

GOV 2138: IDENTITY POLITICS IN AMERICAN AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE (Living Syllabus: Subject to Change)

Fall 2025

Time: Mondays, 9:00 – 11:45 AM

Location: CGIS Knafel K450

Professors Mashail Malik and Marcel Roman

CGIS-Knafel, 1737 Cambridge St, Room K203 (Mashail Malik) and Room K422

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Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Overview

This course will examine the varied relationships between identities and political behavior from a social science perspective, bridging two subfields – American Politics and Comparative Politics – that traditionally tend not to be in active conversation. Over the course of the semester, we will investigate questions such as: What is identity and how does it affect social and political outcomes? Why are some identities salient for particular people or groups while others are not? Can we change our identities, and if so, under what circumstances and to what end? How do forces outside of us – such as the state or society – determine which identities are ascribed to us? And what are the causes and consequences of what we term “identity politics”? The capstone project of this course is a research paper by each student on an identity-related topic of their choice.

Course Expectations

Seminar Participation (40%)

A seminar course is only successful if everyone comes fully prepared. We are all expected to attend having carefully and critically read all the assigned reading. The reading load is relatively heavy but reasonable, and on most weeks requires you to read four to five texts. For all the readings, you should pay special attention to the question(s) asked, the key arguments, the methods, and the empirical evidence. Remember to read with an eye toward what the broader debate in the field is and where future research – including your own – might take us. Importantly, even (and especially) if you agree with the conclusions of the text, make sure to come up with potential theoretical, empirical, or normative challenges to the author’s arguments. The purpose of our readings and discussions is not only to learn something about the week’s topic but also to hone our analytical skills. In this spirit, everyone is required to post **two discussion comments or questions on our website by 5 pm before class each week. These discussion posts should engage directly with a reading or readings.** They can be as short as or long as you like, but generally range from 3 sentences to a paragraph (each).

Note: If you must miss seminar for any reason, you are required to submit a response paper that discusses your thoughts on the readings of the assigned texts. This response paper will be due within a week of the missed seminar.

Discussant Presentation (10%)

Each of you is responsible for a single oral presentation, where you will act as if you are a critical discussant of a journal article. In Week 1, you will pick a reading from the syllabus to present on for 15-20 minutes. You can structure this presentation as you wish, but it should include a concise summary of the author's (1) question, (2) argument, (3) research method/evidence and then delve into the bulk of the work, which are (4) your own comments and criticisms, as well as discussion questions for the class.

Prospectus (10%) – Due Friday, October 17th

This is a 4-page research proposal which should consist of a (1) clearly stated research question, (2) a brief outline for your final research proposal, and (3) a preliminary annotated bibliography for your final research proposal (see below). It should state your research question, the literature you will engage with, and the data/case studies you will be looking into to craft your hypotheses and/or provide preliminary evidence. **Note that you will each be presenting your prospectus in class in order to gather preliminary feedback from each other on November 10th.**

Final Research Proposal (40%) – Due Monday, December 8th

Each student will submit a final research proposal on a topic of their choosing (as long as it relates to identity). The proposal should identify a gap in the literature, articulate a clear research question to address this gap, survey the relevant literature, and propose a set of hypotheses. It should then articulate the empirical tests the student would hypothetically carry out to test their theoretical expectations. If you wish, you may include preliminary empirical evidence, though this is not required. **You should meet with me during office hours early in the quarter to discuss your ideas for this proposal.** The proposal should be between 15-20 pages (double-spaced, one-inch margins).

Policies Etc.

Technology Policy

This is a small seminar class requiring engaged discussion and active listening, which means that it is extremely obvious when someone is using their phone or laptop for non-work-related activities. Do not be that person.

Due Dates

Late assignments will not be accepted unless a prior extension has been requested and approved. We will consider requests for extension *made before the deadline* and may grant extensions under

very exceptional circumstances. Late papers will be marked down a third of a grade (example A to A-) for each day following the due date.

Students with Documented Disabilities

Harvard University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although faculty are invited to contact AEO to discuss appropriate implementation. Please call (617) 496-8707 or send an email to aeo@fas.harvard.edu for further information.

