

Introduction to African American Politics

Course Syllabus

Fall 2007

Tuesday and Thursday

11:00- 11:50 AM

Prof HL Precept: Tuesday 2:30

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Corwin 034

This course provides an introduction to the political experience of African Americans. The course is primarily contemporary in its focus although we will deal briefly with the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-twentieth century. Topics include African American political thought, voting and participation, urban politics, race and elected office, religion and politics, and issues of gender, class and sexual identity at the intersections of black politics. This course has a substantial reading load. The course also integrates new learning technology through a partnership with a Documentary, Television and Video Production initiative.

Assessment

Short paper (5-7 pages) in response to readings (20%)

You must write one short paper focusing on the readings from one week in the first half of the semester.

Two Beyond the Classroom Experiences (10%)

You MUST complete TWO (2) Beyond the Classroom Experiences (BTCE). Together they count for 10% of your grade

Midterm Exam (30%)

The midterm exam is a short answer exam take home exam.

Final Exam (30%)

The final exam is a take-home essay exam.

-or-

Final Film Project (30%) (These projects are done in groups and organized by Precepts)

There are three options available for the final film project

1. Video profile of two black political actors (or one actor in two different eras)
2. Creation African American News Magazine
3. Hosting Black Political Film Festival

Class/Precept participation (10%)

Extra Credit: You may complete up to Four (4) additional BTCE for extra credit. Other opportunities for EC will be announced throughout the semester.

Required Texts

Readings marked with a * are available as links from the course website

Readings marked with a + are available on reserve through e-reserve system

Books are all available through the university bookstore.

Lucius Barker, Mack Jones and Katherine Tate
African Americans in the American Political System (4th edition)

Michael Dawson
Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African American Politics

Cathy Cohen
Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics

Paul Frymer
Uneasy Alliances: Race and Party Competition in America

Aldon Morris
Origins of the Civil Rights Movement

Katherine Tate
Black Faces in the Mirror: African Americans and Their Representatives in the U.S. Congress

Cedric Herring (editor)
African Americans and the Public Agenda: The Paradoxes of Public Policy

INTRODUCTION

Week 1: Black Political Thought

September 18 and 20

Tuesday Introduction to course

Thursday Barker, Jones and Tate Chapters 1-3
*King, Letter from a Birmingham Jail
+Carmichael and Hamilton, *Black Power* (selections)
*Combahee River Collective, Black Feminist Statement

BTCE: Go to www.americanrhetoric.com and listen to two speeches by African Americans separated by at least one decade. Write a 700-1000 word essay response that compares or contrasts these two speeches

REMINDER: Sign up for Precept and Final Project Groups!

IDENTITY

Week 2: Black Linked Fate

September 25 and 27

Tuesday

Michael Dawson, *Behind the Mule*, Chapters 1-3, 8-9

Thursday

Dawson continued, same chapters

* Richard Shingles. Black Consciousness and Political Participation: The Missing Link *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 75, No. 1. (Mar., 1981), pp. 76-91.

*Robert Brown and Todd Shaw. Separate Nations: Two Attitudinal Dimensions of Black Nationalism *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 1. (Feb., 2002), pp. 22-44.

*Darren Davis and Ronald Brown. The Antipathy of Black Nationalism: Behavioral and Attitudinal Implications of an African American Ideology *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 46, No. 2. (Apr., 2002), pp. 239-252.

BTCE: Review the 2000 U.S. Census Report “We the People: Blacks in the United States.” Write a 700-1000 word essay response that uses evidence from this census report to take a stand on whether black linked fate is grounded in an empirically sound evidentiary basis.

REMINDER: Precepts meet for the first time this week.

Week 3: Complicating Black Identity

October 2 and 4

Tuesday

Cathy Cohen, *Boundaries of Blackness*, Chapters 1-3, 6-9

Thursday

Cohen continued, same chapters

*Claudine Gay and Katherine Tate. Doubly Bound: The Impact of Gender and Race on the Politics of Black Women. *Political Psychology*, Vol. 19, No. 1. (Mar., 1998), pp. 169-184.

+ Mary Waters. *Black Identities, West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*. Chapter 3 "Racial and Ethnic Identity Choices"

*Kimberle Crenshaw. Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *Critical Race Theory: Key Writings that Formed the Movement*. Crenshaw, Peller, Thomas (editors) Free Press: 1995. pp. 357-383

BTCE: Visit the Black Youth Project site at <http://blackyouthproject.uchicago.edu/> Write a 700-1000 word essay explaining how age/generation complicates the idea of black linked fate.

PUBLIC OPINION AND PARTICIPATION

Week 4: Public Opinion

October 9 and 11

Tuesday

+Harris-Lacewell. Political Science and the Study of African American Public Opinion. Chapter 6 of *African American Perspectives on Political Science* (2007) Edited by Wilbur Rich.

+Schuman, Steeth and Bobo *Racial Attitudes in America Trends and Interpretations*, Chapter 4

+Sigelman and Welch. *Black Americans' Views of Racial Inequality*. 1991. Chapter 5, Black Explanations of Racial Inequality.

