

**Short Course 10:
Identities and Institutions:
Investigating Cultures, Structures
and Subject**
*Sponsor: Organized Section Politics
and History*

This short course led by Victoria Hattam and Anne Norton will focus on series of debates, inquiries and critiques of new methods and fields of research concerning cultural studies and political culture, new institutionalism and poststructuralism, and the impact of feminism and race studies on the notion of the subject. The seminar will read both works that make crucial methodological contributions and works in politics, history, and related disciplines that put those insights and analyses into practice.

Cultures. Why traditional “political culture” is inadequate and what is emerging to replace it. In this field, new work in political science is drawing from—and influencing—cultural studies and anthropology. The term “culture” no longer refers to a “residual variable,” remaining after everything “political” has been precipitated. That leaves us with critical methodological questions. To begin with: When—and how—is culture political?

Structures. The influence of the new institutionalism calls for a re-examination of the theoretical justifications for work on institutions. We will draw on work from Foucault, Luhmann and others who have given new energy to examinations of the structures and genealogies of states and institutions.

Subjects. Poststructuralism, critical race studies and feminism have given new energy to studies of identity even as they have put identity and subjects in question. We will address race and gender issues, the constitution of identities, methods for historicizing the rational actor, and critiques of identity politics.

The object of the short course is to clarify new methods for a more historical political science and a more rigorous examination of history. Registration details are in the back of this issue of *PS*.

**Looking for Results: The
Minority Graduate Fellowship
Program, 1969-1994***

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Descriptions of the American Political Science Association’s Minority Graduate Fellowship Program are often confined to short paragraphs in promotional brochures. “In 1969,” intones the measured voice of historical synopsis, “the APSA’s Committee on the Status of Blacks in the Profession recognized the need to overcome the obstacles that were precluding minority students from pursuing advanced degrees in political science. . . .” We learn that each year, promising students of political science are chosen as fellows and every doctoral department in the country is encouraged to provide them with financial assistance. We know that in 1983, the APSA began offering similar fellowships to Latino students and that as of this year, over 40 APSA fellows have earned their doctorates.

Though informational literature does not generally explain why it is important to take an active role in populating the discipline with more minority professors, the reasoning behind the Minority Fellowship Program is sound. The effort to open the profession to a more representative faculty came from a desire not only to improve the lot of young minority students whose talent for political science scholarship remained untapped, but in the belief that the addition of new, different faces and backgrounds to faculties was essential for the enrichment of political science itself.

“There is something wrong with political science,” declared the Ad Hoc Committee on Mexican Americans in the Profession in 1970, “when we (1) fail to interpret the political presence of eight or more million people, and (2) when we fail to recruit and train more than a handful of their representatives” (Avalos 1991, 241). Jewel Prestage, the first African American woman to receive the doctorate in political science, wrote in 1969 that, further-

more, the problems of the discipline were of great consequence outside the university. Political science, she insisted, is responsible for helping to bring about “a society more responsive to the needs of all its citizens” (Prestage 1969, 23).

The Minority Graduate Fellowship Program was conceived to help push society toward being more representative and responsive, and it is sensible to determine if it is working. Are more minority professors being recruited and retained on political science faculties? If so, are they accounting for a change in the way the discipline is taught and thought about? Is there a more serious consideration of “minority politics” and are the more traditional areas of study re-evaluating their approaches to politics in light of minority issues?

In addition, the measure of success for the APSA’s Fellowship Program is not only a function of the discipline’s intellectual development. The administrative aspects of the profession—tenure, for instance—are inextricably linked to the state of political science. If one accepts the fact that the areas collectively known as “minority politics” have been primarily developed by minority political scientists themselves (McClain and Garcia 1993), it is not difficult to see that the health of political science is dependent on parity in professional advancement.

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In 1969, when the Minority Graduate Fellowship Program was begun, only 63 African Americans held a Ph.D. in political science. The APSA numbered 12,000 members at the time (Prestage 1969, 1). By 1977, this number swelled to over 200 and from 1978 to 1980, an additional 133 African Americans earned their doctorates (Woodard and Preston 1985, 81-2).

During this period, there was unprecedented growth in the fields of “minority politics,” a reductive title for the emerging studies of African American, Latino, Asian American and Native American politics. The development of these fields, especially African American politics,¹ is well-documented in

“Expanding Disciplinary Boundaries,” by Paula McClain and John Garcia. They maintain that today, African American politics, the best-established study of the minority politics group, is defined by vigorous debate in a wide range of sub-fields (McClain and Garcia 1993).

Dr. Catherine Rudder, Executive Director of the APSA, makes the connection between these parallel trends explicit. “African Americans and Latinos have created, opened up and developed the fields of African American and Latino politics,” she says, “Without these scholars, there would not have been the same degree of impetus, energy or amount of scholarship.”

And the importance of the APSA’s program is not just academic. Minority professors teaching political science serve as role models for minority students who might not have otherwise considered pursuing graduate studies. It underscores the point for students of all backgrounds, Rudder says, “that scholarship is not a matter of race.”

