and the Challenge of Race and Class

- Barack Obama *Dreams from my Father*
2/13 Epigraph, Preface and Introduction, Ch. 1
2/15 Chapter 2-3
2/17 Chs. 4-5
2/20 NO CLASS
2/22 Chs.6-7
2/24 Chs. 8-9
2/27 Chs. 10-11
2/29 Ch. 12-13
3/2 Ch. 14 and Epilogue

VII. Brown Thinking about Diversity

- Richard Rodriguez: *Brown, The Last Discovery of America*
3/5 Preface and Ch. 1 (pp. 1-16)
3/7 Ch. 1 (pp. 16-31)\
3/9 Ch. 2

3/11-18

SPRING BREAK

- 3/19 Ch. 3(pp. 47-67)
3/21 Ch. 3 (pp. 67-79)
3/23 Ch. 4
3/26 Ch. 5
3/28 Ch. 6
3/30 Ch. 7
4/2 Ch. 8-9

4/4 SECOND EXAM

PART 3: The Ironies of Diversity in a Technological America

VIII. Diversity in America West of the Mississippi River

Robert D. Kaplan: *The Empire Wilderness*

- 4/6 Preface, Chapter 1
- 4/9 Chs. 2-3
- 4/11 Chs. 5-6
- 4/13 Chs. 7-8
- 4/16 Ch. 14
- 4/18 Chs. 15-17
- 4/20 Chs. 18-19
- 4/23 Ch. 23 (pp. 242-48, 258-60), Ch. 24 (pp.276-80),
- 4/25 Chs. 26, Ch. 29 (pp. 329-34)

IX. Looking at the Future of Diversity Politics

- 4/27 Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* pp. vii-viii; 147-150; 151-66

- 4/30 Richard Thompson Ford, "Moving Beyond Civil Rights." NYTimes October 27, Nicholas Jackson, "Infographic: The American Identity According to Social Media" and "Social Media and the End of Age, Race, and Gender" *Atlantic* 2011

- 5/2 Hannah Rosin: "The End of Men," *The Atlantic*, (E.R.)

- 5/4 Christia Freeland: "The Rise of the New Ruling Class," *Atlantic*, Jan/Feb. 2011

FINAL EXAM