Academic Integrity

You are bound by the [Harvard College Honor Code](#). All work submitted for credit is expected to be the student's own work. In the preparation of all papers and other written work, students should distinguish their own ideas and knowledge from information derived from other sources. The term "sources" includes not only published primary and secondary material but also information and opinions gained directly from other people. Computer programs written as part of one's academic work should be regarded as literary creations and subject to the same standards of misrepresentation as copied work. The responsibility for learning the proper forms of citation lies with the individual student. Quotations must be properly placed within quotation marks and must be fully cited. In addition, all paraphrased material must be completely acknowledged. Whenever ideas or facts are derived from a student's research, sources must be indicated. Students who are in any doubt about the preparation of academic work should consult the [Harvard Guide to Using Sources](#), with their instructor, or the GSAS [Fellowships & Writing Center](#) before submitting it.

Collaboration

Collaboration is a key part of academic research, and you are encouraged to help each other develop your ideas and improve your writing. However, all written work you submit must be your own.

Policy on the Use of AI and LLMs

We expect that all work students submit for this course will be their own. We do not allow the use of ChatGPT or any other generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools at all stages of the work process, including preliminary ones. [Writing is thinking](#), so this policy applies not only to the generation of ideas or the evaluation of existing research, but also to all stages of your own writing process. Violations of this policy will be considered academic misconduct, and students who use AI for an assignment will be asked to redo the assignment and will be marked down by two full letter grades. We draw your attention to the fact that different classes at Harvard could implement different AI policies, and it is the student's responsibility to conform to expectations for each course.

Week 1 (September 8th): Introduction and Overview

We will discuss why each of you wishes to take this class as well as your learning goals for the semester. To prepare for this first class, please read the syllabus carefully and pick the top 5 papers you are interested in presenting. We will generate a random ordering of your names, with your position on this list determining your turn to pick your preferred paper. Please also read the following Annual Review pieces, plus the additional classic piece by Tajfel, and come with your ideas about open questions and gaps in the literature:

Kalin, Michael, and Nicholas Sambanis. "How to Think About Social Identity." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21, no. 1 (2018): 239–57.

Segura, Gary M., and Helena Alves Rodrigues. "Comparative Ethnic Politics in the United States: Beyond Black and White." *Annual Review of Political Science* 9, no. 1 (2006): 375–95.

Tajfel, Henri, et al. "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict." *Intergroup relations: Essential readings* (2001): 94-109.

Week 2 (September 15th): Conceptual Debates – What is Identity?

Chandra, Kanchan. "What Is Ethnic Identity and Does It Matter?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 9, no. 1 (2006): 397–424.

Brubaker, Rogers. "Ethnicity without Groups." *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 43, no. 2 (2002): 163–89.

Fearon, James D. 1999. "What is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?" Working Paper.

Horowitz, Donald L. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. pp. 1-64.

Sen, Maya, and Omar Wasow. "Race as a Bundle of Sticks: Designs That Estimate Effects of Seemingly Immutable Characteristics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19, no. 1 (2016): 499–522.

Monk Jr, Ellis P. "Inequality without groups: Contemporary theories of categories, intersectional typicality, and the disaggregation of difference." *Sociological Theory* 40.1 (2022): 3-27.

Week 3 (September 22nd): Identity Change and Political Salience – Part 1

Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2000. "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity." *International Organization* 54(4): 845-877.

Mora, Cristina G. 2014. *Making Hispanics: How Activists, Bureaucrats, and Media Constructed a New American*. University of Chicago Press: Chapters 1, 3 and 4.

Lieberman, Evan S. and Prernah Singh. 2017. "Census Enumeration and Group Conflict: A Global Analysis of the Consequences of Counting." *World Politics* 69(1): 1-53.

Weber, Eugen. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*; Stanford University Press, 1976. Chapter 18 ("Civilizing in Earnest: Schools and Schooling").

Abascal, Maria. 2020. "Contraction as a Response to Group Threat: Demographic Decline and Whites' Classification of People Who are Ambiguously White. *American Sociological Review* 85(2): 298-322.