The skeptic who says that the Minority Fellowship Program does make scholarship a matter of race because it presumes that minority professors will have a positive effect simply by showing up to class, does not, according to Rudder, understand the program. The APSA selects talented minority students with great potential for graduate study and connects them with graduate programs that, for whatever reason, might have difficulty locating them otherwise. The fellows are students who, in a truly meritocratic society, would likely be encouraged into the academy on the basis of their aptitude but because of financial exigencies or obstinate assumptions about what types of people become professors, cast their lots elsewhere. Rudder puts it succinctly. “[The Minority Graduate Fellowship Program] finds people who ought to be professors and encourages them to be professors.”

The Minority Fellowship Program has helped open the doors to political science and, in theory, guarantees a return on its own investment. With more political scientists of color serving as role

models on faculties across the country, minority students should no longer reflexively rule out pursuing an academic career.

Sadly, that is not the case. The number of African Americans beginning doctoral study in political science plummeted from an encouraging 11 percent of all students in the fall of 1975 to five percent in 1982 (Woodard and Preston 1985, 84). Considering that the average time between the undergraduate degree and the Ph.D. is 11 years and that between 1975 and 1982, African Americans did not improve their three percent share of political science faculty positions (Preston and Woodard 1984, 788-89), the number of African Americans in the profession is persistently low and, by all indications, the situation will only get worse. Where are the African American students of political science?

The 1993 edition of the *Guide to Graduate & Professional Fellowships for Minority Students* published by *The Black Collegian*, asked a similar question in an article entitled “Wanted: Great Professors of Color! Who Will Answer the Call?” Though the article by Clement A. White, a language and literature professor at the University of Rhode Island, was necessarily upbeat about the merits and rewards of life as a professor, it did not sugar-coat the experiences of minority students in graduate school. One student said that after attending a predominately black undergraduate institution, graduate school made him feel like he was “behind enemy lines.”

White cited what he called typical complaints of African American graduate students: the faculty sees them as tokens; there are not enough minority professors or students to identify with; they are treated condescendingly by faculty and students; the course offerings do not address minority experiences (White 1993, 28). This unscientific collection of complaints is likely a combination of reality and perception, but word gets around. Why should minority students be willing to commit tremendous amounts of time, energy and money to a graduate education if it

will likely be an unpleasant process?

Desiree Pedescleaux, professor of political science at Spelman College and a former APSA Minority Graduate Fellow, says that though she never felt like she was “behind enemy lines” while working on her doctorate at Yale University, graduate studies can indeed be more difficult for minority students. Part of the problem is with the institutions themselves. “Universities are not doing their jobs in terms of . . . providing a supportive environment,” she says. She points to the experience of young, white scholars who are taken under the wings of white mentors on the faculty. “That doesn’t happen too often for African Americans,” who may find out only after formal, year-end evaluations how their work is being received.

Pedescleaux nevertheless thinks that declining rates of African American students entering doctoral programs are not solely a function of being repelled by unfriendly universities. Students, she says, are just not interested in political science. She laments the decline in funding for the APSA’s Ralph Bunche Summer Institute which provides a two-course, six-week program in the issues and tools of political science to prepare and excite young African American students for graduate work. The Institute, which had to be scaled back in 1993 because of waning foundation and government sponsorship, successfully propels students toward careers in political science and counteracts what Pedescleaux describes as students’ priorities and their impressions of the field: “They don’t think they can make money.”²

But even if the Bunche Summer Institute increases interest in political science graduate school and even if the Minority Fellowship Program helps young African American scholars get there, there is no guarantee that the profession will then give them a full and fair range of professional opportunities. Between 1980 and 1990, the percentage of non-African American faculty that held full professorships grew while there was no change in

the number of African Americans in the same category. In addition, the share of tenured positions (full and associate professors) for each group remained unchanged for the same period (Ards and Woodard 1992, 256-58).

It is certainly true that, as a group, it is harder to get promoted if you are not present in significant numbers, but there may be other forces preventing minority professors from getting tenure. As an example, Maurice Woodard, Professor of Political Science at Howard University and Staff Associate at the APSA, offers the observation that minority professors, often the only non-whites in their departments, are responsible for a lot more than teaching and research. "A black professor in an all-white department has to take every responsibility on campus dealing with affirmative action. . . . At some universities, African American professors are on every committee in the county dealing with affirmative action or equal opportunity." The result of being spread so thinly is that minority professors are less able to concentrate on the parts of their jobs more likely to get them tenure.

Even if time were not so precious a commodity, the "publish or perish" doctrine of academics might still be an insurmountable obstacle. Professor Pedescleaux notes that "African American professors have had a hard time being published in the top journals in the discipline" because articles dealing with African American politics are still not taken as seriously. "[The journals] may say, 'We've had a number of these articles. We don't want anymore.'" she says. As a result, African Americans find it more difficult to convince tenure committees that they are capable of writing for conventionally respected publications.

Why, with consciousness raised to previously unheard of heights, with fellowships, equal opportunity programs, affirmative action mandates and constantly renewed commitments to equal treatment; with repeated recognitions of the problem and doubtless genuine intentions to solve it, why is the deck

still stacked against minority professors?

