U.S. Latina/os in Contemporary Society

LAS 6938-SYA 7933

Spring 2016

Thursday Periods 9-11 (4:05-7:05)
Little Hall 0201

Dr. Nicholas Vargas
Nicholas.Vargas@ufl.edu
Office Hrs: Tuesdays 9-10; Wednesdays 9-11
360 Grinter Hall

Description:
This course is organized around themes of racialization, racism, and immigration in the United States, specifically as they relate to contemporary Latina/o experiences. Theoretically, we will highlight current debates regarding whether racialization or assimilation is the more useful lens to understand Latina/o incorporation in the U.S. We will also examine how Latina/os transform and are transformed by the current U.S. system of racial hierarchy whereby Whiteness dominates. Throughout the course, we will compare and contrast experiences between Latina/os, Blacks, Asian Americans, and Whites in U.S. institutions (i.e. education, criminal justice, etc.). We will also consider how skin color, socioeconomic status, national origin, generation, gender, legal status, and other factors come to inform Latina/o racial identities and pattern racial inequality. We will conclude by considering the drastic shift in racialized immigration enforcement over recent decades and its specific implications for Latina/o youth and families today.

Course Goals:

- Learn the foundational and dominant frames for the study of race, immigration, and Latina/os in the social sciences
- Assess different methods and approaches used in the study of Latina/os
- Examine the cues and mechanisms that shape Latina/o racialization in the U.S.
- Consider if/how Latina/os have shaped and been shaped by the U.S. system of racial hierarchy
Assignments and Grading:

Grades will be based on 100 points divided as follows: participation in class discussions (20 points); weekly reading notes (20 points); discussion facilitations (25 points); research project (30 points); research presentation (5 points).

Attendance: Because this is a discussion based seminar, attendance is mandatory. In a small seminar we must rely on one another to attend class and be prepared for discussion each day. An unexcused absence will result in a final grade reduction of 15 points (1.5 full letter grades). Excused absences are permitted only in very extreme circumstances, and with proper documentation detailing said circumstance.

Participation in Class Discussions (20 points)

This course is organized as a seminar. Graduate seminars are most useful and enjoyable when everyone attends class prepared having read ALL assigned readings. Informed questions, comments, and critiques about each assigned reading are expected of all students. This format allows for a deep and critical exploration of ideas. Commentary that does not illustrate knowledge of the assigned readings will not earn points.

Public Weekly Reading Notes (20 points)

For each class, you should write at least 2 pages of double-spaced notes that cover all of the assigned readings. These notes are informal. There is no correct format or style, but they should incorporate independent thoughts, critiques, and commentary. It is expected that you will develop a style that best allows you to organize your thoughts. The following are some guidelines adopted from Jusionyte (2015) to help get you started:

- Write down the main points, new concepts, important quotes or phrases you would like to remember from the readings, and explain them in your own words;
- If you are puzzled by the text (or its parts) or would like to know more about a certain subject, write down your questions;
- You can list the arguments you disagree with and why;
- Use the material from the text to reflect on your research subject or on another topic that is of interest to you;
- Compare and contrast the text with other readings assigned for the class.

Reading notes are due on Canvas by the start of class each week. You should also bring a print copy to class. You will receive credit if you complete the assignment in a timely manner and engage with all assigned texts. *Weekly reading notes are not required during the weeks that you are a discussion facilitator.*

Facilitating Discussions (25 points)

Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to facilitate three class discussions. You will sign up for these days the first day of class. Discussion facilitators are entirely responsible for planning and leading an informed discussion of the readings. This is best accomplished when discussion facilitators provide a list of discussion questions on Canvas several days in advance so that others can consider said questions when reading the material. On some days, there will be two facilitators.
On these days you may work in collaboration or independently--each taking charge of specific readings.

**Research Project (30 points):** One week after the final class meeting of the semester (at 5 p.m. that day), a final paper related to U.S. Latina/os will be due. This paper can be either (1) a work of original empirical social scientific research; or (2) an empirical research proposal. Students must clear their topic with me in person by the end of Week 10. There is no formal page limit, but papers are typically between 18-30 pages in length.

Empirical research proposals should specify the empirical object of study and indicate, with as much specificity as possible, how one would go about studying it, the kinds of sources to be used, the kinds of cases one would select, or the specific dataset and variables to be used, and, in general, how one would deploy ideas or methods covered in this course when addressing that empirical problem. The goal should be to have a project that will be ready for presentation at a conference, and/or a paper that will eventually be suitable for publication. This might also serve as the basis for an MA thesis, or a chapter of a dissertation.

**Presentations (5 points):** On the last day of class, each student will make a 15 minute presentation of his or her paper to the class. This presentation will follow the format of a professional presentation at an academic conference, typically in PowerPoint. We will discuss tips for these presentations in class.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

**(Week 1) Introductions**

1. Latino Americans, PBS Documentary Series: Episodes 1 and 2 (In Class)

**(Week 2) Latino History in the U.S. and Introduction to Migration Theory**

1. Latino Americans, PBS Documentary Series: Episodes 3-6 (Homework)


(Week 3) Theoretical Approaches: Racialization vs Assimilation?


(Week 4) Empirical Debates: Racialization vs. Assimilation


(Week 5) Empirical Debates: Racialization vs. Assimilation (Cont’d)


(Week 6) Identities and Classifications: The Creation of a Racial Category


(Week 7) The Immigration Enforcement Regime


(Week 8) Legal Status in Young Adulthood


(Week 9) SPRING BREAK – Start on Week 10 readings

(Week 10) Educational Inequalities


(Week 11) Punishment and Control


(Week 12) Identities and Classifications: Where Do Latina/os “fit” in the U.S. Racial Hierarchy?


(Week 13) Identities and Classifications: Latina/os and the Cultural Transformations of Race


(Week 14) Skin Color, Discrimination, and Flexible Ethnicity


**Week 15: Families and Relationships**


**Week 16: Presentations**