Amanda Robinson. 2025. *The Political Logic of Cultural Revival*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 1.

Week 4 (September 29th): Identity Change and Political Salience – Part 2

Posner, Daniel. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98 (4): 529-45

Pérez, Efrén O. "Xenophobic rhetoric and its political effects on immigrants and their co-ethnics." *American Journal of Political Science* 59.3 (2015): 549-564.

Ichino, Nahomi, and Noah L. Nathan. "Crossing the Line: Local Ethnic Geography and Voting in Ghana." *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 2 (May 2013): 344–61.

Shayo, Moses. 2009. "A Model of Social Identity with an Application to Political Economy: Nation, Class, and Redistribution." *American Political Science Review* 103(2): 147-174.

Egan, Patrick J. "Identity as dependent variable: How Americans shift their identities to align with their politics." *American Journal of Political Science* 64.3 (2020): 699-716.

Fraga, Bernard L. "Candidates or districts? Reevaluating the role of race in voter turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 60.1 (2016): 97-122.

Week 5 (October 6th): The Psychology and Reduction of Prejudice

Tajfel, Henri. "Experiments in Intergroup Discrimination." *Scientific American* 223, no. 5 (1970): 96–103.

Enos, Ryan D. 2017. *The Space Between Us: Social Geography and Politics*. Cambridge University Press: Chapters 1-3.

Sapolsky, Robert. 2019. "This Is Your Brain on Nationalism: The Biology of Us and Them." *Foreign Affairs* 98 (2): 42-47.

Alrababa'h, Ala', William Marble, Salma Mousa, and Alexandra A. Siegel. "Can Exposure to Celebrities Reduce Prejudice? The Effect of Mohamed Salah on Islamophobic Behaviors and Attitudes." *American Political Science Review* 115, no. 4 (November 2021): 1111–28.

Paluck, Elizabeth Levy, Seth A. Green, and Donald P. Green. "The contact hypothesis re-evaluated." *Behavioural Public Policy* 3.2 (2019): 129-158.

Pérez, Efrén, Crystal Robertson, and Bianca Vicuña. "Prejudiced when climbing up or when falling down? Why some people of color express anti-black racism." *American Political Science Review* 117.1 (2023): 168-183.

Week 6 (October 20th – Note that October 13th is a University Holiday): Migration, Immigration and Identity

Lee, Taeku. "Race, immigration, and the identity-to-politics link." *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 11.1 (2008): 457-478.

Malik, M.; Siddiqui, N.; Zhou, Y.-Y. How Does Coethnicity with Refugees Shape Their Reception? Evidence from Afghan Refugees in Pakistan. Working Paper, 2025.

Pérez, Efrén, Jessica Hyun Jeong Lee, and Gustavo Martir Luna. "Partisans of Color: Asian American and Latino Party ID in an Era of Racialization and Polarization." *American Political Science Review* (2025): 1-17.

Thachil, T. "Do Rural Migrants Divide Ethnically in the City? Evidence from an Ethnographic Experiment in India." *American Journal of Political Science* 2017, 61 (3), 584–602. DOI: 10.1111/ajps.12315

Roman, Marcel F. "Living in the shadow of deportation: How immigration enforcement forestalls political assimilation." *Political Research Quarterly* 76.3 (2023): 1460-1474.

Week 7 (October 27th) The Promises and Pitfalls of “Identity Politics”

Kasara, Kimuli. "Tax Me If You Can: Ethnic Geography, Democracy, and the Taxation of Agriculture in Africa." *The American Political Science Review* 101, no. 1 (2007): 159–72.

Broockman, David E. "Black Politicians Are More Intrinsically Motivated to Advance Blacks' Interests: A Field Experiment Manipulating Political Incentives." *American Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 3 (2013): 521–36.

Crawford, Nyron N. “‘It’s a Racist Plot’: An Experimental Test of the Racial Defense.” *Urban Affairs Review* 58, no. 5 (2022): 1277–1304.

Jensenius, Francesca. “Development from Representation? A Study of Quotas for the Scheduled Castes in India.” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 7, no. 3 (July 2015): 196–220.

