

Political Science W3921
Fall 2007
Wednesdays, 2:10-4:00
African-American Politics
Fayerweather 301M

Professor Fredrick C. Harris
International Affairs Building 732
Phone: 212. 854.6593
Email: fh2170@columbia.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays 1-3 or by appointment

This course surveys political strategies adopted by African Americans since Reconstruction that challenged--through organized resistance--their marginalization in American life. This course approaches the study of African Americans in the political system from a historical context that begins with the political mobilization of African Americans after the Civil War and ends with an examination of the strategic and tactical consequences of African Americans' incorporation into mainstream politics since the modern civil rights movement. The course covers the approaches of civil rights groups, mass protest mobilization during the modern civil rights period, and the dominance of electoral politics over grassroots activism as a strategy for the articulation of "black interests" in the post-civil rights era.

The course will examine the following central questions: What are the historical dynamics that have shaped the relationship between blacks and the political system? Under what conditions have blacks been able to exert influence in the political system? What alternative strategies and tactics do African-American leaders deploy when conventional channels to politics are closed? How has the election of blacks to public office changed the face of African-American leadership and activism since the civil rights movement?

Course Requirements

Class Attendance and Participation. This is a seminar course. Each seminar participant is considered a full participant, not simply a spectator. There will be facilitated discussions rather than a traditional-style lecture format. Therefore, I expect participants to regularly attend class and actively participate in class discussions. **You should always bring with you the readings for each session so that we can refer to them during seminar.** Your grade for class participation will be based on my assessment of how closely you have read the assigned readings. Except for sessions when short paper assignments are due, you are expected to prepare a list of 4 questions for each class session based on your critical assessment of readings. **Those questions should be e-mailed to me by 12 noon of each seminar day.** A copy of your questions should be forwarded to me at the beginning of each seminar.

Short Paper Assignments. You will be required to turn in a total of four short paper assignments in response to the readings. Short papers should be 5 pages in length and based on a summary of key concepts. **Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day assigned.** Late submissions of short assignments will not be accepted without prior permission. **Professor Harris does not accept paper assignments via e-mail.**

Research Paper. You will be required to write a 15 page research paper on some aspects of contemporary black political life. The **topic must be approved by Professor Harris** and cover some general theme related to political participation or representation. You should submit a two-page proposal that includes your paper topic and a short

bibliography, to be submitted on **October 24th**. The topic should be related to the politics of black communities, centered on the themes of either political representation/leadership or political activism. You will be required to give a 10-15 minute presentation on the preliminary findings of your research paper. The presentations will take place during the last two class sessions of the semester. **The paper is due on the day of the final examination.**

Academic Honesty. You are required to submit course assignments that you completed. Plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is a serious offense and will be reported for disciplinary action.

Grading

Short Papers Assignments (4)	50%
Research Paper	40%
Class Participation	10%

Readings

Six books are required for the course. The books can be purchased at Labyrinth bookstore. Additional readings (marked with an “*”) can be found on the web or on the library's course reserve website.

Eric Foner. 1988. *A Short History of Reconstruction* (New York: Harper & Row).

Doug McAdam. 1982. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Robert Smith. 1996. *We Have No Leaders: African Americans in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. (Albany, NY.: State University of New York Press).

Richard Fenno. 2003. *Going Home: Black Representatives and Their Constituents* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Fredrick C. Harris. 1999. *Something Within: Religion in African-American Political Activism* (New York: Oxford University Press)

Course Schedule

September 5 th	Introduction
September 12th	Historical Foundations of African-American Politics Foner, xi-xvi, Chapters 1-3, 5.
September 19th	Historical and Theoretical Foundations Foner, Chapters, 6-8 *Michael Dawson, "A Black Counterpublic?: Economic Earthquakes, Racial Agendas(s), and Black Politics," <u>Public Sphere</u> 7 (1), pp. 195-223. Essay Assignment 1: What accounts for the demise of Reconstruction? How did African Americans respond to the weakening of their civil and political rights? How did Reconstruction and its aftermath influence the development of civic life in the United States?
September 26th	Prelude to the Civil Rights Movement Foner, 9-12, Epilogue Booker T. Washington, "The Atlanta Compromise" (1895) http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/39/ and W.E.B. DuBois, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," (1903) http://www.bartleby.com/114/3.html
October 3	Origins of the Modern Civil Rights Movement McAdam, Chapters 1-5.
October 10	The Dynamics of the Movement's Rise and Decline McAdam, Chapters 6-9.
October 17	Political Incorporation and the Emergence of Electoral Politics *Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet" http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/speeches/malcolm_x_ballot.html *Bayard Rustin, "From Protest to Politics" http://www.socialdemocrats.org/protopol.html

Smith, Chapters 1-2.

Essay Assignment 2: How did leaders as diverse as Malcolm X and Bayard Rustin view the emerging black vote? How did they view the role of the economy in black communities? And according to Smith, how was the incorporation of blacks into electoral system and away from protest accomplished? How has incorporation influenced black leadership?

Hear Malcolm X's speech on You-Tube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRNciryImqg>

October 24

Limits to Political Incorporation

Smith, Chapters 3-4, 8-11.

Paper proposal is due.

October 31

Black Congressional Representation

Fenno, Chapters 1-3

November 7

Black Congressional Representation

Fenno, Chapters 5-7

Essay Assignment 3: What styles of representation do black members of Congress bring to their constituencies? How important are organizational and symbolic connections to black members of Congress? And how has black representation in Congress changed since the 1970s?

November 14

Black Civil Society in the Post Civil Era

*Harris, "Will the Circle Be UnBroken: The Transformation of African-American Civic Activism in the Post-Civil Rights Era."

Harris, Something Within, Chapters 1-5.

November 21

Civil Society II

Harris, 6, 8-9, Epilogue.

Essay Assignment 4: How important are activist black churches to electoral politics in black communities? What are the religiously based resources that are used to mobilize black voters? What are the advantages and disadvantages of church-based political activism in black communities?

Note: The paper for this course can be turned in on either Tuesday, November 20 or Wednesday, November 28.

November 28 Oral presentations

December 5 Oral Presentations