MC 281: Immigrants, Minorities and American Pluralism  
Spring 2011

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Section 002: TTh 12:40-2 p.m. 331 Case Hall

MC 281 is the second in the required sophomore sequence for Social Relations and Policy. In this course, we will explore the interactions and experiences between and among various groups in American history. We will consider how Americans both defended and contested prevailing definitions of fitness for citizenship and inclusion in the political process and American life, and how groups sought to gain access to social and political equality. This course focuses on the history of relationships within and between different groups in the United States, and explores the complexities of those relations. Rarely centered solely on race or ethnicity, such interactions were also affected by gender, sexuality, religion, nation, and class. We will also explore the shifting definitions of race and ethnicity. Students will analyze not only the experiences of the different groups, but also the connections between them to assess the larger dynamics and their implications for public policy.

Students will develop their critical reading and writing skills using both secondary and primary sources. This course is not a comprehensive social history of immigration and pluralism, but rather focuses on key case studies as a means to assess issues central to these experiences. We will focus primarily on the experiences and interactions of African American, Asian American, Mexican American, and European American communities. We will also explore the construction of the illegal immigrant. Students will do informal writing that will serve as preparation for class discussion and to foster intellectual engagement with the course material. Formal written assignments will help students synthesize and analyze the course material. Grounded in historical work, the issues described remain relevant today, and the course will provide students with a framework for understanding contemporary issues.

**Required Texts:**


*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot (New York: Random House, 2010) [This text will be available in paperback March 8 - you will not need it before then, if you wish to wait for the PB edition.]

Coursepack of articles available at Budget Printing, 974 Trowbridge Road, East Lansing, 351-5060.

Copies of all the required books are on reserve in the Main Library and the James Madison Library.
Course Requirements

Participation: 20%
Response papers (4): 40%
Midterm essay: 20%
Final essay: 20%

Participation and Engagement
Students must plan to play an active and engaged role in this course. Discussions and collaborative activities will form the basis for many of our sessions, and thus student preparation is critical. Preparation includes careful and close reading and annotation of all assigned texts, and completion of any informal writing assignments. Students should always have the assigned text with them. Students need to be actively and verbally engaged in class. Listening is a critical part of participation, and students cannot listen if they converse with those sitting near them. The quantity is not critical in participation, and students who attempt to dominate class discussions, who demonstrate a lack of respect for their peers’ comments, or who fail to listen to others, will see their participation grade suffer. Interested, consistent and informed engagement is key. At the most basic level, participation requires attendance. More than two absences will affect this grade. Save your absences for illness and other unavoidable problems, and keep me informed if circumstances require more absences.

Computers can be a useful resource for students in class, but they should only be used for class purposes, such as taking notes. Students should not check email, search the internet, or do other activities not connected to the course work that day. Students who persist in doing this will see their participation grade suffer significantly.

Attending office hours is considered in the participation grade. Students having difficulty with the course material or assignments need to make an effort to meet with me. If you cannot attend my scheduled office hours, ask for an appointment. If you email me for an appointment, please provide possible times/dates for the meeting, or simply see me before or after class to schedule one.

Essays:
Students will write both a midterm and final essays. Both will be comprehensive and address all course material, including readings, films, and class discussions. The goal is for students to synthesize and analyze the material in an organized and coherent way. Both exams will be take-home and must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins and appropriate documentation of all sources.

Reader responses:
Students will rotate writing reader response papers as a means to prepare for and guide class discussions. Students will be assigned a group (A-C) and each group will be assigned a response paper on a given day. That group will provide a framework for class discussions and collaborate group work. Response papers should be between 750 and 900 words, typed, double-spaced, with one inch margins and pages numbered. Document your source with appropriate page numbers (using in-text citations), but response papers do not require a bibliography or Works Cited.

