Goals. The purpose of this course is to consider the politics of ethnic and race focusing on the United States and Western Europe. More specifically the underlying question is how is race in the US similar or different than Islam in Western Europe? Is the American experience and its narrative of the melting pot and assimilation of people from many different lands into "one nation" strikingly different than Europe even though the reality throughout American history is that there were always people considered unassimilatable? Although there have been changes in who these people have been and how they are defined, the most enduring American cleavage has been that of race. There have been questions as well about the extent to which the US is, or should be, a multicultural, multiethnic, or multiracial society and what it is that all citizens must share. Is it language? religion? core values? a set of political institutions? a common identity? In Europe the situation is somewhat different. There, despite the reality that Europe’s large states such as Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy were—and saw themselves as—culturally heterogeneous as recently as a century and a half ago, in the post-WW II period their national narratives each of these countries as homogeneous nations with a distinct identity and national culture. The situation is not quite the same in Spain which has always been aware of distinct nationalities within its borders and the Netherlands or Scandinavia where ethnic diversity is seen as a more distant and/or more marginal phenomenon. As a result, the influx of immigrants in recent decades from former colonies and poorer regions of the world created a strong sense of cultural threat and xenophobia in countries such as France which has about 5 million Muslims mostly from former colonies in North Africa among its 60 million residents (many of whom are citizens) and Denmark with but 60,000 out of 5.5 million people.

The first part of the semester explores the concepts of ethnicity and race in an American context and how they have changed in popular and scholarly usage over time and identifies some conceptual tools to understand this change while the second half of the course turns to Muslims in Europe and investigates the passionate political conflicts that their presence has generated in virtually all western European states. What is the nature of these conflicts and why are they so intense? A central goal of the course is to consider the contextual nature of identities and the contradictions between the apparent “objective” indicators of group identity and their subjective, socially constructed nature. In many ways this is especially well illustrated through examination of the apparently simple question, “Who is white in America?” As historians have shown, answers to this question are anything but straightforward as whiteness is a category whose boundaries have been renegotiated almost each generation. Considering the dynamics of group definition and redefinition is a first step towards examining the political consequences of these dynamics. Who defines group boundaries and privileges and how is this done? How does privilege and inclusion get decided? These questions encourage us to ask who gains and loses from alternative frameworks and how ideas about belonging, inclusion and citizenship interact in specific contexts.

The course seeks to examine the interplay between specific cases and general questions about ethnicity, race and conflict in multicultural, industrial societies. Each student is encouraged to explore these links (and the problems establishing them) in class discussions and papers. The problems the readings raise are important and complicated ones; active engagement for each student through careful reading and writing and dialogue among students is important to making this experience successful. It is important and reasonable to be puzzled about how to make sense of race and ethnicity generally and in specific contexts, uncertain about how to locate one’s own experiences in the theories and cases that are explored, and unclear about what is expected. The best solution is to not suppress these questions but to raise them with each other and in class.
**Class organization, assignments and expectations.** Each class is organized around the assigned readings that must be completed *before* class and students are expected to come to class ready to raise questions and to engage in class discussion. While classes will develop from issues raised in each week’s readings, we should also make an effort to see connections between material considered in different weeks and between general theory and specific cases. The assignments for this course require an on-going process of engagement in the material that will require a good deal of time and energy. Take this course only if you are able to make the commitment it requires.

Attending and participating in class discussions is important and will account for 25% of each student’s grade. Part of participation includes writing nine one page reaction papers on the readings that are due in class. While you can choose which weeks to write comments, you cannot skip more than two weeks in a row at any point. Your comments should incorporate reactions to the readings and/or to issues that were raised in prior classes and readings. These comments are intended to clarify important issues for yourself and to raise issues you feel need additional discussion. Late submissions will affect a student’s grade. These reaction papers are not graded but will always be returned with comments. Sometimes possible topics will be suggested for these postings, but each student should always feel free to write about whatever seems most important or most puzzling. There will be three papers, one that will be due on November 3, a paper exploring the politics of Islam in one western European country due on November 24, and a term paper due at the end of the exam period. The first two papers are 20% of the final grade each and the term paper is 35%. To pass the course each student must complete all assignments.

**Office hours:** If you have questions or comments I can be reached by e-mail. My office is Dalton 100H and my scheduled office hours this semester are Wednesday 10-12 and Thursday 4-6. Please make it a point to come and talk to me during these office hours during the first four weeks of the semester and feel free to come in at any point to discuss your work, material we have covered, or anything else.

**REQUIRED BOOKS**

(AVAILABLE AT THE COLLEGE BOOKSTORE)


The articles and book chapters are available on Blackboard.
WEEKLY TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1: September 4: Introduction

Week 2: September 11: Ethnicity and race as social and political categories

Ethnicity and race are commonly used terms but are also the source of a great deal of confusion and disagreement. For some, these concepts communicate biological differences while others see them as social and cultural constructions. Ponder why it seems so easy for people to “biologize” cultural and social differences and the consequences of doing this. What, if anything, is the difference between ethnicity and race and why is it easier, at least in the US, to have open and relaxed discussions about ethnicity but not about race? Finally, why and how do certain cultural differences matter so much to so many people? Consider how they can generate anxiety, fears, and perceived threats.

