GOVT 414: Politics of Race and Gender
Spring 2018

Draft Syllabus 11/07/2017

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

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Office hours: Wednesdays 11-12 and by appointment
Telephone: I will provide my cell phone number to all registered students

Class Meetings:
Tuesdays, 7:20pm-10:00pm
Location: Fairfax Campus, Krug Hall 19

OVERVIEW
This course examines historical and structural roots of the contemporary politics of race and gender as a foundation for examining current dynamics, implications, and alternatives. Policy making in contexts of structural power asymmetries requires careful attention to the ways in which people’s experiences differ dramatically as a function of social identity and other contextual factors. This course seeks to support students (1) in self-reflective exploration of the dynamics of their own relationships with questions of race and gender and (2) in developing greater understanding, sensitivity and wisdom in addressing contemporary political and social challenges that touch upon issues of race, gender and social identity.

I. Knowledge and Understanding
• Recognize systems and identify system effects, including in complex systems
• Understand the nature and dynamics of structural power
• Understand the role of context, perspective, social location and structural power dynamics in shaping diverse experiences and interpretations of the “same” events, policies, etc.
• Consider and understand events, policies, norms and practices from perspectives and points of view that diverge from one’s own
• Excavate blind spots and unintended consequences
• Develop critical consciousness and awareness of layered meanings in popular and media representations of current events and in policy debates

II. Professional Development
• Empathic listening, learning and dialogue across differences
• Increased valuing of and appreciation for diversity and difference
• Improved capacities for self-reflection and ability to identify blind-spots and assumptions
• Improved ability to resolve conflicts

III. Skills
• Presentation and oral skills
• Writing skills
• Self-Reflective skills
• Identifying complex systems and their effects in diverse contexts
READINGS

Books: (feel free to get any edition as long as you take responsibility for bridging differences yourself; specific chapters to be assigned will be listed in the detailed syllabus to be distributed on the first day of class or ahead of time on blackboard/emailed to registered students)

Alexander, Michelle. The New Jim Crow
Flynn, Andrea & Susan Holmberg. The Hidden Rules of Race: Barriers to an Inclusive Economy
Macy, Joanna & Chris Johnstone. Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We’re in without Going Crazy
Perkins, John. The New Confessions of an Economic Hit Man
Wagner, Sally R. Sisters in Spirit: Haudenosaunee Influence on Early Feminists
Wallerstein, Immanuel. World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction

Additional readings and materials (articles, videos and book chapters):
Articles, book chapters and other materials to be assigned will be listed by class date and topic in the detailed syllabus distributed on the first day of class (or posted ahead of time on blackboard/emailed to registered students). Students will have free access to these materials through blackboard or other university resources.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

The course requirements include the following (fuller descriptions of assignments will be handed out in class at appropriate times):

1) Small group presentation and leading discussion in class on a policy or current dynamic of your choice relevant to issues of race, gender and intersectionality (15%)
2) Cultural autobiography, ethnographic self-reflection, and identity exploration: 10% (not letter graded)
3) Short reading response essays and/or annotated bibliography of course readings (25%)
4) Final Papers: Group policy report (20%) with individual reflections (20%)
5) Participation and engagement with the materials and class: (10%)

Note: Appropriate effort and participation means that the use of cell phones, text messaging devices, email, web-browsing, computers and so on are NOT permitted to be used in class, unless being used publicly to support the collective class work or for officially approved special needs. If you must use your text messaging device, etc. for an emergency, please take it outside of the classroom.

Please note that full attendance and participation in class meetings is essential. Missing more than two classes will result in point deductions, and twice arriving substantively late/leaving early equates to a missed class.

CREATING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN OUR CLASSROOM

As part of creating a great learning experience for everyone in the classroom, let’s attend to the quality of how we talk with each other, support our own and each other’s learning, and help each other (including helping me!) when we forget. This includes: An emphasis on inquiry rather than advocacy in class conversations, support for multiple different forms of interaction and participation guided by a foundation of mutual valuing and respect, and practicing ways of being in class that are less well developed for you. For example, let’s go beyond the content of what we want to contribute, by attending actively to how we are listening to and conversing with each other in class. Let’s focus on the quality of listening, efforts to build on the contributions of others and on the substance of the readings, asking questions, reflection, thoughtfulness of comments, and other contributions made to the creation of a mutual learning space. Let’s all try to work on whatever is hardest for us: For those who speak up often, try focusing on...
receptive listening; for those who rarely speak, try to add your voice even when it’s not comfortable. Most of all, let’s each of us take responsibility for creating a caring and respectful space where everyone is truly heard and valued. From this foundation, class discussions will promote your ability to understand, contextualize and interpret class materials and the world around you.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

GMU Writing Center. I would encourage you to make use of the GMU Writing Center while you’re here (regardless of how well you write), since getting feedback on writing is often a great learning opportunity and one that’s harder to come by once you leave school. The writing center info can be found online at http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/. For updated information please check for their hours on their website.

New Voices in Public Policy is a journal designed to disseminate student work in SPGIA to a broader audience. It is reviewed by a combined panel of students and faculty. You may self-submit online at: http://journals.gmu.edu/index.php/newvoices If you would like me to consider nominating your course paper for publication in New Voices in Public Policy you may let me know.

SPECIAL NEEDS: If you are a student with special needs that require academic accommodations, please see me and contact Disability Services at 993-2474 or www.ds.gmu.edu as early as possible. All academic accommodations must be arranged through Disability Services and must be prospective rather than retrospective.

Class Meetings and Missed Classes. If you find you have to miss class, please communicate with me. If you find you will have to miss more than two classes during the semester, you may need to complete additional assignments designed to help you assimilate the information and classroom experiences you have missed. Missing a substantial number of classes may jeopardize your grade. I am willing to work with you through difficult situations, especially when you can alert me in advance or as soon as possible, to make it possible to complete the course successfully.

Honor Code: GMU has an honor code and all students are required to know and abide by it. The information is located at: http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/

PLAGIARISM: All submitted work must be your own, and it is imperative that you accurately cite all sources in your work.

- GMU has an official university policy on plagiarism that can be found at: http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/
- Please note that violations of plagiarism policies can result in expulsion from the university.
- Note that ignorance of the policies is not a defense, so please familiarize yourself with what plagiarism is and how to ensure that you don’t commit it. If you have any questions about what constitutes the appropriate use and citation of sources, please talk with me.
- To quote from GMU’s policy as emailed to me on 3/20/08 by the SPP office:

“The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the School of Public Policy. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

“Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things,
the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

“Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

“The faculty of the School of Public Policy takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (eg. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

“To help enforce the SPP policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The SPP policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.”

Note that most cases of plagiarism are unintentional, but are plagiarism nonetheless and carry all the consequences. Here are a few tips to help you avoid making such a serious mistake:

- As a rough guide, if you use three or more consecutive words from a source, use direct quotation marks around the text and cite it (see a style manual for citation guidelines). Direct quotations must be enclosed in quotation marks, with references to the corresponding source and page number(s). Images, data and charts must also be cited and referenced.
- If you use ideas, data, or other material from a source but put it in your own words (paraphrasing), then you must reference the source materials with in-text citations.
- All direct quotations and all paraphrased ideas and data need to be cited in the text where they appear (can be with footnotes, endnotes, or in-text parentheses depending on your manual of style), with a bibliographic entry at the end.
- These requirements apply to all forms of submission or presentations (including oral presentations), and all kinds of sources, including material drawn from the internet.
- IN YOUR NOTES AND ALL WRITING/PRESENTATIONS, to protect yourself from unintentional plagiarism, ALWAYS 1) take the time when copying notes to put quotation marks around direct quotations (and then copy the quoted material accurately – you can use ellipses (…) to skip parts of the quotation and brackets ([ ]) to change specific words such as replacing “He” with “[The informant]” to clarify references, etc.); 2) clearly distinguish direct quotations from paraphrases in your notes so that it’s clear what is your language and what isn’t; 3) clearly distinguish paraphrases of others’ ideas and data from your own original ideas and data so it’s clear in your notes what are your original ideas and what is drawn from others – this is easy to forget over time.
- In sum, always make clear which language and ideas come from which sources, vs. which are your own original ideas, & cite all direct quotations & all paraphrases clearly, fully & appropriately.