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African American Politics

Spring 2011

Course Description

This course will focus on the continuing struggle for Black political empowerment in America.  We will pay special attention to how this struggle has helped to influence and shape the past and current American political environment.  We will also address the social and economic conditions of the African American community.  Our examination of African American politics will be an interdisciplinary study of the subject, incorporating the other social scientific disciplines of economics, history, and sociology into our overall understanding of the African American community.  Upon the completion of this course, you should be able to understand the critical influence that the African American community has on the American political system.

This course will begin with a discussion of slavery, Reconstruction, and early black political thinkers.  We will then move our focus to the American party system, the civil rights movement, attitudes, the economy, identity, and end with a look at public policy.  I hope that you will find this course to be insightful and rewarding.  Black politics continues to change and influence America.  Its impact is as important now as it was during slavery and the quest for civil rights.  Although many attempt to minimize the importance of this field, it is necessary to understand African American politics if you are to truly understand American politics.

Goals of the class…

1) Understand the unique nature of the black experience in the US

2) Understand the political nature of the African American experience

3) Understand the changes in black politics

4) Become better critical thinkers

5) Strengthen writing skills

Student Evaluations and Course Work

1) Literature Review:  You are required to write a literature review.  This literature review must explore the research in a specific area of African American politics.  Although you may use the topics in this syllabus, you must use more than the sources listed in the syllabus. You must use 5 additional scholarly sources. The reference librarian will be able to help you with this. You may use the Internet, but it will not count as one of the 5 additional sources. If you would like to count an internet source as one of your 5 sources, please consult with me. In order to write this paper, you should think about the topic and then find an area of the research that you would like to explore.  The review will begin with a research question and end with a thesis.  Each article that you review must at least include the research questions addressed by the scholars, the hypotheses, the variables and how they are defined, the data, and their findings. A successful review must also include how the articles are related to each other.  You may include the thesis early in the paper, but make sure that you restate it at the end of the paper.

Be VERY careful not to plagiarize when writing these papers. Please read the student’s handbook for the policy regarding plagiarism. I will report any cases of plagiarism to the appropriate officials at the University. You should also be aware that papers with grammatical errors are graded harshly. I would expect you to let others (such as tutors at the DePauw Writing Center) read your papers before turning them in. Although I will not monitor peer evaluation, it usually leads to a better paper. Please place all critical essays on Moodle.

Worth  35%

2) EXAMS:  One Midterm and one Final Exam will be given in this course.  The exams may be written or oral. (Midterm 25%/Final 20%)

Worth 45%

3) PARTICIPATION:  Although I will not take attendance every day, you are expected to be present for all class sessions.  Moreover, you are expected to participate in class discussions.  This is primarily a discussion class on African American politics.  Although I am the professor, I expect you to participate in discussions with each other about the material.  I will facilitate and monitor the discussions, and will limit my lecturing to the more difficult topics.  I will also provide you with some basic framework of the material covered in class.  I want you to understand what scholars are saying about the African American community and to question the statements that are made about African Americans.

          In addition, you should come away with an appreciation for opinions and thoughts that are different from your own, but be able to separate what appears to be truth from the truth that evidence supports.  In order for these objectives to be realized, you must be active participants in the class.  Of course, if you are not in class, you cannot participate.  Although I will not take attendance every class period, I will penalize those who continually miss class sessions and/or do not participate in class discussions. Please consult the last page of this syllabus for more information on the participation grade.

Worth 10%

4)  MISC:  From time to time you will be expected to complete special assignments. Some, or all, of these assignments will be used in the calculation of your grade. These assignments may include in class activities, research on a specific topic, class presentations, quizzes, etc.  Be aware that these assignments will be included in this part of the grade.

Worth 10%

\*No late papers  will be accepted for full credit  If you find that one of your  papers will be late, you must let me know as far in advance as possible. Late papers will be penalized.  The grade will be reduced by a half letter every day that the paper is late.  For example, if your paper is due on Thursday, but you hand the paper in on Friday, the BEST grade that you can get is an A-.  If you find that one of your other papers will be late, you must let me know as far in advance as possible.