Week 3: September 18: Is Islam in Europe like Race or Ethnicity in the US?

At first it seems odd to ask the question that offers a religious difference as parallel to a racial one. Perhaps it isn’t quite so strange if you think about both as culturally, socially or politically significant differences. The readings get you to think about how we can think about these differences as more similar than different and provide important background on Muslims in both the US and Europe. Finally, Rytkonen's article introduces you to one of the many cultural conflicts involving Muslims in Europe in recent years and pushes you to consider what it behind them and why they are so intense.

Week 4: September 25: Race and category construction

Rodriquez asks the simple question of who is Hispanic and how does the US count them? The explanation she offers provides you with a fine account of the diverse ways the US census has thought about and counted ethnicity and race over the years. It also makes clear that the term race means very different things to the country’s Hispanic population than it does to white Americans. Finally, consider how the issue of when, racial categories are mutually exclusive or
when multi-racial identities are, or are not, politically acceptable has come up at several points during Barack Obama’s campaign.

Week 5: October 2: **Identity and category redefinition**


Ethnic and racial categories and their usage change over time. For example, Italians, Irish and Jews, for example, gradually became accepted socially as white in the first half of the 20th century. New categories come into existence and older ones disappear. A particularly good example is the development of the category “Asian American” that developed over the past 30 years. Le Espiritu tells the interesting story of how this took place, the motivations behind the shift, issues of inclusion and exclusion, and the ambivalence it raised for many people. Can you find other parallel cases? Why or why not?

Week 6: October 9: **The role of the past: Memory and contemporary politics**


In ethnic and racial conflicts, competing understandings about the past and cultural memory often become focal points of conflict that puzzle observers. After all why would people get so riled up and even violent about issues such as flags, parades or statues? What does it mean for people to be included or excluded from a society’s symbolic landscape? Who makes such decisions and what do they mean especially in cases involving previously excluded groups such as African-Americans? Finally, ask yourself when the past shapes the present and when the needs of the present shape how we see the past.

Week 7: October 23: **Race, ethnicity and social movements**


A common way that groups work to change their positions in society is through the development of social and political movements working, sometimes peacefully, for social change. A prototypically recognized case is the civil rights movement of the 1950’s and 60’s in the US. Morris tells the story of how the movements worked on the ground in the American south.
Esman asks broader comparative questions about movements and the article on the Obama campaign looks at this political campaign from a social movement perspective.

**Week 8: October 30: Race frames and elections**


It will be a surprise to no one that race has mattered a great deal in American elections. For most of the country’s history, African Americans were first excluded from participation legally and then were unable to stand for office except in areas where they were the overwhelming majority. In more recent years, there has been some change but you should realize that not only is Obama the first serious African American candidate for President from a major party, but he is only the second one elected to the Senate since Reconstruction. The reality is that while African Americans will vote for whites, whites are far more reluctant to vote for African Americans. Mendelberg explains the underlying dynamics at work and watching the Willie Horton and other ads from the past 30 years should give you a good sense of why this is the case.

**Paper 1 Due November 3 12 noon**

**Week 9: November 6: Political conflict and Muslim minorities in Europe**


Who exactly are the Muslims in Europe and where do they come from? What is the role of the colonial experiences in countries such as France, Britain and the Netherlands in shaping each country’s Muslim populations? How do these country’s different positions on issues of citizenship and cultural integration matter? The case of France with its very large Muslim population is particularly relevant here in terms of the intense conflict, including violence, that has taken place there and we will continue to examine this case over the next three weeks.

**Week 10: November 13: Integration versus Multiculturalism**


What does Islam look like in Europe in general and in France in particular? What are the models of a relationship between the older European populations and the Muslim minority? France, the
country with the largest Muslim population in Europe, is a good case to analyze in detail asking what exactly it is that people on both sides want as a relationship. How is this similar or different than what white and black Americans want from each other?

Week 11: November 20: The Case of Islamic Headscarves in France

The conflict over headscarves in France is now 20 years old. Bowen does a fine job of explaining how it developed and why it is so virulent at times. Why, we can ask, would a country that allows public nudity in many places worry when a young girl wears a scarf? Why is it a provocative act rather than a fashion accessory? Why is it that headscarf controversies have arisen in many other European countries as well? To answer this question ask what headscarves represent and consider how and why male control over female bodies has been a concern throughout these disputes?

Paper 2 Due November 24 12 Noon

Week 12: December 3: The Politics of Ethnic Social Conflicts

What is at stake in headscarf conflicts and what are the ways people in France on all sides have framed the conflicts? Consider Bowen’s discussion of communalism, Islamism, sexism as three different frames that have been invoked in the controversy both in France and elsewhere in Europe. Bowen talks about anxiety in this conflict. What does he mean by it and what role does it play in making such disputes difficult to settle constructively.

Week 13: December 10: Open