

Department: POLS/PRLS

Course No.: 249/270

Credits: 3

Title: Latino Political Behavior

Contact: Jennifer Sterling-Folker

Content Area: CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

Diversity: CA4 Non-International

Catalog Copy: POLS 249. Latino Political Behavior. Either semester. Three credits. Exploration of Latino political behavior in the United States, including Latino ethnic identity, political representation, voting behavior, non-electoral political participation, and public opinion.

Course Information:

a. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the study of Latino politics in the U.S. While the course focuses on the political histories of Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans, other Latino populations will be discussed. Different forms of political activities, ranging from electoral behavior to more participatory expressions such as political art, music, and theater are examined.

b. The course is designed to help students develop critical thinking skills, research skills, and factual knowledge of Latino politics through the reading of different texts on Latino politics and supplementary articles. Students are graded on participation, exams, and a research paper. Although the course is primarily lecture intensive, in each session students have the opportunity to participate by asking questions, or providing answers to questions posed by the instructor. Essential to participation is class attendance. Excessive absences or failure to arrive on time will lower a student's participation grade. The mid-term and final exams are done in class and consist of short identifications and an essay question.

Finally each student is required to write a lengthy research paper on any topic dealing with Latino politics.

c. The basic theme of this course is to understand the strategies pursued by different Latino populations in their pursuit of political empowerment. The course reviews the political histories of Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, Central Americans, Dominican Americans and Puerto Ricans. Students come to understand how the political context shapes the tactics and strategies groups pursue to achieve equal rights. Beyond knowing the political histories of each group some of the other topics covered are Latino voting behavior, candidate behavior, public opinion, electoral systems, and minority representation.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed.: The course meets several of the goals listed. The emphasis on participation helps lay the foundation for the development of rhetorical skills. Complex and controversial topics are openly debated in each session. Diversity of opinions is encouraged and in the spirit of true deliberation, critiques are limited to the merits of the argument and not the purveyor of the argument. Critical thinking skills are also fostered through discussion, exams, and research paper. For example, for each of the books selected, 'roundtable' discussions are held. During these sessions each student must be armed with at least three questions they will pose to the class for discussion. During these debates, the instructor takes on the role of moderator and lets students try to arrive at an answer or solution to the questions posed.

The material of the course assists students in acquiring awareness of their era and society, as well as becoming conscious of the diversity of human culture and experience. As noted earlier, the Latino population in the United States is quickly growing and yet little is known of this electorate. The course seeks to acquaint students with the experiences, traditions, and dynamics of Latinos in the United States, and to critically examine and interpret these dynamics. In the process, students develop a greater consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience that exists in their own society.

CA4 Criteria: The course meets several of the criteria that are listed. The study of Latino Political Behavior emphasizes that there are varieties of human experiences, while also considering the similarities that may exist among diverse groups. During class discussions, there is a continual effort to link the experiences of Latino groups with those of the students. Because many of these students are members of one of the previous waves of mass immigration, links are made between the struggles of contemporary immigrants with those of the previous waves. The experience of Latinos is also contextualized within the study of immigration, diversity, and minority politics in America in general.

The course employs a variety of mediums to help bring the diversity of this country and the Latino population up close. For example, documentaries on Latino politics in East Los Angeles, 'El Barrio,' and Little Havana are used to give students a visual of the places and people shaping Latino political life. In

addition, students are encouraged to visit 'El Barrio' and Park Street in Hartford to connect the issues discussed in class with the real world. The course also assists students in developing an awareness of the dynamics of social, political, and/or economic power. This is because at its core, the course deals with issues of racism, prejudice, social violence, and political estrangement. These are issues each of the Latino groups has faced historically and continues facing daily.

Role of Grad Students: Every Fall this course has been taught by Professor Pantoja, a regular faculty members in the department at Storrs. Graduate students are not regularly involved with the teaching of this course (either as TAs or teaching their own sections).

Supplementary Information: This course is crossed-listed as POLS249 and PRLS270. All sponsoring programs have approved the course as a general education course.