

Hist. 615-008: African American Politics: Nineteenth Century to the Present
Thursday 7:20-10:00pm, Science Technology I 120



Professor: Millington Bergeson-Lockwood, Ph. D.
Email: mbergeso@gmu.edu
Office Hours: Thursday 5-7pm, Robinson Hall B377D

This course explores the political world of African Americans from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the present. In class we will question previously held notions of what politics is and where it happens. We will look at the political activity of free and enslaved black men and women and discuss how these political traditions were transformed following emancipation, the great migration, and the civil rights movement. During this course we will analyze the influence of social class, gender, and ideas of nationalism on African American politics and political culture. We will examine the diverse political concepts expressed by African Americans such as: integration, assimilation, respectability, accommodation, and racial nationalism. We will also examine various tactics used to achieve their goals, like: petitioning, voting, writing, non-violent direct action, and armed self-defense. We will also interrogate how historians have attempted to understand African American politics and how these interpretations have changed over time. This is a reading seminar and the course meetings will focus on in depth discussions of historians' interpretations of periods in the history of African American politics and the analysis of primary documents.

Required Books:

- Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007)
- Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1996)
- Kevin Gaines, *African Americans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2007)
- Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005)
- Martha Jones, *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830-1900* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2007)
- Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton University Press, 2010)

Lisa Materson, *For the Freedom of Her Race: Black Women and Electoral Politics in Illinois, 1877-1932* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2009)
Tera Hunter, *To Joy My Freedom: To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Harvard University Press, 1998)
Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Beacon Press, 2006)
Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (University of California Press, 2007)
Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2002)
Thomas Sugrue, *Not Even Past: Barack Obama and the Burden of Race* (Princeton University Press, 2010)

Copies of the required books are also on reserve at the Johnson Center.

All other readings will be posted on the course *Blackboard* site [BB] or linked to via their website. Speeches posted on the "Say it Plain, Say it Loud" website are linked and noted [SPSL]

Assignments and Grading Breakdown:

Final Literature Review Paper: (approx. 15 pages) 30%

As a final assignment students will prepare a critical review essay of scholarly works on a major theme or era in the discussion of African American politics. While this essay may include a broader discussion, it should be based on the critical analysis of **at least four texts**, two of which may come from the course readings. A brief description of your paper's focus and list of books should be submitted for approval by Week 13. **The final paper is due no later than 7:30pm on Thursday, May 10th.** (More details about the final paper will be covered later in the term)

Primary Document Review: (approx. 7 pages) 25%

Students will write a critical analysis of a book length primary source which reflects elements of African American politics. These papers should include an opening introduction and argument, a brief summary of the text as a whole, a critical discussion of major themes and connections to the course content, and a conclusion. In the papers you should make reference to relevant secondary sources to support your analysis. A list of potential documents is attached, but students may choose other readings pending my approval. The final document is **due April 18**, but may be turned in earlier. **You should send me an email confirming the book you will use no later than week 8 (spring break).** (Books for this assignment have not been placed on reserve and should be procured as soon as possible) (More details about the Primary Document Review will be covered later in the term)

Weekly Response Essays and Questions: 20%

Prior to each class students will write a **2-2 ½ page double-spaced** analysis of the week's readings. While generally informal, these essays should have a coherent argument and structure and discuss a particular theme or issue from the readings that you find particularly interesting or provocative. You should avoid excessive summary of the text, but rather focus on your own original ideas and analysis. In these essays you should also attempt to draw connections with the other readings and themes of the course as a whole. The best essays will use quotations judiciously from the text to support their arguments. At the conclusion of each response, you should **include 2-3 substantive questions or topics** you would like to bring up in discussion. Responses should be uploaded to the discussion board on the Blackboard site **no later than 5pm on the Wednesday** before class and a hardcopy should be turned in at the conclusion of class on Thursday. Everyone should read each others responses prior to class meeting. Weekly responses will be graded on a High Pass, Pass, and Low Pass scale (check-plus, check, check minus).

