SOCIOLOGY 285: THE SOCIOLOGY OF MEXICAN AMERICANS: IDENTITY AND SCHOOLING IN A CHANGING SOCIAL CONTEXT

Spring Quarter 2002
Course Time: Mondays, 9:30-12:20
Course Room No., Rolfe 3106

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Description:
This graduate seminar examines eight recently published books about Chicanos regarding identity, education and the Los Angeles context. The focus of the course is meant to accompany a major research project by me with a colleague (Professor Ortiz). The research project is titled “The Mexican American People: A Generation Later” and it examines ethnic identity and social mobility among Chicanos in Los Angeles county and San Antonio city. It is an integenerational and longitudinal study of a randomly selected Chicanos in the two cities that were interviewed in 1965 and re-interviewed again in the past three years. In the recent time period, a random sample of their children was also interviewed. The study relies on survey methodology for the two time periods but also uses a limited number of unstructured interviews.

I would hope that students in the course could go away from it with a state-of-the-art understanding of identity and mobility among Mexican Americans. The course is fairly intensive and I expect all students to actively participate in discussions each week. I would hope that students also develop and share research projects and ideas in the course.

Students will be required to submit a three-page report on the readings each week by the beginning of class. These reports should be an evaluation of the readings with a discussion of some aspect that you found interesting rather than a mere summary. At the end of the course, students will complete a take-home essay exam. The discussion in class, weekly reports and the final exam will all be used to evaluate your completion and understanding of the material. For a variety of reasons, I understand that you may not be able to make all the classes or fully read all the books. Therefore, I allow one absence and I require reports for only seven (7) of the eight (8) books.

Books are available at the bookstore and are on reserve at the library.
Guiding Questions:
Following is a list of questions that may help you draw out some of the central concepts or for critically examining the readings. You may also add your own.

What has been the experience of Chicano identity and education in the US, especially in Los Angeles? What is so special about the Chicano experience? How are ideologies about the Chicano experience different from the realities based on the social science evidence? How is it different from that of other groups including African Americans, earlier European immigrants and recent Asian and other Latin American immigrants and their descendants?

How might the experience of Chicanos in Los Angeles be different or similar to that in other places? What is the role of culture? What is the role of race? When is ethnic or racial identity important? What is the difference between race and ethnicity?

What accounts for differences among Chicanos regarding their identities or mobility? How have the educational outcomes and identity of Chicanos changed over time? How does skin color, nationality, generation away from immigration affect their experiences? What is the role of gender and class? Does geographic location, for example living in suburbs or central cities or living in urban or rural areas affect their experiences?

What difference does the social science methodologies (e.g. quantitative, ethnographic, interview, historical) employed make in our understandings about Chicanos?

What are appropriate social policies for improving the conditions of Chicanos?

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week 1 (April 1)
Introduction

Los Angeles: Historical and Contemporary Accounts of Latinization

Week 2 (April 8):

Week 3 (April 15)
Identity: Three Book on the Chicano Racial/Ethnic Identity

Week 4 (April 22)

Week 5 (April 29)

Week 6: (May 6)

Schooling: Three Books on Educational Opportunity:

Week 7 (May 13)

Week 8 (May 20)

Week 9 (May 27)

Week 10 (June 3)
Wrap Up/Final