Immigrants and Politics in New York City

The vast flow of immigrants into New York City (and other “gateway cities”) since 1965 is reshaping its population composition, neighborhood dynamics, and political constituencies in ways that we are just beginning to understand. Caribbean, Latin American, East and South Asian, European, and African immigrants and their native born children are remaking our already cosmopolitan racial and ethnic groups into an even more varied mix, posing new challenges for inter-group relations and the fair and vigorous political representation of all groups. The emerging new immigrant communities are now contending for power not just against an older set of native born white political elites, but also against native-born minority elites. They are redefining what it means to be a New Yorker, and, ultimately, to be American. Such a profound transformation raises many research questions for social scientists.

This seminar uses New York City as a laboratory to analyze the political changes being brought about by the new immigration. It will cover the existing theoretical and empirical literatures on immigrant political incorporation and enable you to do a "hands on" research project. It has three “learning goals:"

- To give you experience in using quantitative data (Census data, election results), secondary sources (such as the immigrant and neighborhood press), and interviews to describe and analyze the civic and political engagement of an immigrant ethnic group of your choice.
- To enable you to examine the patterns of political activism within your group and how it interacts with other racial/ethnic groups in their environment in pursuit of its political goals, with attention to patterns of conflict and/or cooperation.
- To allow you understand how leadership is developing within your group, how leaders are seeking to promote group identity and activism, and how they are seeking to become elected or appointed office holders as the larger civic and political culture gradually integrates them.

Class members will pursue these goals by: 1) reviewing key studies on the overall process of immigrant political incorporation in New York and other cities, 2) reading studies about political participation within the major immigrant groups, 3) analyzing Census data, election results, and voter history, and available public opinion polls regarding the political engagement and leanings of your chosen group, and 4) undertaking interviews of political elites from your group, focused on the 2013 mayoral and council elections. (We will hold a workshop for students who lack basic quantitative skills and may also substitute further qualitative work for the quantitative analysis.) Class readings will mainly be available in electronic form. The new Center for Urban Research information resource, www.nycelectionatlas.com/

Each student will prepare three reports:

1) By Monday, September 23, circulate a one page outline identifying the group you will study, listing a bibliography of studies on the groups, and describing the key political contests for this group in 2013. (Please choose among the groups for which we have created Census and voter profiles at http://www.nycelectionatlas.com/.)

2) By Tuesday, October 14, circulate a five page profile describing recent political developments within your group, drawing on quantitative data, secondary literature, and interviews, also reviewing how your group voted in the Democratic Primary and Runoff elections.

3) By Friday, December 13. Submit your final group profile.
Course Outline - Fall 2013

1. **Monday, September 9th.** Introduction and overview of main issues of course, discussion what the concept of political incorporation means and its historic relationship to immigration, overview of immigration to the US and NYC, and discussion of course assignments.

   No readings.

   **[Tuesday, September 10th, Democratic Primary Election]**

2. **Monday, September 16th.** Key issues in understanding immigrant political incorporation.


   **Background**


   Jennifer Hochschild and John Mollenkopf, eds., *Bringing Outsiders In: Transatlantic Perspectives on Immigrant Political Incorporation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009)


3. **Monday, September 23rd.** New York City as the World’s Largest Melting Pot

   [Professor Foner will join us for the first hour]

   Nancy Foner, ed., *One Out of Three* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), introduction (1) and chapters by Lobo and Salvo (2), a group of your choice, and Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters (11)

   **Background**

   Roger Waldinger, *Still the Promised City? African Americans and New Immigrants in Post-Industrial New*


4. Monday, September 30th. The Shifting Composition of the New York City Electorate and the Rise of Immigrant Political Influence


Background:


First Assignment Due: Outline of Group Profile

[Tuesday, October 1, Democratic Runoff Election]

5. Monday, October 7th. Native and Immigrant Minorities: Racial and Ethnic Complexities in Political Mobilization and Political Empowerment [Angelo Falcon of NiLP will join us for the class]


Background


Karthick Ramakrishnan and Irene Bloemraad, “Civic Presence and Political Weight: Bringing Power into the Analysis of Immigrant Civic Organizations” (conference on political incorporation of immigrants, UC Berkeley, March 4-5, 2011)


**Second Assignment: Draft Group Profile**

NO CLASS Monday, October 14 - Columbus Day – Class held on Tuesday

6. **Tuesday, October 15th.**: Puerto Ricans and Dominicans


Ed Morales, series of articles on Latino leadership in *City Limits* (November 2012).

Silvio Torres-Saillant and Ramona Hernández, “Dominicans: Community, Culture, and Collective Identity,” in Foner, ed., *One Out of Three*

**Background:**


7. **Monday, October 21st.** The Other Hispanics: Mexicans, Ecuadorans, Colombians, and Peruvians


**Background**


Juan Hernández, Senior Adviser to the President, Office of the President for Mexicans Abroad, Government of Mexico, “Mexico’s New Public Policies for its Citizens Abroad,” (Metropolis Conference Rotterdam, The Netherlands November 28, 2001)


8. **Monday, October 28th.** Native and Immigrant Minorities: African Americans, West Indians, Haitians, and Africans [Professor John Flateau of Medgar Evers College, CUNY, and campaign manager both for Queens Borough President Helen Marshall and Brooklyn Congresswoman Yvette Clarke will join us]

Milton Vickerman, “Jamaicans: Balancing Race and Ethnicity,” in Foner, ed., *One Out of Three*


[http://bronx.ny1.com/content/politics/road_to_city_hall/187897/ny1-online--caribbean-journalists-voice-importance-of-west-indian-vote](http://bronx.ny1.com/content/politics/road_to_city_hall/187897/ny1-online--caribbean-journalists-voice-importance-of-west-indian-vote)

**Background**

J. Phillip Thompson III, Double Trouble: Black Mayors, Black Communities, and the Call for Deep Democracy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), Part II


Yvette Alex-Assensoh and Lawrence J. Hanks, Eds., Black and Multiracial Politics in America (New York: NYU Press, 2000)


Background


Pyong Gap Min, Changes and Conflicts: Korean Immigrant Families in New York (New York: Allyn & Bacon, Inc, 1997) (Little material on politics but good background)


[Tuesday, November 5th, Mayoral Election]

10. **Monday, November 11th.** South Asians: Indians, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, and Indo-Guyanese and Indo-Trinidadians


CHHAYA Community Development Corporation, "A Community’s Vision," (CHHAYA 2011)

**Background**


Compendium of press reports on 2013 election

12. **Monday, December 2nd.** Cleavages and Coalitions II: The Broader Prospects for Multi-ethnic Alliances Among Old and New Immigrant Minorities


Taeku Lee, “Racial Attitudes and the Color Line(s) at the Close of the Twentieth Century,” and


13. **Monday, December 9th.** Student Reports

**Friday, December 13th.** THIRD ASSIGNMENT: Final group profiles due