NOTE: Twice during the semester you may opt out of the essay portion of the response. You are still required to post 2-3 questions. If you choose to do so, please email me by 5pm the Wednesday before the class. Everyone must do a response with questions for week 2 and week 15.

Class Participation: 25%

Students are expected to provide regular relevant, insightful, and sophisticated comments and questions. In order to prepare for class discussions, you should make a note of passages that are particularly illuminating, confusing, or representative so that you will be ready to include these items in class discussion. As you participate in section, your intent should be to integrate the weekly readings within the greater context of the course.

Class Attendance:

You cannot participate if you are not present in each class. Even if you complete all the written assignments but do not come to class, you will not pass the course. Therefore, attendance is mandatory and I will take attendance at the beginning of each class meeting. If you must miss a class meeting please notify me via email ahead of time.

Students who do miss a class must still **submit a Blackboard Discussion Posting** before the course meeting and must turn in a **one-page single spaced summary** of the reading assignments **within one week** of the missed class regardless of excuse. Failure to do so will result in an unexcused absence which is factored into the section grade. While turning in the summary mitigates the penalty for an absence, repeated absences, even if excused, will negatively affect your course grade.

Classroom Environment:

Arrive on time and prepared for class. Consistent tardiness will be reflected in your participation grade.

Remember to turn off cell phones, pagers, and any other electronic devices. Laptop computers are allowed as long as the wireless connection is disconnected and they do not become a barrier to discussion.

The material covered in this course will frequently involve volatile, sensitive, and controversial subjects. Please observe the following guidelines during our discussions:

****Be courteous.*** It's okay to disagree, but do so in a respectful manner. Do not attack someone personally merely for raising a contentious issue.

****Support your statements.*** Developing the skills to compose an argument is an extremely important aspect of this class. Be prepared to justify and expand what you say in discussion.

****Be Relevant.*** Students come to class with a range of personal experiences and prior knowledge. While you are encouraged draw upon these things, they must help us unpack the readings we are discussing in class. Avoid long anecdotes which are unrelated to the readings.

****Listen carefully.*** Respect is reciprocal and it is extremely important that everyone focus on what is being said in the classroom. Furthermore, someone else might raise a really important issue that you might not have otherwise considered. Keep an open mind.

****Allow others to speak.*** Not only is it important that all students participate, but it is also crucial that everyone is granted an equal opportunity to raise issues germane to the class.

Students are welcome to bring food and drinks to class as long as they do not disturb the rest of the class. *Refreshments to share are always appreciated.*

Late Assignments:

Please respect deadlines. Late papers will be docked **1/3 of a letter grade** for every late day, and I will not accept papers a week later than a due date except in the case of genuine emergencies that you discuss with me in advance. Even if late, missed assignments must be submitted in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Format for Written Assignments

Unless otherwise indicated, all written work should be **double spaced in 12pt standard font and include page numbers**. All citations should be included as footnotes in Chicago Style.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence that is not tolerated. For this course all citations should be in Chicago Style. Direct quotations must be footnoted as well as

enclosed in quotation marks. It is also absolutely essential that you footnote any source that influences your thinking on a subject, or any source from which you draw information, whether or not you quote from it directly. This includes facts, paraphrased material, and also cases in which the connection may be less direct. If another scholar's conclusions helped shape your own, then you must provide credit. For a more detailed explanation of plagiarism see: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/resources-template.php?id=1>. For a guide to Chicago Style citation, see: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/resources-template.php?id=6>. Other resources regarding proper citation will be posted to the course Blackboard site.

There should be no confusion: plagiarism in any form is a serious offense. This includes all forms of unattributed borrowing, from another student's paper, to material found on a website, to copying passages from books, to turning in the same research paper you also turned in for another class.

