The Civil Rights Movement
History 83

Dr. Peniel E. Joseph
Office: East Hall 108
Office Hours: Noon-1PM T/Th and by appointment
10:30-11:45 AM T/TH
E-mail: Peniel.Joseph@tufts.edu
Website: http://www.penielejoseph.com
Tufts University
Fall 2010

Course Description:

This course examines the long civil rights movement in the United States and its global reverberations around the world. 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 a successful bus boycott, racial violence and terror continued to escalate. Youthful idealism infused by the sit-in movement, John Kennedy’s “New Frontier,” and Third World anti-colonial movements 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. The civil rights movement represents arguably the most important social movement of the twentieth century whose political, economic, and cultural reverberations transcended race, class, as gender, as well as the very boundaries of the U.S. nation-state serving as a touchstone for far-flung liberation movements around the world.

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. We will also watch historical documentaries that offer us a visual chronology of the era.

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

Absences: Class attendance is crucial. Any student who misses more than 8 classes will receive an automatic F. When students miss class they miss important information in lectures and critical questions and commentary contained in classroom discussions. Poor attendance will result in a failing attendance grade and may result in failing the course. Of course, unexpected crises and setback do occur during every semester, which is why you are given two unexcused absences. However, your participation grade will be docked for each subsequent absence. 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. Any student who misses a third of the classes will fail the course.

Lateness: I expect every student to come to class on time. There will be a 5-minute grace period at the start of class. After this time, I reserve the right to bar a student from entering class.
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 %
Critical Group Presentation 25%
Participation (includes lecture notes) 15%
Attendance 10%
Final Exam 25%

Required Readings: Available at the University Bookstore

Taylor Branch, Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963
Komozi Woodard and Jeanne Theoharis, Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle
Charles Payne, I've Got the Light of Freedom
Peniel Joseph, Waiting Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America
Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s
Michele Alexander, The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness

Reserved Readings (Blackboard)

Class Schedule

Sep. 7/9
Week 1
Forerunners
Branch, Parting the Waters, Ch. 1-5.
Payne, I’ve Got the Light of Freedom, Ch. 1-2
Voices From Freedom, Prologue and Ch. 1.

Sep. 14/16
Week 2
At Home in the World
Branch, Parting the Waters, Ch. 5-10.
Payne, I’ve Got the Light of Freedom, Ch. 3-4.
Voices From Freedom, Ch. 2-3.
Sep. 21/23
Week 3
The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee: Snick and the Black Freedom Struggle
Parting the Waters, Ch. 11-15
I've Got the Light of Freedom, Ch. 12-13.
Voices of Freedom, Ch. 6 and 13.

Sep. 28/30
Week 4
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., President John F. Kennedy, and the Iconography of the Heroic Period
Parting the Waters, Ch. 16-20.
I've Got the Light of Freedom, Ch. 9 and 14.
Voices of Freedom, Ch. 5-8.

Oct. 5/7
Week 5
“Mississippi Goddamn!”
Parting the Waters, Ch. 21-Conclusion
I've Got the Light of Freedom, Ch. 5-6.
Voices of Freedom, Ch. 9 and 12.

Oct. 12/14
Week 6 Mid-Term Review, October 12/Mid-Term Exam, October 14
Freedom North: Malcolm X and Black Radicalism
Waiting Til the Midnight Hour, Ch. 1-3

Oct. 19/21
Week 7
Black Women and the Civil Rights Movement
Want to Start a Revolution?, Ch.
I've Got the Light of Freedom, Ch. 9.
Voices of Freedom, Ch. 25-26

Oct. 26/28
Week 8
Storm Warnings
Voices of Freedom, Ch. 15-16.
Want to Start a Revolution?, Ch.
I've Got the Light of Freedom, Ch. 11.
Waiting Til the Midnight Hour, Ch. 4.

Nov. 2/4
Week 9
Dark Days, Bright Nights: From Civil Rights to Black Liberation
Joseph, Waiting Til the Midnight Hour, Ch. 5
Voices of Freedom, Ch.27-28
Week 10
Nov. 9 (no class on Thursday, Nov. 11)
The Black Power Movement, Part 1
Waiting Til the Midnight Hour, Ch. 6-8
Voices of Freedom, Ch. 18-21

Nov. 16/18
Week 11
The Black Power Movement Part 2
Waiting Til the Midnight Hour, Ch. 9-11
Voices of Freedom. Ch. 22-24.

Nov. 23 (no class on Thursday, Nov. 25, Thanksgiving)
Week 12

Nov. 30/Dec. 2
Week 13
The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Twenty-First Century
The New Jim Crow, Ch. 1-3
Voices of Freedom, Ch. 29-30.

Dec. 7/9
Week 14
Post-Racial America? Civil rights in the Age of Obama
The New Jim Crow, Ch. 3-6.
Voices of Freedom, Ch. 31 and Epilogue
Final Exam

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.

Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and will be dealt with according to university regulations.