

Introduction to African-American History

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T/TH
Office Hours

Course Description:

This course examines African American history from 1863 to the present. We will specifically focus on the struggle for African Americans to achieve full citizenship in the aftermath of antebellum slavery. The promise of citizenship promised during the period of Reconstruction (1865-1877) exploded amid a climate of breathtaking anti-black violence and terror known as "Redemption" (1877-1896). In the aftermath of "Redemption" African Americans migrated in record numbers to northern cities in hopes of a better way of life. While many of these hopes were dashed by poverty, racial segregation, and violence, black life gradually improved. Much of this improvement was sparked by African American migration to northern cities. However, the system of segregation called Jim Crow continued to impact blacks living in the north and the south throughout the 20th century. 1954's *Brown* Supreme Court decision signaled the beginning of the modern Civil Rights Movement. While educated leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. led successful bus boycott, racial violence and terror continued to escalate. Youthful idealism infused by the sit-in movement competed with militant voices personified by Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam. By the 1960s the civil right movement's legal and legislative victories gave way to urban rebellions and calls for "Black Power!" The Black Power Movement transformed the nation. No longer willing to be called Negroes or colored people, black Americans assumed a strong, consciously proud racial and political consciousness. Some groups, such as the Black Panthers, went further, calling for nothing less than total political revolution. In the almost thirty years since the Black Power era, African Americans have continued to wage intense struggles against racism and other forms of social injustice.

Classes will be a combination of lectures and group discussion. Students will be responsible for paying close attention to assigned reading and preparing discussion questions for future classes. Each student should be ready to engage in a good amount of sophisticated, yet highly readable intellectual material. Finally, students are expected to participate in classroom discussions in an informed manner regularly.

The examinations will be a combination of essay questions and critical identifications that require short essay-style responses.

Students are responsible for answering review questions at the end of each chapter. Thursdays will generally be discussion days, where we will break into small groups to go over these questions and the previous lecture.

Absences: Class attendance is crucial. When students miss class they miss important information in lectures and critical questions and commentary contained in classroom discussions. My hope is that you learn from reading, lectures, and a critical and informed exchange of ideas with fellow students. Poor attendance will result in a failing grade for class participation.

Participation: All students are expected to read assigned reading materials. Merely showing up in class is not enough to ensure a passing grade. Students who have fears about speaking in front of others should come to me.

Requirements:

Students are expected to keep up with the reading assignments. This is imperative since exams will be in essay form and based on an understanding and conceptualization of the assigned readings and lectures. All students are expected to be prepared for class and contribute to discussion in an informed manner. Students are required to keep detailed notes of the readings and lectures. Notes based on the reading assignments will be collected periodically.

Assignments

Mid-Term Exam 25%
Class Presentations 5%
Participation (includes group discussion and notes) 10%
Attendance 10%
Book Review 25%
Final Exam 25%

Required Readings: Available at the University Bookstore

Darlene Clark Hine, ed., *The African American Odyssey* (2003)
Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (2006)
Peniel Joseph, *Dark Days, Bright Nights: From Black Power to Barack Obama* (2010)
Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* (1992)
Reserved Readings (In Library)

Themes in the African American Experience

1. Modernity
2. Black Political Thought/Struggles for Democracy
3. Social, Political, Economic, and Cultural Transformations
4. Domination and Resistance
5. Black Internationalism

Class Schedule

Week 1

Introduction: Themes in the African American Experience

Hine, *African-American Odyssey*, Ch. 12-13

Week 2

Reconstruction: American Democracy's Unfinished Legacy/ Race and Redemption in Southern Society

Hine, *African-American Odyssey*, Ch. 14 and 15

Week 3

Marcus Garvey, New Negroes, and the Harlem Renaissance

Hine, *African-American Odyssey*, Ch. 16-17

Week 4 A Great Depression/Freedom Dreams

Hine, *African-American Odyssey*, Ch. 18-19.

Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, pp. 1-8

Week 5

Postwar America/Race and the Double V Campaign

Hine, *African-American Odyssey*, Ch. 20

handout

Week 6

Modern Age of Civil Rights Struggles/ Movement's Heroic Period

Hine, *African-American Odyssey*, Ch. 21

Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, Ch. 1-2

Week 7

Freedom Now/Seeds of A Revolt

Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, Ch. 3-4

Week 8

Malcolm X/Black Internationalism
Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, Ch. 5-6
Joseph, *Dark Days, Bright Nights*, Chapter 2

Week 9
The Black Power Movement/The Black Arts
Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, Ch. 7-8
Joseph, *Dark Days, Bright Nights*, Chapter 1

Week 10
The Black Panthers/Black Liberation in America
Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, Ch. 9-11
Joseph, *Dark Days, Bright Nights*, Chapter 3

Week 11
The Post Civil Rights Era/ From Protest to Politics?
Hine, *African-American Odyssey*, Ch. 22.
Bell, *Faces At the Bottom of the Well*, ch. 1-3;
Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, Epilogue

Week 12
Race, Democracy, and the Ideal of Colorblindness
Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, Ch. 4-6.

Week 13
Contemporary Black Politics
Hine, *African-American Odyssey*, Ch. 23
Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, ch. 7-9.

Week 14
Barack Obama: Race and American Democracy
Joseph, *Dark Days, Bright Nights*, Chapter 4

Notes

Any student that has documented requirements for special needs can contact me in private.

Class discussion is encouraged. As a group of intellectuals in the process of becoming a scholarly community debate and discussion is encouraged. However, these individuals must maintain civility and respect toward one another at all times.

Academic Integrity

ALL CASES OF PLAGIARISM OR OTHER ACADEMIC DISHONESTY WILL BE REPORTED. You should know that it is very easy to catch papers or portions of papers downloaded from the internet. Direct quotes must be openly acknowledged through the use of

quotation marks. You need to provide proper footnote citations and bibliography for any material taken from another source whether quoted or paraphrased. I will pass out a sheet showing the format I would like you to use for footnotes and bibliography. You may seek help with papers at the Writing Center, or from the instructors in this course, or you may discuss projects with student colleagues in the course, but the final product must be your own.

Statement on Disabilities

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact on your ability to carry out assigned course work or perform effectively on timed examinations, we recommend for you to contact the staff who will review your concerns and determine, in consultation with you, what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation of disability is confidential. The instructor can only respond to requests for disability accommodation if they have gone through that office.