

PS 3441: African American Political Theory
Temple University, Tuttleman Learning Center 402
TR 2:00-3:20, Spring 2012
Instructor: Prof. Heath Fogg Davis
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Office Hours: TR 4-5, and by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an intensive introduction to African American Political Theory that uses political theory methodologies that have been developed within the discipline of political science. Our goal will be to explicate and evaluate the philosophical claims that have shaped, and continue to shape black political practice in the United States. Some of the major questions we shall explore this semester are: How have blacks living in the U.S. responded to mainstream U.S. political theories such as liberalism and conservatism? What has been, and what should be the relationship between political theory and political practice? What theoretical, practical, and other connections exist among blacks living throughout the world in what some have termed an African Diaspora? We will also consider how social categories such as class, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and geographical region intersect with race, and what impact such intersections have, and should have on black political thought.

The structure of the course is both *historical* and *thematic*. We begin with the deceptively straightforward question of racial definition, and then move into some methodological distinctions among political theory, political ideology, and political partisanship. From there, we look at the fraught relationship that has historically existed between black political activists and core liberal principles at the heart of American democratic ideals. With this paradigm in mind, we consider a number of alternatives to American liberalism, such as black nationalism, black Marxism, Diasporic blackness, black feminism, black conservatism, existentialism, and finally contemporary critical race theory.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance Strict. You should neither miss a class nor be late. Arrive to class on time, and be prepared and ready to work. Late arrivals and early departures are disruptive and unacceptable; if you anticipate being late or having to leave early on a regular basis, please make other arrangements. In the unlikely event that you arrive late to class, take a seat closest to the door in order to minimize disruption. Please refrain from leaving and returning as it disrupts the classroom atmosphere.

Class Engagement

Active course engagement and an attentive presence are essential. Throughout the semester we will engage in some in-class small group exercises aimed not only at

elucidating the core themes and arguments of the texts we read, but also at sharpening your analytic and critical thinking skills.

Class Etiquette

This class is designed to encourage discussion and exchanges of ideas in conjunction with the development of critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. I expect you to treat your fellow students with respect and courtesy, listening when they speak and refraining from personal attacks in your own statements. You may disagree with your fellow students, but listen attentively when they are speaking and respond in a courteous manner. Most, if not all, of us can remember how unnerving it can be to give a presentation, ask a question, or even speak up in a classroom setting. Extend to your classmates the same cordiality you would like them to extend to you.

Notes

You are strongly advised to take notes during lectures, including any video clips/films shown. I expect you to pay attention in the classroom and you are responsible for remembering discussions about the texts we read and watch. Please keep in mind that the emphasis on note taking is meant to emphasize the importance of attentiveness and of assimilating information, ideas, and concepts in a thoughtful and intelligent manner. You should keep a weekly account of the course and be able to respond to points raised in previous classes.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be several quizzes given at the start of class throughout the semester. Each quiz will consist of three short questions from the reading assignment due that day. You are permitted to use your notes to answer these questions, but not your textbook or course reader. The purpose of the quizzes is to reward those who complete the reading assignment, and to encourage good note taking. Each quiz will be graded as follows: 3 correct answers=100; 2 correct answers=85; 1 correct answer=70; 0 correct=50; absent=0. I will drop your lowest score when calculating your final grade.

There will be a *mid-term* and *final* examination (see schedule below for dates). Both exams will be cumulative.

A term paper based on the course material (no outside research) is required. You will be asked to select one of at least two essay questions distributed in class to answer in your paper.

FINAL GRADE BREAKDOWN

Quizzes	15%
Mid-term	25%
Term Paper	30%
Final Exam	30%

Letter Grade Equivalencies*

A	93-100
A-	90-92

B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

*I use these to assign your final grade.

Required Readings: 1. Textbook: Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008. Available for purchase at the university bookstore. 2. The rest of the readings will be posted to Blackboard.

Deadlines

No late assignments, no excuses. An absence from class does not excuse a late paper. Your syllabus clearly indicates due dates so plan accordingly. Late papers will drop a letter grade per day. No makeup exams without a serious documented event such as a medical emergency.

Disability Disclosure Statement

This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Please contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for your coursework and participation.

