

African American Women's Political Activism

History 410/510

Winter 2014
M/W 10-11:20

Instructor: Professor Melissa Stuckey

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Office Hours:
M/W 12:00-1:00PM
or by appointment

Course Description

This course will explore the history African-American women political expression in the United States from slavery to the late twentieth century. Through a combination of books, primary sources, and film we will formulate answers to the question of how black women in the United States articulated themselves as political actors in spite of the fact that for most of their time in this nation they have been defined outside of the body politic. What did political expression look like to enslaved black women? How did African-American women, during the long decades after slavery and still not recognized at full citizens because of both their race and sex, continue to develop a political voice and push forward an agenda to advance their goals? What obstacles did they struggle against in this endeavor? What kinds of alliances did they form? How have these struggles impacted black women and other parts of American society? Certainly broadening our understanding of political history is crucial to forming answers to these questions. By looking at politics as expressed “from the ground up” we can begin to develop an understanding of and appreciation for African-American women’s struggles for personal autonomy, parental rights, labor rights, sexual rights, social rights, civil rights, and political rights, all as being important parts of their political history in the United States.

Course Requirements and Grading

Class Participation—10%	See details below
Class Message Board article posting—10%	See details below
Lead Class Discussion—20%	See details below
Take Home Midterm Exam—20%	Due Feb 12
Group Presentation—20%	See details below
Final Paper/Project—20%	Due March 18

Required Readings

The following books are required and will be available for purchase at the Duck Store.

All Students

Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America*

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

Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*

Course Packet

Additional readings may be posted on Blackboard or occasionally distributed as handouts.

Graduate Students

In addition to the above books, you will be reading:

Danielle McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*

Jean Fagan Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*

Class Participation (10% of grade)

This class runs through a combination of lecture and discussion. Thoughtful and active participation is essential, so come prepared to participate each week. If you do not speak, I will assume that you have not done the reading. Questions, comments, and healthy and respectful debate are both welcome and necessary as we explore the themes of the course. Strive to engage in dialogue with your peers instead of directing your comments exclusively to me.

Note Taking

You are required take notes on the lectures and readings. Your reading notes must be taken prior to class. Because we will be working with digitized primary sources, you are welcome to bring and use your laptop in class for academic purposes. Personal use of computers is strictly prohibited. It is also fine to not bring your computer.

Undergraduate Assignments

Message Board: The Past is Present (10% of grade)

Each week, you will find an article that is related to the themes of this course and post it to our class message board along with your analysis of why your chosen article speaks to the course themes. You will also read the articles posted by your classmates and join in the conversation that has been started by the initial post and comments.

Articles should be posted by Friday of each week.

Some suggestions:

--You can ask your classmates to contemplate specific passages in the article.

--You can post a few questions about it.

--You can highlight intriguing contradictions, and hypothesize about what is at stake in the article as it relates to the idea of the "past being present."

Leading Class--undergraduate (20% of grade)

In teams of two, each undergraduate class member will lead one class discussion during the semester. You will choose your week (between weeks 4 and 8) and in consultation with me, you will work together to develop questions for the discussion and to determine the way you want to run class for that day, this may include a short presentation, images, or a warm up activity of your design.

Take Home Midterm Exam (20% of grade)

The midterm examination will consist of essay questions based on the readings we have covered at each point. You will receive the essay questions on February 5 and the essays are due in class on February 12.

Group Research Presentation (20% of grade)

Using a relay race a metaphor, each group member will present on the findings of their research. This means, your work should have a relationship to your fellow group members' work, a "thread" that connects them thematically. You will coordinate, communicate, and work with each other to create a cohesive presentation with individual components that are researched and presented by individuals. You will be graded on your individual presentation, but also on how well the pieces work together. Visual aids and handouts are encouraged. Each person should present for between 5 and 7 minutes.

Final Paper (20%)

You will write an eight to ten page paper based on your primary source research findings.

Graduate Student Assignments

Message Board: The Past is Present (10%)

Each week, you will find an article that is related to the themes of this course and post it to our class message board along with your analysis of why your chosen article speaks to the course themes. You will also read the articles posted by your classmates and join in the conversation that has been started by the initial post and comments.

Articles should be posted by Friday of each week.

Some suggestions:

- You can ask your classmates to contemplate specific passages in the article.
- You can post a few questions about it.
- You can highlight intriguing contradictions, and hypothesize about what is at stake in the article as it relates to the idea of the "past being present."

Midterm exam as above.

Leading Class—graduate student (20% of grade)

You will each choose one day (between Weeks 4 and 8) to run the class. In consultation with me, you will choose your day and method of teaching, which can include some lecture and discussion, a short presentation, images, or a warm up activity of your design.

Individual Research Presentation (20% of grade)

Plan and deliver a short lecture or class lesson based on your research topic. Approximately 40 minutes in length.