Thursday

+Harris-Lacewell, *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought*. Chapter 1 and 3

+Dawson, Michael, *Black Visions*, Chapter 1 and 2

BTCE: Read Katrina report by Dawson, Harris-Lacewell and Cohen. Write 700-1000 word essay on how our understanding of public opinion from the course readings might influence how we understand of the findings in the Katrina data.

Week 5: Race and Elections

October 16 and 18

Tuesday

Barker, Jones and Tate, Chapter 9

Dawson, Chapter 6

+Keith Reeves, *Voting Hopes and Fears: White Voters Black Candidates and Racial Politics in America*, Chapters 4 and 5

*Brian McKenzie. Religious Social Networks, Indirect Mobilization, and African-American Political Participation. *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 4. (Dec., 2004), pp. 621-632.

*Angela Behrens, Christopher Uggen and Jeff Manza. Ballot Manipulation and the "Menace of Negro Domination": Racial Threat and Felon Disenfranchisement in the United States, 1850-2002. *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 109, No. 3. (Nov., 2003), pp. 559-605.

Thursday

+Barack Obama, *Audacity of Hope*, selections

BTCE: Find two articles about Barack Obama's presidential bid from two different newspapers. Interpret whether the information contained in the article leads you to be optimistic or pessimistic about Obama's chance of securing the DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION (not winning the US presidency!). Write this in a 700-1000 word essay.

Week 6: Social Movement

October 23 and 25

Tuesday

+ Cedric Robinson, *Black Movements in America*. Chapter 5, The Nadir and Its Aftermath

Aldon Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* Chapters 1-3

Thursday

Morris, Chapters 9-11

BTCE: Watch one segment of *Eyes on the Prize* and write 700-1000 words about what you learned.

****FALL BREAK****
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 5th, Your PAPER IS DUE by 5PM!
HARD COPY

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Week 7: Political Parties

November 6 and 8

Tuesday:

+Nancy Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln*, Chapter 10, *Why Blacks Became Democrats*

Barker, Jones and Tate Chapter 8

Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances*, Chapters 1 and 2

Thursday

Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances*, Chapters 4, 5 and 7

+ Tahsa Philpot, *Race, Republicans, and the Return of the Party of Lincoln*, Chapter 1

BTCE: Visit Blacks for Bush at <http://blacksforbush.blogspot.com/> Read several entries and write a 700-1000 word essay that explains how this blog fits into your understanding of black partisan politics gained from the readings.

Week 8: Courts

November 13 and 15

Tuesday

Barker, Jones and Tate Chapters 5 and 6

+Gerry Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?*, Intro, Chapter 2-3

Thursday

****TAKE HOME MIDTERM EXAM** NO CLASS**

BTCE: Find a court decision from the past 10 years that you believe makes a major impact on African American life. (positive or negative by your own assessment) Use a 700-1000 word essay to give a brief description of the case and explain its relevance.

Week 9: Presidency

November 20 and 22

Tuesday

Barker, Jones and Tate Chapter 11

*Harris-Lacewell and Albertson. Good Times? Understanding African American Misperceptions of Racial Economic Fortunes. *Journal of Black Studies*

+Kenneth O'Reilly, *Nixon's Piano: Presidents and Racial Politics from Washington to Clinton*, selections

Thursday

THANKSGIVING, NO CLASS

BTCE: In a 700-1000 essay make a case for a president that you believe has been “The Best” or “The Worst” president for advancing the policy agenda of African Americans.

Week 10: Congress

November 27 and 29

Tuesday

Barker, Jones and Tate Chapter 10

Katherine Tate, *Black Faces in the Mirror* Chapters 1,2,4,5,8

Thursday

+Kerry Haynie, *African American Legislators in the American States*. Chapters 1 and 2

+Richard Fenno. *Going Home: Black Representative and Their Constituents*. Chapter 1 and 7

BTCE: Write a 700-1000 essay about any current member of the Congressional Black Caucus. You can include some biographical information, but focus on the policy agenda, successes and failures of the member. (Do NOT choose Barack Obama)

POLICY and COALITIONS

Week 11: Policy

December 4 and 6

Tuesday

Cedric Herring, *African Americans and the Policy Agenda*, Chapters 1, 2, 6

Thursday

Herring, Chapter 8, 9 10 and 14

BTCE: Write a 700-1000 word “policy memo” proposing a new policy or supporting or denouncing an existing policy that you believe is important to some element of an African American political agenda.

Week 12: Coalition Politics

December 11 and 13

Tuesday

+Claire Kim, *Claire Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black-Korean Conflict in New York City*, Chapters 1,2, and 6

* Karen Kaufmann. Cracks in the Rainbow: Group Commonality as a Basis for Latino and African-American Political Coalitions *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 2. (Jun., 2003), pp. 199-210.

* Kenneth J. Meier; Paula D. McClain; J. L. Polinard; Robert D. Wrinkle
Divided or Together? Conflict and Cooperation between African Americans and Latinos
Political Research Quarterly, Vol. 57, No. 3. (Sep., 2004), pp. 399-409

Thursday

Conclusion and Wrap Up