

**AAS:Hist 628: History of the Civil Rights Movement**  
**Professor Plummer**

**SYLLABUS**

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. It explores black radicalism, 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 evolving fight against racial discrimination. It considers the activities and life stories of some individual participants as well as broad historical forces. Upper-level undergraduate and graduate students will learn how the events and issues of this social and political movement changed the face of contemporary America. While social movements have developed around 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 or articles to be downloaded. There are two examinations and a required 12-page research paper, submitted in stages: a) a bibliography; b) a thesis statement; c) a first draft; d) a final draft. More specific instructions for the paper will be distributed in separate documents. 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.

The growing body of work on civil rights history has multiplied our information on the subject and introduced numerous interpretations of the past. This course will examine diverse approaches, probe how historians have used and interpreted sources, and develop an appreciation for the variety of scholarship that they have produced.

**Organization:** Class meetings center on lectures and presentations, discussion, and audiovisual material. Most of these address assigned texts or scheduled topics. Scheduled topics provide broad chronological and thematic continuity and 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 assess 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. Laptops can be useful adjuncts to learning, but unfortunately, they have proven to be a distraction in the classroom setting. You are therefore requested not to use laptops in class or use phones for texting.

**Evaluation:** Grades are based on the following:

1. Midterm: This will consist of an in-class essay exam - 15 percent of the grade.
2. Research paper:
  - Bibliography - 10 percent of the grade
  - Thesis statement - 10 percent of the grade
  - First draft - 20 percent
  - Final draft - 25 percent of the grade
3. Final examination: Essay take-home). 20 percent of the grade. I don't curve grades.

**Paper topics cannot be changed after November 1.**  
**Missed exams cannot be made up.**

Students with disabilities. Students with a disability should contact the professor as soon as possible to arrange for alternative testing accommodations or any other special needs.

**DUE DATES:**

- Bibliography - October 11, 2011
- Thesis statement - Oct. 24, 2011
- Midterm (in-class) - October 17, 2011
- First paper draft - Nov. 17, 2011
- Final paper - Dec. 15, 2011
- Final exam (take-home) due Dec. 22, 2011 at 9:25 p.m.

**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. Learning is not only about what a professor says: it is also based on interaction among members of a group. Anyone can have up to 8 unexcused absences ( i.e., one month of classes) without penalty. Students who belong to UW teams or who are 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 gearing 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: Books for purchase are at the Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative, 426 W. Gilman St. Texts owned by campus libraries are on reserve.

Steven F. Lawson, *Running for Freedom: Civil Rights and Black Politics in America Since 1941*, **3RD ED. ONLY** (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) paper

Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Univ. of Illinois Press) paper

Danielle McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street* (Knopf) - The paperback won't be out until October but Rainbow has some used hard copies - get there quick!

Mark Newman, *The Civil Rights Movement* (Praeger) paper

Required downloadable [from LearnUW] articles and chapters:

Sudarshan Kapur, "African-American Solidarity and the Post-World War II Encounters with Gandhi," in idem, *Raising Up a Prophet: The African-American Encounter with Gandhi* (Beacon Press, 1992)

Martin Luther King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail" also available on the Internet and in various print editions

Chapter Four, "Racial Troubleshooting," of Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 108-142

Nancy McLean, *Freedom Is Not Enough* ch. 7 (Harvard University Press (2006), pp. 265-291

Chapters 3 and 13 of Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions* (University of North Carolina Press, 2000)

Contact with professor: I have an office in the History Department and another in Afro-American Studies. I will be holding office hours in Afro-American Studies on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 to noon and by appointment. My Afro-American Studies office is 4109 Helen C. White. Due to staff shortages, e-mail is better than leaving phone messages. My e-mail address is bplummer@wisc.edu

You are automatically subscribed to the class list if you are registered. The list address is: afroamer628-1-f11@lists.wisc.edu

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 has a web page at <http://hum.lss.wisc.edu/bplummer/hist628/>