

The Politics of Minority Rights

P11 0023

Professor Elizabeth Cohen

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Winter Session 2009

Course Description

This course explores contemporary political debates about minority identities with a focus on their incorporation into public politics. We will examine theories of how identities come to exist and how identity shapes and is shaped by the agenda of contemporary democratic politics. This will enable students to critically consider the place of race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and foreignness in specific public policies. Policies covered include recent same-sex ballot initiatives (e.g. Proposition 8 in California), comprehensive immigration reform, wage equality, and affirmative action. Discussions will refer to primary resource policy documents as well as literary texts, film, public discourse, and images from popular and commercial culture.

Assignments:

Students will complete one written investigative journalism assignment as a group, a take-home midterm examination, and in-class debates. In addition a participation grade will be awarded.

The breakdown of grading percentages is as follows:

Investigative Journalism: 30 %

Midterm: 30 %

Debates: 30 %

Participation: 10 %

Readings are available on Blackboard unless otherwise specified.

Syllabus:

January 5

Introduction:

No required readings

Recommended Reading:

Iris Marion Young, "The Five Faces of Oppression"

January 6-7

Theories of Minority Rights and The Politics of Ethnic Minority Rights

A. Theories

Iris Marion Young, "Social Movements and the Politics of Difference"

B. The Politics of Ethnic Minority Rights: the case of immigration
Jacob Riis, "How the Other Half Lives" (Selections)

White House Brief: On Comprehensive Immigration Reform
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/immigration/>

Project: Using investigative journalism

January 8

The Politics of Gendered Rights

Carole Pateman, "The Sexual Contract"
EEOC Brief on Equal Pay (available at <http://www.eeoc.gov/types/epa.html>)

January 9

The Politics of Linguistic Minority Rights:

Alan Patten, "Political Theory and Language Policy"

January 12

24 Hour Take Home Midterm: (Class will not convene in order to permit students to complete the midterm.)

(January 13)

The Politics of Sexual Minority Rights

Andrew Koppelman, "Dumb and DOMA"

January 14-15

The Politics of Racial Minority Rights

A. Affirmative Action

Derrick Bell, "Learning From Living: The University of Michigan Affirmative Action Cases"
Available at: <http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/forum/symposium-aa/bell-printer.php>

Erin Kelly and Frank Dobbin, "How Affirmative Action Became Diversity Management"

B. Disenfranchisement

Uggen and Manza, "Democratic Contraction"

January 16

Conclusion

Desmond King, "Facing the Future: America's Post-multiculturalist Trajectory"