\*I expect all students to be respectful of your classmates and your professor.  This means that you should not be speaking while others are speaking or say things that are offensive to other students (such as calling them stupid).

\*If you have any problems with the course, you should see me as soon as possible.  Do not wait until the end of the semester to voice your concerns about the class.  Often it is too late in the semester to have an impact on the way the class is running.

**\*I reserve the right to modify the schedule from time to time to accommodate the unanticipated things that may come up during the semester.**

Grade Breakdown

Paper 35%

Tests 45%

Participation 10%

Misc 10%

Books Frymer, Paul (1999) *Uneasy Alliances*

Jordan, Winthrop. *White Man’s Burden*

Price, Melanye T. (2009) *Dreaming Blackness*

Smith, Robert C. (1994) *We Have No Leaders*

Tate, Katherine. *What’s Going On?*

Walters, Ronald. (2007) *Freedom is Not Enough*

**Preliminary Course Schedule**

January 29 Introduction and Course Overview

I. MODERN TRENDS IN BLACK POLITICS

January 31

Greenblatt, “Race in America” Pew Research Center, “Blacks Upbeat About Black Progress, Prospect (online)

II. ORIGINS OF RACISM

 February 5-14

February 7 visit from Professor Sundiata Cha-Jua



II. FOUNDATIONS OF BLACK POLITICAL THOUGHT

February 19

Washington, Booker T., “The Atlanta Exposition Address,” and “The Awakening of the Negro” DuBois, W.E.B., “Of Mr. Washington and Others,” and “The Talented-Tenth”  (online)

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=174>

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/washington/ch14.html>

February 21

Garvey, Marcus, “The Future as I See it,” and “Look for me in the Whirlwind” Rolinson, Mary, “Appeal,” in Grassroots Garveyism, (2007), pp. 131-160

III. BLACKS AND AMERICAN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

February 26

Smith, *We Have No Leaders,* pp. 1-26

Blacks and Mainstream Party Politics Feb 11 Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances,* pp. 3-48

February 28

Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances,* pp. 49-86 Submit Q&A

March 5

Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances,* pp. 87-119

**\*I will not review any research questions related to your paper after March 7**

A. BLACKS AND PRESIDENTIAL POLICYMAKING

March 7

Smith, *We Have No Leaders,* pp. 139-163, 255-274

B. BLACKS AND CONGRESS

March 12

Smith, *We Have No Leaders,* pp. 211-225 Tate, *Black Faces in the Mirror,* pp. 73-95, 113-131

**\* March 14 NCOBPS Conference paper due**

IV. A BLACK POLITICAL AGENDA?

March 19

Smith, *We Have No Leaders,* pp. 29-85 Walters, *Freedom is Not Enough,* pp. 27-51

Smith, *We Have No Leaders,* pp. 226-253

View Documentary: Chisholm ’72, Unbought and Unbossed

March 21 Midterm exam

**\*It would be a good idea to read ahead over spring break because you will have to read the next book in one week.**

 April 2 The Black Megachurch Chapters 1-3

April 4 The Black Megachurch Chapters 4-6

V. REVISITING BLACK NATIONALISM

April 9

Price, *Dreaming Blackness,* pp. 1-79

 April 11

The Politics of Racial Uplift Mar 25 Price, *Dreaming Blackness,* pp. 80-102, 173-179

VI. BLACK PUBLIC OPINION

April 16

Tate, What’s Going on? pp 1-62

April 18

Tate, What’s Going on? pp 64-112

April 23

Tate, What’s Going on? pp 113-168

VII. THE FUTURE OF BLACK POLITICS

April 25

Black Presidential Politics Apr 13 Walters, *Freedom is Not Enough,* pp. xi-xii, 1-26, 53-76 Class Discussion

April 30

Walters, *Freedom is Not Enough,* pp. 77-132

May 2

Walters, *Freedom is Not Enough,* pp. 133-183

May 7

Walters, *Freedom is Not Enough,* pp. 185-208

Sinclair-Chapman, Valeria and Melanye Price “Black Politics, the 2008 Election, and the (Im)Possibility of Race Transcendence” in *PS: Political Science and Politics,* pp. 739-745

May 9

Unresolved issues