Response papers should be framed around a central question addressed in the assigned text. The primary goals for these papers is for students to engage with the reading in meaningful ways to foster class discussion, and to make connections with the course as the semester progresses. The best questions often center on issues of difficulty - questions that you are unclear about but that might be answered by writing thoughtfully and reflectively about it. Use the paper to explore issues and your understanding of them using
the assigned reading. The goal is not to “prove” one viewpoint but to explore the complexities and debates in the text. Quality responses will highlight key issues that can generate a thoughtful discussion, and provide direction to that discussion with specific textual evidence. Students should consider the question in the context of the larger argument in the reading as well. Students should deal with specifics in the reading that speak to their question, either in quoted or paraphrased form. Papers should not be opinion pieces on the broader topic, but a close analysis and discussion of the question in the assigned reading. The paper should end with two or three provocative questions that invite further discussion by the group.

To facilitate planning for class, students must email their three questions, indicating the one they will respond to in the paper, to the professor by 8:30 a.m. the day it is due. Students do not need to email the paper. Papers must be posted in the drop-box on Angel by the beginning of class and will be graded electronically unless requested otherwise. Students who want papers graded in print form should submit a printed copy in class.

Students may revise one response paper; a deadline will be announced near the end of the semester. The revised grade will replace the original grade.

Response papers lose their value if submitted late. Papers that are one day late will be penalized by 0.5; papers submitted after one day will see a 1.0 deduction. Papers will not be accepted if more than a week late, unless prior arrangements are made with the professor. If circumstances prevent your completion of an assigned response paper, see me in advance to make alternate arrangements.

Course expectations
As with most Madison courses, students receive an additional credit hour beyond the three hours of contact time in class. The expectation is that this credit is earned through rigorous and extensive work, both in reading and writing, outside of class. It also reflects time spent working with other students and myself either in office hours or informal study sessions.

Honors Option
Students interested in an honors option for this course should see me by January 20.

Plagiarism:
All work submitted for this course must be the original work of the student. Plagiarism is when a writer copies verbatim or paraphrases from the work of another author without documenting the source and thus crediting the original author OR when a person turns in work completed (even in part) by someone else. Using only a phrase written by someone else - from any source, including the Internet - but presenting it as your own is plagiarism. Plagiarism violates the university and college’s code of academic honesty, and is remarkably easy to detect. Students who plagiarize material in a paper will fail the course and under University guidelines, will be reported to the University. The offense will be part of the student’s permanent record. Inadvertent plagiarism - carelessness in documenting quotations or paraphrased material - is not acceptable as college work and thus falls below the criteria for a 2.0. Document your sources carefully.

ALL work for this course (informal and formal) must be original work and should be grounded in the course material and discussions. Any work found to be from another course or earlier era will receive a 0.0.

Course Schedule
What follows is a tentative course schedule for the upcoming semester; changes are likely to occur.
Schedule changes will be announced in class and posted on the course's Angel website. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day they are listed.

Tue. Jan. 11: Course introduction.


Thur. Jan. 27: Read Gilmore 5, “No Middle Ground” (pp. 119-146). Response paper 1B.

Tue. Feb. 1: Film: *The Birth of a Nation* (excerpts).

Thur. Feb. 3: Finish Gilmore (pp. 147-228). Response paper 1C.


Tue. Feb. 15: Jacobson, chapter 7 (pp. 223-245). Response 2C.

Thur. Feb. 17: Each student should write three possible questions (typed) for the midterm. Questions should seek to integrate the course material and explore connections between the groups and events we have studied. Final midterm essay questions posted on Angel on Friday, Feb. 19.


**Midterm essays due on Angel by 4 p.m. Friday, Feb. 25.**

Tue. March 1: Read George Sanchez, chapter 2, “Across the Dividing Line,” (pp. 38-62) in *Becoming Mexican American* (CP).

Spring Break! No class March 8 & 10


Thur. April 7: Read Skloot, The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, 177-231 (thru chapter 28). Response 4B.


Tue. April 19: Film, Farmingville.

Thur. April 21: Discuss film.

Tue. April 26: Workshop on topics for final exam. Each student should write three possible questions (typed). Questions should seek to integrate the course material and explore connections between the groups and events we have studied. Final essay questions will be posted on Angel by Wednesday, April 27.


Final Examination:
Take home final is due by 2:45 p.m. on Thursday, May 5, on Angel.