

Spring 1993
History 201: Special Topics in American History: History of the
Civil Rights Movement
Plummer

Scope and purpose. This course will familiarize students with the events and issues of the civil rights movement, and introduce them to literature that accounts for the movement's ascendancy and its influence on American life. It will treat the historical context in which the civil rights movement emerged, including industrialization and demographic change, agricultural mechanization in the South, the rise of the liberal coalition, and the consequences of World War II and the Cold War for race relations. It will examine the origins of civil rights litigation and the key events and issues of the critical 1954-1964 decade. The development of black radicalism will be explored, as well as civil rights in the urban North, federal policies, and the impact of a changing global community.

Evaluation. It is expected that students who enroll in the course are genuinely interested in the subject matter. Regular attendance, adequate preparation, and participation in class discussion are essential to the success of the course. All students will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of written assignments (including exams), attendance, and participation.

Midterm. The midterm will be an in-class essay exam on March 4, 1993. The midterm is worth 25% of the total grade.

Paper. An essay of 6-8 pages is due on the day of the final exam. This is worth 35% of the total grade. Students can draw their topic from a list that will be distributed later, or they can write on subjects of their own choice provided these are pertinent to civil rights history. Guidelines for preparing the paper will be distributed separately. If you wish, you may hand in an outline or rough draft at any time after the midterm. Students are not required to do this, but may find it helpful.

Final. The final is a take-home essay examination distributed on the last day of class (May 6) and due on the day and time of the scheduled final. Because the university insists that final grades be turned in on time, no allowances can be made for lateness. The final exam is worth 25% of the grade.

Attendance. An attendance sheet will be circulated and signed at each class session. Attendance is worth 15% of the grade.

Texts:

Clayborne Carson, In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s
Archie Epps, ed., The Speeches of Malcolm X at Harvard
Martin Luther King, Why We Can't Wait
Jo Ann Gibson Robinson, The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It
Juan Williams, Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965

COURSE SCHEDULE

Reading assignments are due for the next class meeting.

WEEK 1: THE BACKGROUND OF PROTEST, 1

Jan. 19 - Introduction to the course.

Reading: Eyes on the Prize, ch. 1.

Jan. 21 - Jim Crow's recessionary.

Reading: Eyes on the Prize, ch. 2.

WEEK 2: THE BACKGROUND OF PROTEST, 2

Jan. 26 - Urbanization and industrialization.

Reading: Eyes on the Prize, ch. 3.

Jan. 28 - Agricultural change in the South.

Reading: Robinson, Foreword, Preface, Prologue, chs. 1 and 2.

WEEK 3: RACE RELATIONS AND THE NATIONAL SCENE, 1945-1954

Feb. 2 The social sciences interpret race.

Reading: Robinson, chs. 3 and 4.

Feb. 4 The legacy of World War II.

Reading: Robinson, chs. 5 and 6.

WEEK 4: CIVIL RIGHTS LITIGATION

Feb. 9 From Plessy to Brown.

Reading: Robinson, chs. 7, 8, and 9.

Feb. 11 From Brown to Bakke.

Reading: MLK, chs. 1, 2, and 3.

WEEK 5: LIBERALISM AND POLITICS

Feb. 16 - The Democratic Party's legacy.

Reading: MLK, chs. 4, 5, and 6.

Feb. 18 Liberals without portfolio.

Reading: MLK, chs. 7 and 8.

WEEK 6: CHRISTIAN, NON-CHRISTIAN, AND SECULAR SOURCES OF BLACK INSURGENCY

Feb. 23 - The black church and protest.

Reading: Eyes on the Prize, chs. 4 and 5.

Feb. 25 - The philosophy of nonviolent civil disobedience.

Reading: Eyes on the Prize, chs. 6, 7, and 8.

WEEK 7: WHITE SOUTHERN RESISTANCE

Mar. 2 - White Southern resistance.

Reading: No assignment.

Mar 4 - MIDTERM

Reading: No assignment.

Spring break week of March 7-14. No classes

WEEK 8: CLASS AND LEADERSHIP

Mar. 16 The black bourgeoisie and the civil rights movement.

Reading: Carson, Introduction, chs. 1 and 2.

