

African-American Politics in Theory and Practice

Instructor: **Andrew Dilts**

Office: Gates-Blake 317

Office Hours: Weds, 10:00a-12:00a

Email: dilts@uchicago.edu

Phone: 773-702-0354

Course Meetings: Tuesdays & Thursdays

Website: <http://chalk.uchicago.edu/>

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course asks what it means to talk about African-American in both theory and practice over the course of the American experience. The first half of the course begins by focusing on the theoretical and philosophical foundations of race, asking how race figured into abstract notions of politics as well as in the founding of the United States during the late 18th century. We continue historically, asking how the end of the Civil War, reconstruction, redemption, and the rise of Jim Crow shaped black politics during those periods and how it has shaped black politics for future generations. In particular, we will explore the dramatic emergence of a black voting block and the “realignment” of black voters from the Republican to Democratic parties in the early 20th century. In the second half of the course, we will focus on the civil rights movement and its legacy of shifting from “protest to politics,” questioning the very idea of “black politics” itself. Challenged on the one hand by internal cleavages amongst African-Americans and on the other hand by external pressures of systemic racism in institutions such as the criminal justice system, we will ask if the idea of black politics even makes sense any longer. At the end of the course, we will ask what the future of black politics looks like, and how our own theoretical and philosophical commitments continue to form and shape our political praxis in the “Age of Obama.” A constant voice throughout the course we be that of W.E.B. Du Bois. If, as DuBois puts it, the problem of the 20th century is the “problem of the color-line,” we will force our selves to ask in what way it continues to be the problem of the 21st century as well.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- (1) You will submit **one term paper** (15-20 pages in length) at the end of the semester. Papers **MUST** be formatted and submitted properly in order to receive full credit, as documented in the course paper guidelines, available on the course website. Paper topics must be approved in advance by the instructor or the Teaching Assistant.
- (2) You will complete a **midterm exam**. The exam will be a closed-book/notes “blue-book” style exam.
- (3) You must **attend class** and be an **active participant** in discussion. This is a reading intensive course, and as such, students should be prepared to cover a large amount of material each week, and should plan accordingly.
- (4) You will give **one in-class presentation** on the day’s material. The presentation should be no longer than 25 mins, and should focus offering both a specific question prompted by the readings as well as a preliminary answer to your own question.

GRADES: Term paper: 50%; midterm exam 20%; presentation 20%; class participation and attendance is 10%. *Any student who receives a failing grade for attendance and participation will receive a failing grade for the class.*

PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Proven plagiarism of any kind may result in automatic

failure of the course, and will be referred to the University for further disciplinary action. I reserve the right to submit your electronic document to plagiarism detection websites if necessary.

ACCOMMODATION: Students in need of accommodation for an impairment and/or disability should contact me as soon as possible. You should also contact the Coordinator for Disability Services (773-834-4469), as outlined in the Student Handbook, to document your needs and determine a reasonable accommodation.

READING SCHEDULE:

Week 1: What do we mean by Race?

- Selections from *Idea of Race*, Part I (Bernier, Voltaire, Kant, Herder, Blumenbach, & Hegel) pp. 1-44 & Part II (Gobineu, Darwin, Galton) pp. 45-79.
- W.E.B. Du Bois, *Souls*, Forethought, Chapter 1, and “Conservation of the Races”

Week 2: Race and Foundations of the Political Community

- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, Chapters 1-5.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, selections from the *Discourse on Inequality* and Book I of *The Social Contract*.
- Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (entire book).

Week 3: Race and the American Republic

- Alexis de Tocqueville, “On the Three Races that Inhabit America” in *Democracy in America*.
- Selections from Louis Ruchames (ed.), *Racial Thought in America*, pp.162-169, 307-315, 337-346, 380-382, 388-403 (Thomas Jefferson, William Lloyd Garrison, Catherine E. Beecher, Angelina Grimké, Abraham Lincoln, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, Supreme Court).
- Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”, 1852.
- Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, in *Idea of Race*, pp. 181-212.

Week 4: What do we mean by “Black Politics?”

- W.E.B. Du Bois, *Souls*, Chapters 2-3.
- Michael C. Dawson, *Behind the Mule*, pp. 45-68.
- Cathy J. Cohen, *The Boundaries of Blackness*, pp. 33-77.
- Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (entire book).

Week 5: Black Political Ideology

- Michael Dawson, *Black Visions*, pp. 1-43.
- Melissa Harris-Lacewell, *Barbershops, Bibles and BET*, pp. 1-34.
- Cathy Cohen and Jamilla Celestine-Michener, “‘Minority Report’: Kany West, Barack Obama, and Political Alienation” in *Democracy Remixed*, pp. 108-155.

