

AFROAM/HIST 628: HISTORY OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT - Fall Semester  
2006

S Y L L A B U S

TR 9:30-10:45 p.m.  
Professor Plummer  
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Office: 5111 Humanities Building  
263-1845, 263-1800

**Course Description.** This course focuses on the civil rights movement led by African Americans in the United States. It treats the historical background to movement emergence, including industrial and demographic transition, agricultural change in the South, the rise of the liberal coalition, and the impact of World War II and the Cold War on race relations. It examines civil rights litigation and the key events and consequences of movement insurgency. Black radicalism is explored, as well as civil rights in the urban North, the policies of the federal government, the impact of world affairs, and the role of gender. The course probes the fight against racial discrimination as it evolved in the 1970s and in the succeeding decade. The activities and life stories of some individual participants as well as broad historical forces are considered. The purpose of this course is to acquaint upper-level undergraduate and graduate students with the events and issues of this social and political movement. While movements for change have developed round the demands for justice made by other groups, this course focuses on the African American experience. The reading load normally consists of five books, or four books and a photocopied reader. There are two examinations. A 10-page research paper, submitted in two drafts, is required. There is also an attendance requirement: students missing more than 8 classes without good reason cannot get a grade higher than C in the course.

**Organization:** Class meetings will center on lectures and presentations, discussion, and videos. Most of these will address assigned texts or scheduled topics. Scheduled topics provide broad chronological and thematic continuity and supply background material for students' own independent research. Students are encouraged to use the Social Action Collections at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, which includes one of the finest civil rights archives in the country. Wisconsin also has one of the most extensive collections of newspapers, including the African American press. The course offers an excellent opportunity to use these resources.

**Classroom policies.** The more controversial a subject, the more we need to respect one another's viewpoints. Class discussions can be lively and intense, but they must be diplomatic. Thoughtfully criticize an idea; don't attack the person expressing it. Please turn off cell phones, pagers, and other noisemakers while in class and enter and leave the room quietly at the beginning and end of the session. The multimedia classroom was expensive to build. Please try to keep furnishings clean.

**Evaluation:** Grades will be based on the following:

1. Midterm: This will consist of an in-class exam (mixed essay, multiple choice, and short-answer). 25 percent of the grade.
2. A 10-page research paper submitted as a first draft and a final draft. (See below for details) Each draft is 25 percent of the grade.
3. Final examination: (Mixed essay and short-answer take-home). 25 percent of the grade. Grades are not curved on exams.

What the grades mean:

A (93-100) - Papers that are thoroughly researched, knowledgeable and reflect mastery of the sources used. They have a well-defined, logically developed argument that takes into account possible counter-arguments and that show strong evidence of original thinking. "A" papers are soundly structured, skillfully written, lack grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors, and are careful about citations. Exams demonstrate excellent knowledge of facts as shown by quantitative performance on short answer and multiple-choice sections. Excellence indicates superior knowledge, ability to reason on the fly, and writing ability on essay questions.

AB (85-92) – ABs are papers that are well researched but not exhaustively so, and that indicate solid understanding of the sources used. They are well argued and do not simply mirror the conclusions of other authors. Papers are clearly written and identify all sources used and cited, but are not outstanding as far as writing style or insights are concerned. ABs have a mini-mum of grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. Exams evince good knowledge of facts as demonstrated by quantitative performance on short answer and multiple-choice sections. Essay sections are characterized by sound knowledge, capacity to sustain an argument, and write clearly and well spontaneously.

B (80-84) – "B" papers have covered some but not most of the bases in drawing factual information out of sources. They have moderate organizational problems. They make a good argument but do not provide evidence to support all of it, or may not be logical or well organized throughout. Sometimes there is slippage with regard to citations and grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. Exams show good knowledge of facts as demonstrated by quantitative performance on short answer and multiple-choice sections. Essays show an adequate grasp of the subject but arguments are not strongly supported, and writing is adequate but not impressive.

BC (77-79) – These papers do not cover enough factual ground. They have serious structural or organizational problems and may feature weak arguments or adequate arguments that are weakly supported. Papers may have compositional problems. Not enough attention has been paid to grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. Exams indicate borderline knowledge of facts as illustrated by quantitative performance on short answer and multiple-choice sections. Essays may not fully answer the question, try to answer another question, or are not clearly written.

C (70-76) – So-called "average" papers indicate through inaccuracies or lack of material that research was not adequately done. They may have writing problems serious enough to confuse a reader. "C" papers do not present a real argument, or do little to support it. They may contain extensive citation that just fills up space with poor documentation of the citations. These papers pay little or no attention to grammar, punctuation, or spelling. The exams display limited knowledge of facts as demonstrated by quantitative performance on short answer and multiple-choice sections. Essays may skirt the questions asked, are not well structured, or show evidence of writing difficulties.

