Syllabus Outline

Course Title: Comparing Affirmative Action Policies

Course number: PUAF U8231.001

Meeting Date/s Times: Tuesday, 11-12.50

Location: Room 253, International Affairs Building

Instructor: Daniel Sabbagh

Office hours: Tuesday, 2-4 pm, room 1309, International Affairs Building

Columbia email address: ds2468@columbia.edu

Credits: 3.0 (14 2-hour meetings)

Prerequisites: None

Course overview:

Broadly defined, affirmative action encompasses any measure that allocates goods – such as admission into universities, jobs, promotions, public contracts, business loans, and rights to buy and sell land – on the basis of membership in a designated group, for the purpose of increasing the proportion of members of that group in the relevant labor force, entrepreneurial class, or university student population, where they are currently underrepresented as a result of past or present discrimination. The existence of such measures may result from constitutional mandates, laws, administrative regulations – such as requirements on public contractors –, court orders or voluntary initiatives. Their goal is to counter deeply entrenched social practices that reproduce group-structured inequality even in the absence of intentional discrimination.

The course will consist in a comparative exploration of this subset of “antidiscrimination policies”, without conflating the topic with the related issue of “multiculturalism”. It will draw on sociological, historical, legal, philosophical and economic material and will consider the national experiences of several countries, including the United States, India, South Africa, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, Canada and France. Among other things, the course will attempt to clarify the analytical and empirical connections between “racism”, “discrimination”, and “affirmative action”; to disaggregate the notion of “discrimination” so as to make explicit some distinctions that are relevant to policy analysis in all the countries under examination (disparate treatment versus disparate impact, intentional versus unintentional discrimination, value-driven versus “statistical” discrimination); to distinguish and assess in each case the potential justifications for affirmative action (the “corrective justice” argument; the “diversity” argument; the “deracialization” argument) – while accounting for the predominance of some over others in political and legal debates; to identify the empirical effects and side effects of affirmative action – and of its legitimization by legal institutions; last but not least, to establish a typology of affirmative action policies according to the identification of their intended beneficiaries, the form of the programs involved (quota/non-quota), the level (constitutional, legislative, administrative) of the legal
rules from which they derive, their domain of implementation, and the justifications more or less successfully advanced in their behalf.

**Grading:** Each student will prepare a short, in-class presentation (10-15 minutes; topics listed below) and there will be an exam covering the full semester. The final grade will be determined as follows: exam: 40%; in-class presentation: 30%; general class participation: 30%. An additional paper (8-12 pages) on a topic defined in agreement with the instructor may be written by students willing to improve their grade, in which case it ought to be submitted no later than two weeks before the end of the semester.

**Readings:** electronic reserves

**Reading list** (by order of assignment)


**Week by week list of class schedule/topics:**

**Class 1: January 17:** Organization of the work schedule; an introduction to liberal theories of justice and equality (I)

**Class 2: January 24:** An introduction to liberal theories of justice and equality (II)

**In-class presentation:** An introduction to John Rawls’ *Theory of Justice*

**Assigned readings:**


**Additional references:**

Class 3: January 31: The concept of discrimination (1)

In-class presentation: Discrimination as « disparate treatment », discrimination as « disparate impact », « affirmative action »: definitions and connections

Assigned readings:


Additional references:


Class 4: February 7: The concept of discrimination (2)
In-class presentation: What is « statistical discrimination »?

Assigned readings:


Additional references:


Class 5: February 14: Where do the Data Come from?

In-class presentation: The Uses of Statistics in Antidiscrimination Policies

Assigned readings:


Additional references:


Class 6: February 21: Identifying the Beneficiaries of Affirmative Action: The Indian Dilemma

In-class presentation: The Origins and Consequences of « Reservation » Policies

Assigned readings:


Additional references:


In-class presentation: Who is « Black »?

Assigned readings:


Additional References:

**Class 8: March 7: The U.S. Matrix (II): The History of Affirmative Action**

**In-class presentation:** How did affirmative action come about?

**Assigned readings:**


**Additional references:**


In-class presentation: Should affirmative action be justified as a way of promoting « diversity »?

Assigned readings:


Additional references:


**Class 10: March 28: The Case of Canada**

**In-class presentation: The Canadian « multicultural » model**

**Assigned readings:**


**Additional references:**


**Class 11: April 4: The United Kingdom**

**In-class presentation: The British Antidiscrimination “Model”**

**Assigned readings:**


**Additional references:**
Class 12: April 11: The French « Exception » (I):

In-class presentation: The Issue of Gender Quotas in Political Representation

Assigned readings:


Additional references:


Class 13: April 18: The French « Exception » (II)

In-class presentation: Does affirmative action exist in France?

Assigned readings:

Additional references:


**Class 14: April 25: Affirmative Action for Majority Groups**

In-class presentation: Assessing Affirmative Programs for Majority Groups: Malaysia and South Africa

Assigned readings:


Additional references:


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Additional references relevant for most classes:

