AFRICAN AMERICANS IN AMERICAN POLITICS

Political Science 238  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Office Hours: 1-2 R  

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course investigates black politics in broad strokes. In 2008, for example, the Obama Factor has exerted and continues to exert enormous influence on African American politics. Our effort is to examine how the Obama Factor structures and shapes the realities of blacks and whites in this nation. Some scholars contend the election of Obama to the Presidency of the United States has meant the end of black politics. Others insist the election of the first African American to the White House has cemented America's entrance into a post-racial society.

The course examines how the nation's cultural values and beliefs, historical processes, and institutional structures impact the demands, strategies, and policy choices of black and white leaders as well as individuals. Please leaders references governmental and non-governmental leaders. That is, our effort examines the demands of African Americans and their political allies on governmental and sometimes non-governmental decision makers to make authoritative decisions which promote and advance the rights and interests of blacks. To achieve this purpose our effort includes an examination of black politics in an historical-political context. This examination allows us to obtain a better understanding of how the historical and legal contexts influence the complexion and nature of black politics. For example, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution formed the basis for the exclusion of African Americans from the mainstream of American life. Then in Brown v. Board of Education I and II, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, constitutionalism and law became key elements in the pursuit of the democratic inclusion of African Americans.

The course also focuses on how the exclusion of blacks has influenced the political thought, political rhetoric, strategies and aspirations of many in the black community, including interest groups and the activities of other organizations and groups. More specifically, the course seeks to come to terms with —"Why things are as they are or why are things as they seem?" In addition, the American political values and the structure of the political system will be analyzed in light of how such values and structures advance, frustrate and block the full inclusion of blacks in the American political, social and economic fabric. Students are encouraged to explore the nexus between the political resources of blacks, their status in the political order, and the choice of strategy and political rhetoric.

Another focus of the course includes special attention to the issue of race in global context. For example, the course analyzes how the Civil Rights Movement and other strategies of inclusion and empowerment might provide insights in understanding race and related issues in global context. Students are challenged to link globally inequality in the distribution of resources and group status in society. The class also examines how disadvantages in almost every society are directly connected to the distribution of resources, including color, gender, status, and opportunities.
Finally, we look at the demands of African Americans under the rubric of interest groups, political parties, and political campaigns. Attention is, also, devoted to the response of Congress, the President, and the Supreme Court to the demands and strategies of African Americans. Students are asked to explore the conditions or the minimum conditions that are necessary for racial or ethnic democracy to be promoted and even exist in America, Brazil, France, Nigeria, India, Iraq, or South Africa.

The group or individual assignments might focus on the following nations: Australia, Brazil, Germany, Canada, France, India, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain, or other countries.

ACE Information

Learning Outcome: This course has been approved for Learning Outcome # 6 and # 9. Number 6 says use knowledge, theories, methods, and historical perspectives appropriate to the social sciences to understand and evaluate human behavior.

Re-enforcements: This course assists students to analyze how and in what ways structures and institutions influence the political behavior of African Americans and whites; to understand the historical context and theoretical underpinnings of black politics; to assess the relationship between resource distribution and the group status in the political-social order of society; to examine how racism and its manifestations influence the behavior and attitudes of African Americans and whites. Lectures are structured with twenty minutes intervals. These intervals are used to encourage students to incorporate the nuance of readings and lectures in their comments, arguments, and observations. Students are also encouraged to use current events to make application of class materials. Such student participation should reach beyond racial politics in America.

Opportunities for Learning the Outcome: Student comprehension of theories and approaches are assessed through readings assignments, class discussions, examinations, and their comments and commentary.

How the Achievement of the Outcome Will Be Assessed: Students will write a 10 to 12 page paper demonstrating their understanding and comprehension of the learning outcome.

ACE Information with respect to SLO9

Learning Outcome: Exhibit global awareness or knowledge of human diversity through analysis of an issue.

Re-enforcements: The focus of the course includes special attention to the issue of race in global context. We explore how the Civil Rights Movement and other strategies of inclusion and empowerment might provide insights in understanding racial conflicts in other nations and societies. Students are encouraged to link relationships between inequalities in resources and group status in society. Law, rules statutes, and constitutions are also the focus of the effort of this course in terms of democratization efforts in other societies.
Opportunities for Learning the Outcome: Students’ comprehension of the linkage between human differences and the study of black politics is assessed through reading assignments, class discussions, written assignments, including a 10 to 12 page paper.

How the Achievement of the Outcome Will Be Assessed: The required readings, comments and commentary, examinations, and 10 to 12 page paper.

ADA REQUIREMENTS

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with disabilities (SSD) Office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

ORGANIZATION

While maintaining the lecture format, the course is organized to provide maximum student participation. This class is structured to obtain maximum student participation. Discussion groups will be assigned as well as group reports. Student participation is encouraged and valued. In class discussions, students will evaluate how approaches to address racial differences in America might be useful in changing human behavior that fosters unequal treatment and disadvantages among or between racial groups in democratic and non-democratic societies.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Each student is expected to attend all classes.

2. Each student is expected to be conversant of current events that are within the scope of the course. Additional reading assignments may be made during the semester.

3. The examination schedule is as follows: 1) Tuesday; February 19 2) Thursday, April 4, and 3) final Examination, TBA. Except for the final, the Professor reserves the right to change examination dates based upon the progress he sees the students making towards the learning outcomes and objectives of the class.

4. The first examinations will consist of multiple choice and essay items. However, the second and final examination will be entirely multiple choice items.

5. The Final Exam will be comprehensive, covering the entire course.

6. Each student will be given the opportunity to write a three page bonus (discussion) paper, which is due Monday, December 10. Note the bonus paper is not required. The specific topic will be assigned at a later date.
7. Additionally, for the 10 to 12 page paper, students will select from topics given them by the Instructor. The project will be on designated topics to achieve ACE requirements. The paper will be due Thursday, May 2.

8. The grading scale is:

   100-98= A+   89-87=B+   78-73=C+   63-61 =D+
   97-93=A     86-81 =B     72-67=C     60-56=D
   92-90=A-    80-78=B--    66-64=C-    55-53=D-

9. The course final grade will be computed as follows:
   Bonus paper =15 points
   Examination I =100 points
   Examination II =100 points
   Final Examination =100 points
   Special Paper=100
   Total Points=400

   Please note that in order a student to receive credit for a pass/fail the student must earn at least a grade of "C".

10. Again, Special assignment paper (100 pts) is due Thursday, May 2.

11. Scholars are encouraged to take this course as an honors class. The scholar must make at least a "B" for the course to receive honors credit...

LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES

- To analyze how structures and institutions influence the development of black politics
- To understand the historical context of black politics.
- To examine the theoretical framework of black politics.
- To assess the connection between resource distribution and the status of a group in the political-social order of a society.
- To analyze how the Civil Rights Movement and other strategies of inclusion and empowerment might provide insights to understand issues of race in a global context.
- To challenge students to link globally inequality in the distribution of resources and group status.
- To examine how racism and its manifestations influence the behavior and attitudes of blacks and whites.
- To assess the importance of national institutions and culture in the advancement and the retarding of the interests and rights of blacks.
- To strengthen the capacity of students to engage in critical thinking and analysis.
• To increase students' abilities to evaluate and develop arguments.

• To assess political-legal culture of America influence racial policies and programs.

• To use the materials, approaches, and concepts learned in this class to analyze selected racial conflicts in other nations.

• To assess the interconnection between historical processes, structures and values and their influence on human behavior in the context of democratic and non-democratic societies.

• To evaluate how the structures and values of American society might facilitate the transfer and/or hinder this nation's system of government to assist other societies in their efforts to successfully enact or implement policy that alters human behavior that promote equality or inequality in outcomes and resource distribution.

EVALUATION OF ALL WRITTEN WORK

1. The clarity of the writing.

2. The coherence of argument.

3. The strength of the analysis.

4. The integration of appropriate readings and/or research materials.

BOOKS


Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People*.

Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*

Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*

Walters, *The Price of Racial Reconciliation*

OTHER ARTICLES AND CHAPTERS (Electronic Reserve, Love Library)

Ferber, "The Bounds of Whiteness"
Ferber, "Planting the Seed"
Barnett, "A Theoretical Perspective on American Racial Public Policy."
Hoffman, "A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: Discrimination against the Majority Undermines Equality, While Continuing to Benefit Few under the Guise of Black Economic Empowerment"
Goldberg, "Introduction: The State of Racial Theory" in *The Racial State*
Goldberg, "States of Racial Distinction" in *The Racial State*
PewResearchCenter, "Wealth Gaps Rise to Record Highs between Whites, Blacks and Hispanics"
Wilson, The Declining Significance of Race. Chapter 7
Knowles & Prewitt, "The Institutional Roots of Racism"
Walker, "The Lord Will Make a Way Somehow!" gospel: Historic and Modern
William, P., "The Pain of Word Bondage"
Williams, L., "The Problem of Race", in The Constraint of Race
Presidencies"
President Obama's Inaugural Address 2009
Lipsitz, "Libraries & Memories: Beyond White Privilege 101"
Feagin and Barnett, "Success and Failure: How Systemic Racism Trumped the Brown v. Board
of Education Decision"
Juan Williams and Christopher Neal, "Thurgood Marshall’s Vision"
Dudziak, "Brown’s Global Impact"
Eager, "The Voice of the Congressional Black Caucus in American Foreign Policy"
Walton and Smith, American Politics & the African American Quest for Universal Freedom, chapters 9 & 10

COURSE OUTLINE

I. Black Americans and the Political System:
   A. The Black Population: A Demographic Political Profile
   B. The Politics of Inclusion: Uncertainties and Ambiguities
   C. A Framework for Black Politics
   D. Black Political Thought

READINGS:
* Walton and Smith, chapter 1
* Bell, Faces at the Bottom of the Well
* King's “I Have a Dream”
* Alexander, Introduction and Ch. 1

II. Why Are Things as They Are? Or why are Things as They Seem?
   A. The Problem of Defining the Problem(s)
   B. The Genesis of the March toward Freedom
   C. The Comparative Status of Blacks and Whites: Then, Now and the Future
   D. Through whose eyes? Black and White perspective
   E. Class and Race in America
   F. Approaches to the Study of Black Politics

READINGS:
* Walton and Smith, chapters 2 and 5
* Schattschneider, chapters 1 and 3
* Knowles & Prewitt, Institutional Racism, chapter 1
* Barnett, "A Theoretical Perspective"
* Alexander, Ch. 2

III. The System and Equality: It’s Nature
   A. American Political Values
   B. Structures and "Rules of the Game"
READINGS:
*Walton and Smith, chapter 3
*Hoffman
*Goldberg, "Introduction: The State of Race Theory" and "States of Racial distinction"
*Feagin and Barnett
*Alexander, Introduction, Ch. 3

IV. The Distribution of Political Resources:
A. Dynamics of American Politics and Correlates of Power
B. The Evolution of Black Political Power
C. Black Political Leadership
D. The Pursuit of Power
E. The Racial Divide in Public Opinion

READINGS:
*Walton and Smith, chapter 4
*Walters, Introduction, chapters 5 and 6
* Alexander, Chapter 3
*PewResearchCenter, "Wealth Gaps Rise to Record Highs between Whites, Blacks and Hispanics" 2011

V. The Dynamics of Groups: Public Opinion, Interest Groups and Political Parties
A. Civil Rights Groups
   1. Protest
   2. Litigation
   3. Activism
B. The Black Church and the "New Right"
C. Black Voting Behavior
D. Black Party Behavior

READINGS:
*Walton and Smith, chapters 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10
*Schattschneider, chapters 4 and 5
"Walker, "The Lord Will Make a Way Somehow"
*Williams and Neal
*Walton and Smith chapters 9 & 10

VI. The Supreme Court and Politics of Inclusion:
A. Modes of Interpretation B. Courts and Judges
C. The Politics of Judicial Selection
D. From Warren to Burger to Rehnquist E. Importance of Judicial Support
F. The Competition for Dominance

READINGS:
*Walton and smith, 13
*Juan Williams and Christopher Teal
*Alexander, Chapters 4

VII. Blacks and the U. S. Congress:
A. Blacks in Congress
B. Black Issues in Congress
C. Black Constituents and Congressional Behavior
D. Implications for the Future

READINGS:
*Walton and Smith, chapter 11
*Walters, chapter 8
*Eager

VIII. The Presidency and the Bureaucracy
A. Presidential Powers
B. The White House and Its Symbolism
C. The Policy Process
D. The Bureaucracy and Implementation

READINGS:
*Walton and Smith, chapters 12 and 14
*Alexander, Chapter 5

IX. Some Perspectives and Interpretations: Public Policy

A. Deracialization, Routinization, and the Depreciation of Black Participation
B. Continuing Paucity of Black Political influence
C. The Affirmative Action Controversy
D. The Salience of Race

READINGS:
*Walton and Smith, chapters 15 and 16
*Walters, chapters 7 and 9
*Alexander, Chapter 6
*Williams, "The Problem of Race"