D (69-65) – papers reports do not contain much information and are organized and written poorly. They lack a thesis. Extensive difficulties with writing and documentation are apparent. No attention is paid to the paper's appearance, which might contain extensive grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. Exams indicate deficient knowledge of

facts as demonstrated by quantitative performance on short answer and multiple-choice sections. Essays indicate lack of basic knowledge and have serious organizational and compositional problems.

F (64) - Failure to carry out the minimum requirements of the papers or exams as detailed above. Often a product of absence.

#### DUE DATES:

Midterm - October 17, 2006

First draft of paper due - Nov. 16, 2006

Final draft of paper due - December 12, 2006

Final exam (take-home) due - December 20, 2006, 4:45 pm

Attendance: Attendance is required. Attendance will be kept for each class session. The reason is to protect the interests of students who diligently come to class and help create a community by their presence. It is based on the idea of a classroom as a social entity and education as a commitment. Anyone can have up to 8 unexcused absences (i.e., one month of classes) without penalty. Students who are members of teams, or involved with University-sponsored activities that may occasionally take them away from class, should provide a schedule of their absences to their professors. Students with constant schedule conflicts, or those who have difficulty getting up for morning classes, should make a decision about whether to take the course. Those otherwise missing more than 8 class sessions cannot earn more than a C in the course. As per university regulations, there is no penalty for religious observances.

#### Required texts:

Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s*

Peniel Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement*

Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer*

Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*

Brenda Plummer, *Window on Freedom*

Books for purchase are at the Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative, 426 W. Gilman St. All texts owned by campus libraries are on reserve.

Contact with professor: My office is located in 5111 Humanities Building. The telephone number is 263 1845. Messages can be left with the History Department, phone no. 263 1800, or with the Afro-American Studies Department, phone no. 263 1642. E-mail is better. My E-mail address is [bpplummer@wisc.edu](mailto:bpplummer@wisc.edu). If you have an E-mail account, feel free to make use of it to contact me if you do not find me in my office.

There will also be a class e-mail list to which you will be automatically subscribed if your registration is in order and the registrar's office has accurate e-mail address information for you. The list address is: [afroamer628-1-f06@lists.wisc.edu](mailto:afroamer628-1-f06@lists.wisc.edu)

If you haven't received any mail from the class list by the end of the second week of the semester, please let me know. If you are having an e-mail problem and you have a hotmail account, you may need to change your settings. Students should also feel free to use the list to communicate with one another and share information about the course. E-mail is not a substitute, however, for class attendance and participation.

The course also has a web page on the Learning Support Services server:  
<http://hum.lss.wisc.edu/bplummer/hist628/index.html>

**Information about papers:**

Students will be provided with a list of paper topics they can choose from. Those wishing to develop their own are free to do so after clearing the topic with the professor. Bear in mind that these papers are short, so topics should not be overly broad. For all the papers, think practically. Are you choosing a subject who can be researched and written within the time available to you? Is your topic meaningful? Greater detail and guidelines on the writing process will be provided later on a separate handout.

**SOURCES:** Make use of the University's excellent libraries and the State Historical Society Library. Consult subscription online databases like JSTOR, Academic Full Search, ProQuest, and WilsonWeb. (If another borrower has a book you want, consider the underutilized Madison Public Library. The downtown and Sequoya branches have surprisingly good collections on contemporary issues.) Think twice about inter-library loan, however, the time involved might slow you down.

**CONTENT:** A good short paper quickly identifies the subject matter, and the issue or problem being addressed. It should have an introduction and logical conclusion. The paper will have a thesis statement that makes an argument that you then back up with facts. Critical analysis and careful interpretation are important. Plausible arguments should flow consistently from one point to another in coherent paragraphs. The conclusion should clearly resolve the issues raised in the body of the paper. Consider working from an outline that will help guide your structure.

**FORMAT:** The paper should be typed, double-spaced. Every page should be numbered except for the first. Every page should have a full complement of text. Margins should be no wider than 1 inch on any side. Type (fonts) should be conventional: 9 to 12 points. Standard citation conventions (MLA, Chicago, etc.) apply. Either footnotes or parenthetical references can be used, but be consistent, don't use both. If you use the parenthetical system, make sure you have included your bibliography. If you want to directly quote a source in your text, use quotation marks and indicate the source of the quotation. Any ideas not your own should also be identified as borrowed. The purpose of grammatical and spelling conventions is to make your meaning clear. It is to your advantage, then, to proofread papers for typing, grammar, and spelling errors. Papers with serious errors or a lot of errors of this kind will be downgraded.