

Professor Thompson

Fall 2018
The Revolution Will Be Dramatized
AFR 317F (29570)

Course Description

This course will examine expressions of black cultural and political resistance by contemporary black artists. Although Gil Scott Heron famously crooned that “the revolution will not be televised,” I contend that the revolution is not only televised but dramatized and reimagined in African American cultural productions. This course will specifically examine representations of black political protest and activism in film and theatre from the late 20th century to the present. We will discuss how feature films, documentaries and plays present two movements for racial and social justice: the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement. We will read scholarship and history to help us identify the strategies that cultural producers use to craft narratives about past political activism. We will also consider the performative aspects of contemporary black protest movements for social justice. In order to compare historical narratives with creative ones, using secondary texts and archival materials, you will conduct research about episodes such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott and 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing, and figures such as Angela Davis and Bayard Rustin. You are encouraged to also consider and harness the power of social media in your examination of contemporary black political and cultural activism. The course will culminate in presentations of final creative and/or scholarly projects crafted in response to current black or other relevant movements for social justice.

Required Books

1. Bruce J. Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement: Revised Edition* (2008)
2. Katori Hall, *The Mountaintop* (2011)
3. Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (2007)
4. Dominique Morisseau, *Sunset Baby* (2013)
5. Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the 21st Century* (2018)
6. Anna Deveare Smith, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (1993)
7. Jeff Stetson, *The Meeting* (1990)
8. Tracy Scott Wilson, *The Good Negro* (2009)

All books can be purchased at the University CO-OP. Assigned articles designated by an * can be located on the course’s Canvas page.

Course Requirements

Participation

You are expected to complete all reading and watch films and videos before class and participate fully in discussions and exercises (presentations, quizzes, and in-class group projects). Take copious notes during screenings making sure to cover subjects such as authorial intent, aesthetic strategies and narrative arc. Remember to bring assigned texts to class because you may be called upon to read an excerpt, perform a scene or analyze a passage. Each student is expected to speak during EVERY class. Many of the texts are

quite complicated so I strongly suggest that you also take reading notes since our discussions rely on textual observations. Prompt and regular attendance is expected. Tardiness is disrespectful to me and to your classmates. Please be advised that if you miss multiple classes and/or are consistently late your grade will suffer.

Group Presentation

Pre-assigned groups of 4-5 students will research and present a critical and informative introduction to and/or summary of an event, significant institution or figure that inspired the assigned film or play. Groups must provide background information that helps the class gain a broader understanding of the text. Your main job is to present the facts as represented by reputable historical and scholarly sources. The presentation groups can distribute a handout, craft poster boards, shoot a video, construct a Wikipedia page and/or create a PowerPoint or Prezi. I suggest that you be as creative as possible in order to effectively engage your audience. Groups must work together and ensure that the workload is adequately divided among every student. The group must submit any AV files by 9 am the morning of their presentation, and a typed outline (1-2 pages). Time limit: 5 minutes.

Midterm Exam

The take-home examination will consist of three questions; you are required to select one of the three questions to answer. The exam will require you to craft a typed, 5-7 page essay-length response to the question that critically engages with the key concepts, facts and texts from the first half of the semester. The exam will be graded on the quality of argument, sources, examples, and grammar. This is not a group project; students who submit plagiarized or collaborative work will be penalized.

Black Art Matters Review

Each student must attend a black artistic performance, art exhibit, film, play or concert and then write a 2-3 page review. The review should summarize or describe the art object, discuss your sense of the artist's aims, and provide a sustained analysis of the ways that the piece engages with black politics or political movements. Submissions can be submitted online throughout the semester but the final deadline for all reviews is November 19 at 12 noon.

Final Project

Students will research and then craft a project that reflects on a contemporary protest movement such as the #BlackLivesMatter. Your piece can be a statement about the issues being raised by protestors but it must also reflect on how current black protests use past movements. The project can be a creative or journalistic reflection such as poetry, short film or video, performance, play, song, interview, documentary etc. Use your imagination to document this moment in history: take a current event and retell it using an art form, interview a member of the movement about their experiences (or even those who oppose it). This is your opportunity to craft a narrative about and/or solidify the historical record about a major social justice movement that is happening today. You can work alone or in groups. Whether the final project is journalistic, documentary, or fictional, it must include a written component of 7-10 pages that includes at least 10 scholarly sources from a variety of mediums (articles from academic or popular journals, books, films) as well as any primary sources. The final product will be graded on both the project and the written analytical narrative. Students will showcase their final project by delivering a 3 minute presentation. You will receive instructions about submitting your AV materials the night before your presentation.

Notice:

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities at 512-471-6259, or the following link:

<http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

Midterm (take-home)	20%
Group Presentation	20%
Black Art Matters	20%
Final Project	30%
Participation	10%
Extra credit	10% (applied toward lowest grade)

Course Schedule

Wednesday, August 29
Introduction

Friday, October 5
Midterm distributed

Friday, October 12
Due: Midterm

Friday, November 2
Due: Final Project Proposals (1 page)

Monday, November 19
Deadline: Reviews must be submitted online by noon

Friday, November 30
Presentations (A-F)

Monday, December 3
Presentations (G-K)
Due: Final project

Wednesday, December 5
Presentations (L-Q)

Friday, December 7
Presentations (R-Z)

Monday, December 10
Conclusion