Mar. 18 The fracturing of class issues.

Reading: Carson, chs. 3 and 4.

WEEK 9: CIVIL RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Mar. 23 Poor people and just desserts.

Reading: Carson, chs. 5 and 6.
 Mar 25 - Emergence of the welfare rights issue.
 Reading: Carson, chs. 7 and 8.

WEEK 10: GENDER ISSUES IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Mar. 30 - Afro-American women and empowerment.
 Reading: Carson, chs. 9 and 10.
 Apr. 1- Feminism and civil rights.
 Reading: Carson, chs. 11 and 12.

WEEK 11: WAR AND INSURGENCY

Apr. 6 - Vietnam as a human rights issue.
 Reading: Carson, chs. 13 and 14.
 Apr. 8 - Vietnam and the Great Society.
 Reading: Carson, chs. 15 and 16.

WEEK 12: BLACK POWER

Apr. 13 - Southern roots of the Black Power movement.
 Reading: Carson, ch. 17 through epilogue.
 Apr. 15 - Northern roots of the Black Power movement.
 Reading: Malcolm X, Preface; sections 1 and 2 of Part I.

WEEK 13: RADICALISM IN BLACK AND WHITE

Apr. 20 - The Selma aftermath.
 Reading: Malcolm X, section 3 of Part I.
 Apr. 22 - Civil rights and the "New Left."
 Reading: Malcolm X, sections 4 and 5 of Part I.

WEEK 14: CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE URBAN NORTH

Apr. 27 - SCLC's Chicago campaign and consequences.
 Reading: Malcolm X, section 5 of Part I.
 Apr. 29 - Urban unrest and ethnic politics.
 Reading: Malcolm X, Harvard Law School Forum, Mar. 24, 1961.

WEEK 15: THE FEDERAL POLICY FRONTIER

May 4 - Affirmative action.
 Reading: Malcolm X, Leverett House Forum, Mar. 18, 1964.
 May 6 - How far will you go?
 Reading: Malcolm X, Harvard Law School Forum, Dec. 16, 1964.
PAPERS DUE

History 201: History of the Civil Rights Movement Paper Guidelines

The critical essay has a minimum of six pages. The topic may be broad, but it requires thoughtful consideration rather than intensive empirical investigation. Aside from assigned readings, class discussions, and professorial comments, no additional research is required to write the essay. If you choose to do research on the topic on your own, this will probably help you. Critical analysis and thoughtful interpretation of the topic, however, is highly valued.

Format: The topical essay should be typed, double-spaced. Since illegibility slows down grading process and causes delays for everyone, untyped papers will be penalized. Lateness will also cause a paper to lose points. Get an early start on planning and writing. Feel free to consult the instructor during office hours or by appointment for additional suggestions on how to proceed.

Margins should be no wider than one and a quarter inches, and pages should be full. Spelling, punctuation, and grammar should be correct, i. e., proofread, throughout. Get into the habit of consulting one of the numerous style manuals, such as Strunk and White, Elements of Style, or a dictionary for problems of usage, spelling, punctuation, etc. There are a lot of cheap paperback guides available for advice on formatting papers. One of the most widely used is Kate Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations.

If you want to directly quote someone in your text, use quotation marks and indicate the source of the quotation in a footnote. It might be easier for you to put all the footnotes on a separate page. Any words or ideas not your own should be clearly identified as borrowed.

Feel free to discuss your topic with others in the class. More than one person may write on the same one. Be open to new points of view, but let the final product be your own.

Essays will be evaluated on their pertinence, originality, logical organization, and accuracy.

SAMPLE ESSAY TOPICS

1. Why have social scientists spent so much time studying class structure of impoverished groups? How are racial ideologies and social policy involved in the debate?
2. Why did the Great Society reforms fail to end poverty and injustice in America? What are some examples of current thinking on this question? What are your own views?
3. Certain events in civil rights movement history, such as the Montgomery bus boycott, Selma march, and Chicago campaign, have been seen as pivotal in shaping the future direction of the movement. How would you periodize the movement? In what ways does your scheme differ from that of others?
4. What were the political implications of reduced respectability for nonenvironmentalist theories behavior and personality in the post-1945 period?