Chauchard, Simon. 2014. “Can Descriptive Representation Change Beliefs about a Stigmatized Group? Evidence from Rural India.” *American Political Science Review*.

Mashail Malik. Forthcoming. “Defiant Pride: Origins & Consequences of Ethnic Voting” *American Journal of Political Science*.

Week 8 (November 3rd): The Impact of Diversity

Habyarimana, J.; Humphreys, M.; Posner, D. N.; Weinstein, J. M. *Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?* American Political Science Review 2007, 101 (4), 709–725

Alesina, A.; Baqir, R.; Easterly, W. Public Goods and Ethnic Divisions. NBER Working Paper 6009, April 1997. DOI: 10.3386/w6009.

Baldwin, K.; Huber, J. D. Economic versus Cultural Differences: Forms of Ethnic Diversity and Public Goods Provision. *American Political Science Review* 2010, 104 (4), 644–662.

Abascal, M.; Baldassarri, D. *Love Thy Neighbor? Ethnoracial Diversity and Trust Reexamined.* American Journal of Sociology 2015, 121 (3), 622–782.

Putnam, R. D. *E pluribus unum: Diversity and community in the twenty-first century — the 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture.* Scandinavian Political Studies 2007, 30 (2), 137–174.

Kesler, Christel; Bloemraad, Irene. “Does Immigration Erode Social Capital? The Conditional Effects of Immigration-Generated Diversity on Trust, Membership, and Participation across 19 Countries, 1981–2000.” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 2010, 43 (2), 319–347.

Week 9 (November 10th): In-Class Presentations of Research Prospectuses

Week 10 (November 17th): Race, Caste, Hierarchy, Status, Domination

Wilkerson, Isabel. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*; Random House Publishing Group, 2020. Part One.

Suryanarayan, P. When Do the Poor Vote for the Right Wing and Why: Status Hierarchy and Vote Choice in the Indian States. *Comparative Political Studies* 2019, 52 (2), 209–240.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith; International Publishers, 1971. Sections: “The Intellectuals” and “State and Civil Society.”

Mutz, Diana C. "Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115.19 (2018): E4330-E4339.

Jardina, Ashley, and Robert Mickey. "White racial solidarity and opposition to American democracy." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 699.1 (2022): 79-89.

Bobo, L.; Hutchings, V. L. Perceptions of Racial Group Competition: Extending Blumer's Theory of Group Position to a Multiracial Social Context. *American Sociological Review* 1996, 61 (6), 951–972

Week 11 (November 24th): Intra-Group Relations

White, Ismail K., Chryl N. Laird, and Troy D. Allen. "Selling Out? The Politics of Navigating Conflicts between Racial Group Interest and Self-Interest." *American Political Science Review* 108, no. 4 (November 2014): 783–800.

Fearon, J. D.; Laitin, D. D. Explaining Interethnic Cooperation. *American Political Science Review* 1996, 90 (4), 715–735.

Jefferson, Hakeem. "The Politics of Respectability and Black Americans' Punitive Attitudes." *American Political Science Review* 117, no. 4 (November 2023): 1448–64.

Hickel Jr, Flavio Rogerio, Kassra AR Oskooii, and Loren Collingwood. "Social mobility through immigrant resentment: explaining latinx support for restrictive immigration policies and anti-immigrant candidates." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 88.1 (2024): 51-78.

Lyall, J. "Are Coethnics More Effective Counterinsurgents? Evidence from the Second Chechen War." *American Political Science Review* 2010, 104 (1), 1–20.

Cohen, Cathy J. *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*. 1st edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999, Chp. 2.

Week 12 (December 1st): Adieu/Reflection

We will conduct a “prospectus swap” in Week 12 in preparation for this final class, which will take place as an informal discussion over lunch. You should come having read the prospectus of the classmate assigned to you, and to provide feedback and comments on the ideas therein. You

should also come prepared to share your research proposal and hypotheses with your fellow classmates. Our lunch will be structured as follows:

1. Student X shares briefly their research proposal with the class
2. Student Y, who was assigned to read student X's prospectus, provides some comments and feedback
3. We open the floor for further discussion on the proposal
4. Repeat until we have discussed everyone's proposal