Final Assignment (20% of grade)

For your final assignment you will either write a research paper, 12-15 pages, in one of the four research categories covered in the course or upon consultation with me create an assignment that helps you advance toward your graduate degree.

Class Rules and Policies

Attendance

It is important that you attend every class session. One unexcused absence will lower your class participation grade by one letter grade (A lowers to B). Two unexcused absences will result in class participation grade of zero. More than two unexcused absences will result in failure of the course. Properly excused absences will not harm your grade. This includes flu related absences affecting you or someone in your household and under your direct care (i.e. an ill child).

Email

All email communications will be sent to your University of Oregon email address. Please use only your university email address when contacting me. I will not respond the messages sent via commercial email accounts (i.e. Gmail or Yahoo).

Late work

Late work will not be accepted.

Assignments

All assignments must be typed, double spaced, and in Times New Roman font, with standard margins.

Academic Integrity

Unless otherwise specified, all assignments, presentations, and examinations are to be completed independently.

Plagiarism is using others' ideas and/or words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information. Plagiarism will result in failure of the course and will be reported. Please ASK if you have any questions.

Classroom Decorum

In this classroom people and ideas are respected. Interrupting and other outbursts will not be tolerated. Please put away your cell phones off prior to the start of class. Absolutely no text messaging. No computer use without prior permission. No eating or gum chewing in class, beverages are acceptable.

Disability Statement

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability related barriers to your participation, please notify me as soon as possible. You may also wish to contact Disability Services in 164 Oregon Hall at 346-1155 or disabsrv@uoregon.edu.

This syllabus is subject to modification as necessary.

Unit 1: The Antebellum Period

Week 1

January 6

January 8

A Shining Thread of Hope, Prologue and Chapter 3

This week begin reading *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Chapters 1-16

This week begin reading *Harriet Jacobs: A Life, Part One* (Graduate Students)

Week 2

January 13

A Shining Thread of Hope, Chapter 4

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Chapters 1-16

Harriet Jacobs: A Life, Part One (Graduate Students)

Complete the above-specified reading in by class time January 13 and be prepared to discuss it.

January 15

Stephanie M. H. Camp, “‘I Could Not Stay There’: Enslaved Women, Truancy and the Geography of Everyday Forms of Resistance in the Antebellum Plantation South,” *Slavery and Abolition*, 23:3 (December 2002), 1-20.

This week continue reading *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Chapters 16-41

This week continue reading *Harriet Jacobs: A Life, Part Two* (Graduate Students)

Week 3

January 20

A Shining Thread of Hope, Chapter 5

Martin Luther King Day, Class Does Not Meet

January 22

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Chapters 16-41

Harriet Jacobs: A Life, Part Two (Graduate Students)

Complete the above-specified reading in by class time January 22 and be prepared to discuss it.

Unit 2: Reconstruction through the 1920s

Week 4

January 27

A Shining Thread of Hope, Chapter 6

Elsa Barkley Brown, "To Catch the Vision of Freedom: Reconstructing Southern Black Women's Political History, 1865-1880," *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, Third Edition, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 124-146.

January 29

Karin Zipf, "Reconstructing 'Free Woman': African-American Women, Apprenticeship, and Custody Rights during Reconstruction" *Journal of Women's History*, 12:1 (Spring 2000), 8-31.

Week 5

February 3

A Shining Thread of Hope, Chapter 7

Tera W. Hunter, "Domination and Resistance: The Politics of Wage Household Labor in New South Atlanta," *Labor History*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 205-220.

February 5

Janice Sumler-Edmond, "The Quest for Justice," from *African American Women and the Vote, 1837-1965*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 100-119.

Week 6

February 10

A Shining Thread of Hope, Chapters 8 and 9

February 12

Class will not meet. Midterm due by 5pm.

Begin reading *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (All) and *At the Dark End of the Street* (Graduate Students) in preparation for next unit.

Unit 3: 1930s to 1960s/1970s

Week 7

February 17

A Shining Thread of Hope, Chapter 10

Coming of Age in Mississippi, Parts 1 and 2 (Read through at least part 1 by Monday)

February 19

Coming of Age in Mississippi, Part 1 and 2

At the Dark End of the Street, Chapters 1-4 (Graduate Students)

(Be prepared to discuss readings on February 19)

Week 8

February 24

A Shining Thread of Hope, Chapter 11

Coming of Age in Mississippi, Parts 3 and 4 (Read through at least part 2 by Monday)

At the Dark End of the Street, Chapters 5-8 (Graduate Students)

February 26

Coming of Age in Mississippi, Part 2

At the Dark End of the Street, 5-8 (Graduate Students)

Week 9

March 3

Graduate student research presentations

March 5

Graduate student research presentations

Week 10

March 10

Undergraduate group research presentations

March 12

Undergraduate group research presentations

Final paper due electronically on March 18, 2014 by 11:59PM.