Academic dishonesty also encompasses situations of deliberate fabrication, such as claiming that the "Instructor must have lost the paper you turned in" or the "computer crashed and you lost your only copy" when such stories are not true. Please don't put yourself or your instructors in any of these situations. The penalty for plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty in this course may include failing grade for the course and submission of the case to the Honor Committee. For a more detailed explanation please see the "Honor System and Code" website: <http://www.gmu.edu/academics/catalog/9798/honorcod.html>

Students with Disabilities:

If you have a need for reading and writing accommodations, please come and discuss this with me. The Office of Disability Services (<http://ods.gmu.edu>) provides accommodation for University students with special needs. Please bring this to my attention at the beginning of the semester.

Auditing

If you are auditing the course, please let me know so I can confirm your status on my roster.

How to Reach Me:

Email: Feel free to email me questions and comments about the class, as well as with individual concerns. Be aware that I may not check email daily and I may not have email access some weekends.

Office Hours: You are welcome and encouraged to stop by my office hours or make an appointment with me. I am looking forward to talking with and getting to know all of you.

*****This syllabus is subject to revision at the instructor's discretion*****

Course Calendar, Reading Assignments, and Deadlines

Week 1: (1/26): Course Introduction

Course overview and brief discussion of course themes.

Look and Listen-Look at Images on Blackboard Site and Listen to Speeches on “Say it Loud, Say it Plain” website:

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/>

Part One: Enslavement and the Origins of Black Politics

Week 2: (2/2): The Politics of Enslavement

Walter Johnson, “On Agency.” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2003): 113-124

Kelley, Robin D. G. ““We Are Not What We Seem”: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South.” *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (June 1993): 75-79. (We will read the rest of this article during wk. 6)

Walter Johnson, “Introduction: A Person with a Price” and Chapter 6: “Acts of Sale.” In *Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*. Harvard University Press, 1999, 1-18 and 162-189

Steven Hahn, “‘Slaves at Large:’ The Emancipation Process and the Terrain of African American Politics.” in *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom*. Harvard University Press, 2009, 1-53

Steven Hahn, Prologue: “Looking Out from Slavery” and Chapter 1: “Of Chains and Threads” in *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*. New Ed, Belknap Press, 2005, 1-61

Week 3: (2/9): African American Politics in the Antebellum North

Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North*

Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” July 5, 1852.

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=162> [Also on BB]

Week 4: (2/16): Black Women’s Politics and the Public Sphere

Martha Jones, *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830-1900*

Elsa Barkley Brown. “Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom.” In *The Black Public Sphere: A Public Culture Book*. edited by the Black Public Sphere Collective. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) p. 111-150 [BB]

Part Two: Politics from Slavery to Freedom

Week 5: (2/23): The Politics of Reconstruction and the New South

Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 62-476

Week 6: (3/1): Black Working Class Politics

Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom': Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War*

Kelley, Robin D. G. "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South." *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (June 1993): 75-112.

Week 7: (3/8): Electoral Politics and Activism Beyond the South

Lisa Materson, *For the Freedom of Her Race: Black Women and Electoral Politics in Illinois, 1877-1932*

Ida B. Wells, "Southern Horrors. The Lynch Law in All Its Phases," in Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings; The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, 1st ed. (Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996), 50-72.

Week 8: (3/15) SPRING BREAK-NO CLASS

Submit proposal for and work on Primary Source Analysis.

