

DEMOCRACY AND DIVERSITY: GOVERNING IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES

Professor: **Ariane CHEBEL D'APPOLONIA**

Session: **July 2026**

Language of instruction: **English**

Number of hours of class: **36h**



Objective of the Course

The purpose of this course is to examine the complex relationship between diversity and identity, and the impact of this relationship on democratic governance – from a multidisciplinary and comparative perspective.

In doing so, the main objectives are:

- To provide a strong knowledge of the main analytical approaches to the study of diversity, identity, and democracy
- To critically evaluate the democratic and undemocratic aspects of diversity management
- To engage students in debates about the situation of ethno-racial minorities based on a review of the evidence drawn from countries around the world
- To improve the ability of the students to provide policy-oriented solutions to the identity crisis faced by increasingly diverse societies



Summary

One of the most crucial challenges to liberal democracies is finding a sustainable balance between two trends. The first relates to diversity (mostly defined by race, ethnicity, national origin, culture, and religion) and requires the ability to protect the right of various groups to recognize and honor their specific differences. The second is sometimes considered antithetical to the first: the need to maintain national unity - through a shared commitment to a set of defining ideals, symbols, rituals, values and principles – in order to strengthen a common identity among citizens, and to prevent social fragmentation.

Efforts to balance these two elements have produced different outcomes over time, depending on ideologies (ranging from nativism to multiculturalism) and contextual factors – such as the volume and composition of immigrant communities, the forms of assimilation processes in different countries, and the evolution of ethno-racial relations resulting from institutional and legal reforms.

After a short historical review of some experimental efforts at balancing (such as the US melting-pot, and the French republican model of integration), this course will focus on three related questions:

- How can diversity management improve or damage democratic governance?
- What are the inclusive and exclusive dimensions of both diversity and unity?
- And, in fact, who actually are the “People” in Western and non-Western democracies?

Heated controversies today frame answers to these questions about how to define the “us” and the “them,” reinforced by polarized conceptions of national unity and identity. The ultimate challenge is therefore to analyze how different people, when defined primarily by their distinct collective identities, can live together in a democratic regime under conditions of equity – and rehabilitate democratic principles.



Organization of the course

The first section is devoted to the presentation and analysis of the dynamically changing concepts of diversity and identity in Western and non-Western democracies. Topics addressed in this section include:

Diversity: Two Trends

- The increase of national diversity over time as a result of migration flows and demographic trend- The “diversification of diversity” into increasing numbers of groups as a result of legal reforms and policies (minority rights, anti-discrimination policies, identity politics)

Types of diversity management: Two Types

- Egalitarian policies (equality before the law, race-neutral policies, color-blind assimilation)
- Differential policies (race-based policies, ethno-racial identity politics, gender/ethno-racial quotas)

Diversity benefits and issues: The Pros and Cons

- Positive aspects and outcomes of diversity (political pluralism, intergroup tolerance, economic competitiveness and creativity)
- Negative aspects and outcomes of diversity (separatism, intergroup intolerance, xenophobia, racism)

Ethno-racial identity: Interpretation and Impact

- Historical construction of ethno-racial identities

- Intergroup conflicts/intergroup coalitions
- Perception of immigrants among majority and minority groups
- Racial prejudice among and between minority groups

National identity: Formulation and Codification

- Historical construction of national identities
- Evolution of census categorizations
- Issues raised by the balance between ethno-racial diversity and national unity

The second section of this course focuses on a critical evaluation of a series of exclusive and inclusive principles, norms, institutions, and processes which are currently part of the diversity-identity dilemma at the heart of liberal democracies. Topics addressed in this section include:

Inclusive diversity: Who is in?

- Contact theory, civic nationalism and norms of inclusion
- Positive aspects of diversity/inclusion policies
- Representative bureaucracy
- Best practices around the world

Exclusive diversity: Who is out?

- Selective exposure theory and norms of exclusion
- Issues of fairness and merit
- Resilient racism
- Worst practices around the world

Democratic diversity governance: Integration and Assimilation

- Democratic civic-political incorporation
- Economic and social incorporation
- Civic nationalism

Undemocratic diversity governance: Main current and future issues

- Restrictions to civic-political incorporation (restrictive reforms of citizenship, gerrymandering)
- Ethnic nationalism
- Racialization of immigration reforms
- Impact of populist/anti-migrant parties and the illiberal temptation

The last section of this course is research oriented. Students, informed by the concepts, debates and examples of the first two sections, will present their own work in oral presentations based on their readings of case studies. The objective is to assess various solutions to manage inclusion and diversity in democratic societies.



Professor's Biography



Professor Ariane Chebel d'Appollonia, educated at Sciences Po (Ph.D., HDR), is Professor at Rutgers - State University of New Jersey. Her recent publications include *Frontiers of Fears: Immigration and Insecurity in the United States and Europe* (Cornell University Press, 2012); *How Does it Feel to Be a Treat? Migrant Mobilization and Securitization in the US and Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, NYU Series, 2015); *Violent America: The Dynamics of Identity Politics in a Multiracial Society* (Cornell University Press, 2023); and her coming book – *Divided over Unity: The Identity Crisis of American Democracy* (forthcoming 2026)