Race and Urban Political Economy

STPEC 491H
University of Massachusetts

Fall 2010

Prof. Preston Smith
psmith@mholyoke.edu

Office Hours: Th, 5:30-6:30 or appt

Thursday, 6:30-9
Machmer W-11

This seminar examines the relationship between economic restructuring, social conditions, and the politics of African, Latino and Asian Americans. The main emphasis in the class is gauging the impact of recent urban restructuring on minority residents. We examine what has changed in the last twenty years in urban political economy that makes living in cities so precarious for minority citizens. We assess how private and public investment decisions effect the socio-spatial distribution of jobs and people throughout the metropolitan area. We discuss where minorities fit in polarized labor and housing markets. We look at the global competition for mobile wealth amongst cities where winners experience prosperity and losers suffer decline and despair.

At the same time, we examine the strategies employed by municipal governments, and minority community-based organizations to maneuver effectively in a more integrated global economy. We analyze the political economic basis of interethnic conflict, and social problems. We evaluate the possibilities for neighborhoods building coalitions across race and ethnicity. We attempt to properly assess people of color's attempts to both accommodate and intervene in a urban political economy that continue to leave them socially deprived and feeling defenseless. The seminar will draw upon diverse sources from political science, urban anthropology, sociology, history and economics to evaluate critically these issues.

Course Objectives:

- To understand how racial groups are positioned within the United States social structure and how the patterns of political and economic institutional behavior advantage or disadvantage racial groups as a whole as well as classes and genders within racial groups.
- To effectively understand and explicate arguments presented by the readings and to discuss and debate these arguments with your colleagues in a respectful, but vigorous manner.
- To write with clarity, good organization, and valid interpretation (the use of textual evidence to support your argument).

Required Texts:

Books can be purchased at Food for Thought Bookshop. All other readings are available on electronic reserves.

**Course requirements:**

This is an upper-level seminar; we will spend most of our time discussing the readings as colleagues. Keep in mind that participation includes many things, not only commenting on a point in the readings, but active listening, asking questions, clarifying a point, or responding to a comment made by one of your colleagues. Speaking frequently does not always equal active participation.

Since the course is largely based on our discussions in class, regular attendance is very important. Excessive absences (more than 2 without authorization by a class dean) will reduce your grade.

There will be weekly reading responses (1 page) which you will send to me electronically. Please write in addition to your name, the weekly heading on your paper, and date. In addition, please save the document with that weekly heading, e.g., Race and Immigration. You can comment on themes that tie the readings together, or if two readings disagree comment on that. If you write about something that struck you, explain why it did. At the end of your response, I would like you to pose a question or two as well. The responses will be graded pass/fail. All reading responses should be in your drop box by 6:00 pm on Tuesday. All late submissions will be graded as a failure.

Class participation and your weekly responses will make up 25% of your grade. There will be two other written assignments. A short analytical paper on the readings (5-7 pages) will be 25% of your grade. I will pass out the assignment a week before it is due. A final public policy paper (10-15 pages) will comprise 50% of your grade. I will pass out this assignment in the next few weeks. You must get permission to turn any late papers. Without permission the grade you will receive will be reduced a partial letter grade (e.g., from B+ to a B) each day it is late. You do not have permission unless you hear from me via email or verbally.

**Class Schedule**

**S8**  
An overview of the courses, its themes and structure

**S15**  
Race and Inequality: Theoretical Frameworks


Recommended


**S22 Race and Neoliberal Political Economy**


Recommended


**S29 African Americans and Employment Discrimination**

O6 Racial Minorities and Labor Market Dynamics


Recommended


O13 Race, Gender and Labor Markets


**Recommended**


**O20 Immigrants and Labor Market Niches**


*Short analytical paper due*

**O27 Blacks, Latinos, Immigrants and Labor Markets: Competition or Cooperation**


**N3 Incarceration and Employability**


**N10 Housing Choice and Upward Mobility**


G. Thomas Kingsley and Kathryn L. S. Petit, "Have MTO Families Lost Access to Opportunity Neighborhoods Over Time?" Metropolitan Housing and Communities Center, The Urban Institute, Brief No. 2 (March 2009): 1-12

Recommended


N17 Race, Class and Gentrification


Mary Patillo, "Negotiating Blackness, for Richer or for Poorer," *Ethnography*, vol. 4, no. 1 (March 2003): 61-93.


Recommended


N25 Thanksgiving No class

D1 Political Institutions and Social Mobility


D8 Student Presentations on Public Policy papers

D14 Final Public Policy paper due