Syllabus

AFRAS 321: Black Political Participation in America

Fall 2014
T/Th 9:30-10:45
HH 210

Instructor: Dr. F.N. Nesbitt
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Course description:
This course is an introduction to the modes and rationales for black political participation in U.S. politics. Essentially we will study how black people mobilize to change public policies in the United States. Political participation includes both conventional (voting) and unconventional (social movements) modes participation. We will assess competing theories on the role and scope of black political participation before looking specifically at how black people expressed demands and expanded participation during the first and second reconstructions. We will examine the antislavery and civil rights movements as the paradigmatic models for democratic participation in the United States. We will analyze the impact of these movements on the nation’s ideals, institutions and way of life. Finally we will examine the paradox of black political participation since the Voting Rights Act of 1965. We will examine black political behavior, voting patterns, representation at the local and state levels and in major institutions such as Congress, the Supreme Court and the Presidency.

Students enrolled in the course will: (1) gain an understanding of the role of government in the making and unmaking of policies affecting African Americans; (2) examine the accomplishment and limitations of black political power; (3) study how black freedom movements took form and how they affected local, regional, and national policies; (4) acquire knowledge necessary to identify and to assess the strategic decisions that were made by movement leaders at critical points of the civil rights struggle; and, (5) discover how the mass media, churches and civil rights groups influence - and are influenced by - the struggle for black freedom.
Texts

- Obama, B. *Dreams from my father*

Requirements

There are four essential requirements for the successful completion of this course:

Attendance

Students must attend all lectures, arrive on time and leave when the lecture is over. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class period. **Do not use computers, cell phones or other electronic gadgets during the class period. If you do so you will be asked to leave and marked absent.**

Exams

There will be two midterms on Sept. 25th and Nov. 6th and a final exam on Dec. 11 at 8-10 a.m. The exams will cover all course materials including lectures, readings, discussions and films.

Term paper

Each student should pick a topic discussed in class and write a 8-10 page research paper. The instructor must approve the paper topic.

Service Learning:

Students may elect to do a service-learning project instead of the term paper. See instructions on page eight.

Grading policies

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation/attendance</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterms</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Final exam</td>
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<td>Book report</td>
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A (100-90); B (89-80); C (79-70); D (69-60); F (59-)

Course Schedule

**Week One: Aug. 26-28: Introduction: What is black political participation?**
Questions: What is black political participation? How have African American movements, individuals and institutions influenced—and been influenced by—the state of democracy in the United States?

Week Two: Sept. 2-4: The paradox of black political participation

Walton, pp. 1-43; “Politics, slavery and the ideology of white supremacy in the founding of the republic”; “Federalism and the limits of universal freedom”

Questions: What was the impact of the American Revolution on black political participation? What strategies did black people use to reclaim their democratic rights?

Week Three: Sept. 9-11: Case study one: The first reconstruction

- “Legacy of the first reconstruction,” Marable, pp. 3-39
- “The abolitionist coalition,” Walton, pp. 88-90
- “Booker T. Washington’s coalition for limited politics” Walton, pp. 92-93
- “Material-based coalitions: from populism to communism,” Walton, pp. 94-96

Week Four: Sept. 16-18: Case study two: the second reconstruction

“Social Movements,” Walton, pp. 86-111,

“The demand for civil rights reform,” Marable, pp. 40-60

Week Five: Sept. 23-25: Case study two: Civil rights and political mobilization

- Marable, pp. 61-85

Midterm: Sept. 25th

Week Six: Sept. 30-Oct. 2: Case study two: Black Power and interest group politics

- “Black Power,” Marable, pp. 86-113;
- “The black power movement and the transformation of the movement to interest group politics,” Walton, pp. 102-111

Week Seven: Oct. 7-9: Germany conference No class meeting
Read Barack Obama’s Dreams from my father and write a 4-5 page book review due Oct. 14th on Blackboard

Marable, 114-128
Documents:
- This Side of Glory
- A Woman’s Revolution

Week Nine: Oct. 21-23: The end of reconstruction: Reaction and backlash

Read “Reaction,” Marable, 149-184

Week Ten: Oct. 28-30: Religious networks and political mobilization


Documents: Blackboard
We have no leaders: African Americans in the post-civil rights era
Address before the 1984 Democratic National Convention

Week Eleven: Nov. 4-6: Public Opinion and Political Socialization

- Paradox of Integration, Marable, pp. 185-230
- Walton, pp. 129-165

Documents:
- Inaugural address (1967)
- Race, socio-political participation and black empowerment
- The future of black politics: substance versus process and formality

Midterm: Nov. 6

Week Twelve: Nov. 11-13: The future of black representation


Read Walton, pp. 166-208
Documents:
- The future of black representation
- The representation of minority interests
- Representation in Congress: Line drawing and minorities

**Week Thirteen: Nov. 18-20: The Supreme Court and black participation**

Read Walton, pp. 209-246
Documents: Franklin, pp. 344-368
- Blacks and the Supreme Court
- Race against the court
- On Justice Clarence Thomas

**Week Fourteen: Nov. 25-27: Racial Solidarity and Political Participation**


- The Sources and Consequences of *Political* Mistrust Among *African Americans*. By: Avery, James M. *American* Politics Research, Sep 2006, Vol. 34 Issue 5, p653-682 (Blackboard)


- Walton, pp. 44-64
Documents: Franklin, pp. 157-202
- Divided by color: racial politics and democratic ideals
- Reckoning with rational discrimination
- Race matters
**Week Fifteen: Dec. 2-4: Poverty and the constraints of participation**

- Walton, pp. 247-262
- Bobo, L. and Frank Gilliam, "Race, Sociopolitical Participation and Black Empowerment," AJPS 84 (June 1990):377-393

**Documents: Franklin, pp. 369-440**
- Behind the mule
- Family income
- When work disappears: the world of the new urban poor
- Losing ground
- Race to incarcerate

**Week Sixteen: Dec. 9: Black participation in the 21st century**

- Walton, pp. 263-282

**Research paper due Dec. 9**

**Dec. 11: Final Exam at 8-10 a.m.**
**Service-Learning Project**

Those of you who are interested may participate in a service-learning project in which you will spend two or three hours a week volunteering with a community or campus organization. The organizations that can be worked with are either African American organizations or organizations that serve African Americans among their clientele.

Students will be expected to keep a journal recording their experiences from week to week. At the end of the semester you will be required to write a paper analyzing the organization with which you have worked. You may also have to make a presentation in class discussing what you have learned. Those of you who do a service-learning project will not have to write a final paper.

The locus of the social action of most of the groups you can volunteer with is civil society, the sphere where politics begins. Civil society, you'll recall, is the sphere where personal values, ideologies and political alliances are formed.

Your paper, should you choose to do the service learning project, should be 6-8 pages long. The questions it should address are the following:

1) a) What services does the organization render? b) What population does it serve?

2) What are the human values and ideology of the organization you worked with?

3) What issues in public policy are of concern to the organization, and why?

4) What are the present government policies regarding these issues of concern?

5) How effective is the organization in achieving its goals? What alternatives do you suggest?

6) How does its degree of effectiveness relate to value differences between itself and the broader society?