Week 6: Reconstruction

- W.E.B. DuBois, “Reconstruction and its Benefits” & “Reconstruction, Seventy-Five Years After” and selections from *Black Reconstruction*.
- Phil Klinkner and Rogers Smith, *The Unsteady March*, pp. 72-105.
- Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances*, pp. 49-86.
- Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name*, pp. 1-113.

Week 7: From Jim Crow to New Deal Black Politics

- W.E.B. DuBois, *Souls*, Chapters 4-9.

- Phil Klinkner and Rogers Smith, *The Unsteady March*, pp. 106-135.
- Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln*, pp. 13-61; 78-95; 180-235.

MIDTERM EXAM

Week 8: Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement

- Manning Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion*, 1-184.
- *The Black Panthers Speak*, Philip Foner, ed., pp. 1-37, 45-47, 81-87, 145-166.

Week 9: Voting Rights Act and Black Elected Officials

- Chandler Davidson, "The Voting Rights Act: A Brief History," pp. 7-51.
- William E. Nelson, Jr., "Cleveland: The Rise and Fall of the New Black Politics," pp. 187-208.
- Katherine Tate, *From Protest to Politics*, pp. 75-108.
- Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet."

Week 10: Voting and Representation

- Judith Shklar, *American Citizenship*, Part 1: Voting.
- Adolph Reed, Jr., "The Black Urban Regime: Structural Origins & Constraints," pp. 79-115.
- Carol M. Swain, *Black Faces, Black Interests: The Representation of African Americans in Congress*, pp. 3-44, 193-225.
- Lani Guinier, *The Tyranny of the Majority*, pp. 41-118.
- Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances*, pp. 87-119.
- Cathy J. Cohen, "Fight the Power?: From Jena to the White House," in *Democracy Remixed*, pp. 156-200.

Week 11: A Divided Black Political Agenda? Poverty and Class

- W.E.B. DuBois, "The Economic Future of the Negro."
- Michael Dawson, *Behind the Mule*, pp. 15-44.
- William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, pp. 3-106.
- Adolph Reed, Jr., "The 'Underclass' as Myth and Symbol: The Poverty of Discourse about Poverty," pp. 179-196.
- Bart Landry, *The New Black Middle Class*, pp. 67-115.
- Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Two Nations... both Black," pp. 132-138.

Week 12: A Divided Black Political Agenda? Religion, Gender, Sexuality and Black Feminism

- W.E.B. DuBois, *Souls*, Chapters 10-12.
- bell hooks, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory" in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. pp. 1-15.
- Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, pp. 3-40.
- Johnetta Betsch Cole and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Gender Talk*, pp. 128-181.
- Phillip Brian Harper, *Are We Not Men?*, pp. 3-38.
- Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color."
- Cathy Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens." & "Baby Mama': Black Love, Black Deviance, and the Sexual Politics of Morality" in *Democracy Remixed*, pp. 50-107.

Week 13: Critical Issues, Black Popular Culture

- Stuart Hall, "What is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture," pp. 21-33.
- Adolph Reed Jr., "The Allure of Malcolm X and the Changing Character of Black Politics," pp.

197-224.

- Tricia Rose, *Black Noise*, pp. 1-21, 99-145.
- Cathy Cohen, “‘Gangsta Rap Made Me Do It’: Bill Cosby, Don Imus, and Black Moral Panics” in *Democracy Remixed*, pp. 18-49.

Week 14: Critical Issues, Incarceration

- W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Negro Criminal” from *The Philadelphia Negro*.
- Marc Mauer, *Race to Incarcerate*, 1-14, 118-194.
- Richie, Beth. “Challenges Incarcerated women Face as They Return to Their Communities: Findings From Life History Interviews.”
- Bruce Western, “Punishment and Inequality in America” Chapters 1-3.
- Manza, Jeff, and Christopher Uggen. "Punishment and Democracy: Disenfranchisement of Nonincarcerated Felons in the United States." *Perspectives on Politics* 2 (3):491-505.
- Loïc Wacquant, "Deadly Symbiosis: When Ghetto and Prison Meet and Mesh."
- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, Chapters 1 & 5.

Week 15: Which Way Forward?

- W.E.B. Du Bois, *Souls*, Chapters 13-14, and Afterthought.
- Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character*, pp. 149-175.
- Glenn C. Loury, *One by One from the Inside Out*, pp. 63-82.
- Orlando Patterson. *The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America's "Racial" Crisis*, pp. 171-203.
- Adolph Reed Jr., “Sources of Demobilization in the New Black Political Regime: Incorporation, Ideological Capitulation, and the Radical Failure in the Post-Segregation Era,” 117-159.
- Cathy J. Cohen. “Deviance as Resistance: A New Research Agenda for the Study of Black Politics,” 27-45.
- Cathy J. Cohen, “‘My President is Black’: Barack Obama and the Postracial Illusion” & “‘A Change is Gonna Come’: Policy and Politics,” in *Democracy Remixed*, pp. 201-240.
- Zadie Smith, “Speaking in Tongues”