"The problem is the rhetoric versus the reality," says E. Wally Miles, Professor of Political Science at San Diego State University and former Chair of the APSA's Committee on the Status of Blacks in the Profession. Miles says attempts to discredit efforts to bring more minority professors to the field cite the injustice being done to whites. This criticism, what he calls "surface noise," makes it seem as if a lot of minority professors are actually getting into school or landing jobs. "I ask one question," Miles says. "Where are the people you have admitted under this program?" And often they're not there."

Instead of what those making surface noise would have us believe, the little progress made in the 1970s is in danger of being lost. The statistics about African American professors and tenure in political science do not surprise Professor Miles. "It's easier for white professors to find people with common interests, common school ties," he says and, echoing Pedescleaux, continues, "That's not widespread with minority professors. There are not [others] to show them the ropes. . . to admit them to the club."

Though it's not formal statutory discrimination—what Miles calls "old-fashioned discrimination"—that is preventing minority professors from penetrating political science, the obstacles are just as effective. And though he says white professors who are viewed as "outsiders" or as "different" have similar difficulties getting into the club, "African Americans are by definition in that category."

It is a problem which transcends political science. In its collective ruminations 30 years after the civil rights movement, the country still asks itself why inequality persists in the absence of formal discrimination. The answer implicit in inaction is that there is something wrong with minorities who cannot benefit from equal opportunity. The right answer is that the system—and there is ample evidence of this

in political science—is still unable or unwilling to guarantee equality.

What can be done? The Minority Graduate Fellowship Program is a model for how to find highly qualified candidates and to bring them to the attention of doctoral programs at little cost. The Bunche Institute, an extremely positive and effective way to train and excite undergraduate political science students, should not be allowed to founder without reliable financial support in its first decade. It should be expanded for African American students and, as Professor Woodard hopes, a similar program should be started for Latino students. Both of these Summer Institutes should be visited by political science department recruiters. Woodard also thinks that departments should provide funding for the Minority Fellows to visit the APSA's Annual Meeting and other regional meetings to get exposure to people in the field and to help network for employment.

Professor Miles agrees these practical approaches are important but places hope in the benefits of responsible debate. "Reduce the surface noise," he insists, "keep folks focused in on the results."

The search for solutions inevitably boils down to a need to convince institutions to commit limited resources to ideas which may not seem to be in their immediate self-interest. But the degree to which the profession succeeds at welcoming promising scholars of all backgrounds will determine its ability to provide relevant and instructive political analysis. It will determine, in other words, whether or not political science takes seriously its responsibility to serve society.

Notes

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1. African Americans are used throughout not as categorically representative of all minority groups but, because they are the largest minority in political science on whom

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the most statistical attention has been focused, they are taken as indicative of the profession's degree of success in recruiting and retaining minority professors.

2. In the Bunche Institute's 1990 Report to the APSA, Co-Director Lois Moreland concluded that the participating students became more inclined to go to graduate school because they had seen that the skills needed to become political scientists were accessible and that they could in fact do important, satisfying work in the field. As for Pedescleaux's hope that students could be convinced not to use money as the sole reason for choosing a lifetime calling, Moreland noted that of the 14 students (of a total of 25) who initially said they had plans for law school, 10 changed their minds by the end of the summer!

References

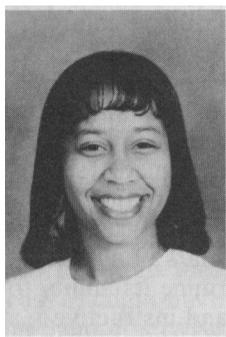
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APSA Minority Fellows Selected

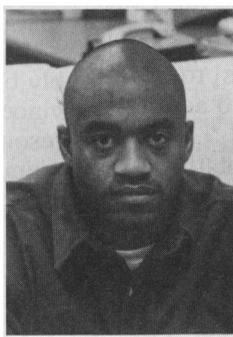
1994-95 APSA African American Fellows

Three outstanding students were selected as the APSA's funded African American Graduate Fellows for 1994-95. They are: Tara Leaman of Cornell University; Linda Ann Signal of Cal Poly State University; and Goldie V. Walker of Hampton University.

Seventeen other talented African American students were selected as non-funded fellows. They are: Encarnacion C. Anderson, Spelman College; Anya P. Bond, Hampton University; Lynda Caine-Barrett, Texas Southern University; Sekou Mace'o-Mustafa Franklin, Santa Clara; Regina C. Gray, Emory University; Tamisha R. Green, Tuskegee University; Maria L. Hicks, North Carolina A&T; Rachel Holmes, University of Chicago; Tammie D. Jackson, Texas Woman's University; Kendra A. King, Colby College; Mark Q. Sawyer, Illinois; Janette L. Shelton, Kentucky State; Wendy G. Smooth, Xavier of Louisiana; Carole L. Strickland, Duke University; Tammalyn Thomas, Mt. Vernon College; Tonia R. Wellons, North Carolina A&T; Kim M. Williams, UC Berkeley.



Anya P. Bond



Sekou Mace'o-Mustafa Franklin



Rachel Holmes



Tammie D. Jackson



Kendra A. King



Wendy G. Smooth



Kim M. Williams