Week 9: (3/22): The Politics of Respectability in the Twentieth Century

Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century*

Booker T. Washington, "Speech to the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition," Atlanta, Georgia - October 18, 1895,
<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/btwashington.html> [SPSL]

WEB DuBois, "Of Booker T. Washington and Others," in *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*. (1904)
<http://solomon.bltc.alexanderstreet.com.mutex.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/asp/philo/bltc/getdoc.pl?S7884-D004>

Mary McLeod Bethune, "What Does American Democracy Mean to Me?," America's Town Meeting of the Air, New York City - November 23, 1939
<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/mmbethune.html> [SPSL]

Part Three: 'The Long Civil Rights Movement'

Week 10: (3/29): Interracial Political Coalitions

Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past" *Journal of American History* vol. 91, no. 4 (Mar. 2005): 1233-1263[BB]

Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles*

Week 11: (4/5): Grassroots Politics

Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*

Fannie Lou Hamer, "Testimony Before the Credentials Committee, Democratic National Convention," Atlantic City, New Jersey - August 22, 1964
<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/flhamer.html> [SPSL]

Week 12: (4/12): Black Power and Black Politics

Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*

Lorraine Hansberry, "The Black Revolution and the White Backlash,"

Forum at Town Hall sponsored by The Association of Artists for Freedom," New York City - June 15, 1964

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/lhansberry.html>

[SPSL]

Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael), "Speech at University of California, Berkeley,"

October 29, 1966

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/scarmichael.html>

[SPSL]

Week 13: (4/19): Transnational Politics

Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era*

Marcus Garvey, "Explanation of the Objects of the Universal Negro Improvement Association," New York City - July 1921

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/mgarvey.html>

[SPSL]

Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael), "From Black Power to Pan-Africanism," Whittier College, Whittier, California - March 22, 1971

[http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/scarmichael-](http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/scarmichael-2.html)

[2.html](http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/scarmichael-2.html) [SPSL]

Shirley Chisholm, "Speech at Howard University," Washington, D.C. - April 21, 1969

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/schisholm-2.html>

[SPSL]

DUE: Primary Source Analysis Project

Proposal for final historiography.

Part Four: The Politics of a "Post-Civil Rights Era"

Week 14: (4/26): Community Organizing and the War on Poverty

Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty*

Shirley Chisholm, "The Black Woman in Contemporary America," University of Missouri, Kansas City - June 17, 1974

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/schisholm.html>

[SPSL]

Vernon Jordan, Jr. "Speech delivered at the National Press Club," Washington, D.C. - February 14, 1978

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/vjordan.html>

[SPSL]

Week 15: (5/3) LAST WEEK OF CLASS: African American Politics in the Age of Obama

Tom Sugrue, *Not Even Past: Barack Obama and the Burden of Race*

"The Future of Black Politics Forum" Boston Review, January/February 2012,
http://www.bostonreview.net/BR37.1/ndf_black_politics.php (Articles also
available for download on the BB site)

Mary Frances Berry, "100th Anniversary of Plessy v. Ferguson," Howard University -
Washington, D.C. - November 14, 1996

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/mfberry.html>
[SPSL]

Ward Connerly, "America: A Nation of Equals," Harvard University, Cambridge,
Massachusetts - April 6, 1998

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/wconnerly.html>
[SPSL]

Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union," Philadelphia, PA, March 18, 2008

<https://my.barackobama.com/page/content/hisownwords>

Week 15: Final Paper Due No Later than 7:30pm on May 10th.

Suggested Primary Readings for Review

One great resource for possible texts is the “Black Thought and Black Culture” database- (<http://solomon.bltc.alexanderstreet.com.mutex.gmu.edu/>). If you choose a text from here is must be of approximately book length. If you have questions about whether something qualifies, let me know.

Other possible books might be:

Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope*

Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage, My Freedom*

David Walker, *David Walker’s Appeal*

Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can’t Wait*

Martin Luther King, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community*

Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*

Robert F. Williams, *Negroes With Guns*

Cornell West, *Race Matters*

Alain Locke, *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*

T. Thomas Fortune, *Black and White: Land, Labor, and Politics in the South*

W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*

James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*

Frances Harper, *Iola LeRoy*

Pauline Hopkins, *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South*

Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class*

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Charles Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*

Martin Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*

George Schuyler, *Black No More: Being an Account of the Strange and Wonderful Workings of Science in the Land of the Free, AD 1933-1940*