Statement on Academic Freedom

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The university has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_non=03.70.02

Plagiarism

This instructor and the University take plagiarism extremely seriously. Personal pride should be sufficient deterrent, but there are also severe academic penalties for academic dishonesty. Please consult the University Bulletin concerning Temple's policy on plagiarism. Any kind of plagiarism for this class will result in failure of the course. The infraction will also be reported to university authorities.

Finally

Please remember that I hold everyone accountable to these course policies. They are here to provide a framework for the class, without which we would not get much accomplished. This course should be a fun time, as well as a challenging period of intellectual growth, and I look forward to working with you.

Course Schedule

Reading assignments are to be completed for the day listed. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the reading assignment.

Key

[LN]=Let Nobody Turn Us Around

[BB]=Blackboard

1/17

Introduction: No reading assignment.

1/19

What is Race? Banton, “The Idiom of Race” in *Theories of Race and Racism*. [BB] and Wright, “One Drop of Blood.” [BB]

1/24

Political Ideology and Political Theory: Dawson, excerpt from *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies*. [BB]

1/26

Black Liberalism: Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” [LN] and Mills, “Whose Fourth of July?” [BB]

1/31

DuBois, excerpts from “The Conservation of Races” and *The Souls of Black Folk*. [LN]

2/2

Du Bois, excerpt from *Dusk of Dawn*. [BB] and Holt, “The Political Uses of Alienation: W.E.B. Du Bois on Politics, Race, and Culture, 1903-1940.” [BB]

2/7

King, excerpts from “Nonviolence and Racial Justice” and “I Have a Dream.” [LN] p. 377, King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” [BB]

2/9

King, excerpt from “To Atone for Our Sins in Vietnam.” [LN] p. 438, King, “I See the Promised Land.” [BB]

2/14

Black Nationalisms: Shelby, “Two Conceptions of Black Nationalism.” [BB]

2/16

Garvey, excerpts from “Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World,” and “An Appeal to the Conscience of the Black Race to See Itself” [LN]

2/21

Malcolm X and Revolutionary Black Nationalism: “The Ballot or the Bullet” [LN], and “After the Bombing” and “Last Answers and Interviews” [BB]

2/23

Black Power: Carmichael, “What We Want,” SNCC, “Position Paper on Black Power,” and Rustin, “Black Power and Coalition Politics,” Davis, “I am a Revolutionary Black Woman” [LN]

2/28 In-class review session

3/1 Midterm Exam (in-class)

3/6 *Spring Break—no class.*

3/8 *Spring Break—no class.*

3/13

Black Cultural Nationalism: Asante, “Afrocentricity” [LN] and, “Racism, Consciousness, and Afrocentricity” [BB]

3/15

The African Diaspora: Appiah, excerpt from *In My Father’s House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* [CP], Gilroy, excerpt from *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. [CP]

3/20

Black Feminism: Higginbotham, “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race.” [CP]

3/22 *No Class*

3/27 PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED

Lorde, “I am Your Sister, 1984” [LN] p. 515 and Jordan-Zachary, “Am I a Black Woman or a Woman who is Black?” [CP]

3/29

In-class Film Screening: Shirley Chisholm: Unbought and Unbossed

4/3

Collins, “Prisons for our Bodies, Closets for our Minds: Racism, Heterosexism, and Black Sexuality” [CP]

4/5

Cohen, Excerpt from *Democracy Remixed: Black Youth and the Future of American Politics* [BB]

4/10

Black Conservatism: Kilson, “Anatomy of Black Conservatism” [BB], Washington, “Atlanta Exposition Address,” “The Fruits of Industrial Training,” and “My View of Segregation Laws” [LN]; Watson. “Guess who came to American politics? Contemporary Black Conservatism” [BB]

4/12

TURF—No Class.

4/17

Black Marxism:

Du Bois, “The Salvation of American Negroes Lies in Socialism” [LN] and Mills, “Underclass Understandings.” [BB]

4/19

Existentialism: Zack, “Race, Life, Death, Identity, Tragedy, and Good Faith.” [BB]

4/24

Critical Race Theory: Lawrence, “The Id, the Ego, and Equal Protection: Reckoning With Unconscious Racism.” [BB]

4/26

Conclusion

Date TBA: Final Exam