

**African-American Politics**  
GOV 370K/AFR 374D  
Unique Number 38620/30740  
Fall 2018  
TuTh 9:30 am to 11:00 am  
UTC 3.132

**Professor**

Professor Tasha S. Philpot  
tphilpot@austin.utexas.edu  
4.140 Batts Hall  
512-232-3681  
Office Hours: TuTh 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

**Description**

This course focuses upon the evolution, nature, and role of African-American politics within the American Political System. The concern is with African Americans as actors, creators and initiators in the political process. Specifically, this course will examine various political controversies that surround the role of race in American society and how these controversies affect public opinion, political institutions, political behavior, and salient public policy debates. This course will assess and evaluate the contemporary influence of race in each of these domains while also exploring their historical antecedents.

This course carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one U.S. cultural group that has experienced persistent marginalization.

**Prerequisites**

Six semester hours of lower-division coursework in government.

**Required Text Books**

There are two required text books for this course, which are available at the University Co-op:

Walton, Hanes, Jr., Robert C. Smith, and Sherri L. Wallace. 2017. *American Politics and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom*. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. London: Routledge.

Philpot, Tasha S., and Ismail K. White, eds. 2010. *African-American Political Psychology: Identity, Opinion, and Action in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.  
(This book is available electronically through the library website for free.)

## Supplementary Readings

Readings not found in the required texts can be accessed through Canvas ([canvas.utexas.edu](https://canvas.utexas.edu)) in the Supplementary Readings folder in the Files section.

## Grading

Your grade will be based on three exams and several pop quizzes/in-class assignments. The format for the three exams will be multiple choice and will cover the lectures, films (all films on the syllabus will be screened during class), and readings. Exams will **NOT** be cumulative. Quizzes will be given at random and at any time during lecture. Frequently, I give quizzes at the beginning of class so be on time. If you miss a quiz because of tardiness, you **CANNOT** make it up. Each quiz/in-class assignment will be worth 5 points each. You will receive one point for just handing in a quiz/in-class assignment. Credit for the remaining 4 points is determined by the quality of your work. Each student can miss one quiz without it counting against his/her grade. Your quiz grade is a weighted average (see below), with a maximum of 25 points. In the case of a conflict, please notify me ahead of time so that we can make alternative arrangements. Without prior notification and proper documentation, missed quizzes, assignments and exams cannot be made up. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** The weight of each assignment in determining your final grade is as follows (**PLEASE NOTE THAT ONLY FINAL GRADES AT .5 OR HIGHER WILL BE ROUNDED UP TO THE NEAREST WHOLE NUMBER.**):

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Exam 1                           | 25% |
| Exam 2                           | 25% |
| Exam 3                           | 25% |
| Quizzes and in-class assignments | 25% |

|    |        |    |       |    |       |   |       |
|----|--------|----|-------|----|-------|---|-------|
| A  | 93-100 | B+ | 87-89 | C+ | 77-79 | D | 60-69 |
| A- | 90-92  | B  | 83-86 | C  | 73-76 | F | 0-59  |
|    |        | B- | 80-82 | C- | 70-72 |   |       |

## Note about Electronic Devices

Electronic devices (phones, laptops, tablets, mp3 players, etc.) may be used during class for academic purposes only. Students disrupting the class because of their use of electronic devices for non-academic purposes will be asked to leave class. Under **NO** circumstances may electronic devices be used during an exam. Students using electronic devices during an exam will be given a zero grade for that exam.

## Website

For class information and assignments please see the Canvas site at [canvas.utexas.edu](https://canvas.utexas.edu). Class notes **WILL NOT** be on Canvas.

## E-mail

No assignment is to be e-mailed to me. Also, I regularly check my e-mail, but sometimes I am unable to respond quickly. Please allow one to two days for an e-mail response. In addition, please limit your e-mails to questions about class topics. Any grievances involving the class must be handled during my office hours. Please exercise proper e-mail etiquette (for etiquette tips see <https://www.netmanners.com/e-mail-etiquette-tips/>). Finally, make sure to check the syllabus or Canvas first before sending an e-mail. In many cases they will answer your question.

### **Excused Absences**

An absence from class will only be excused if proper documentation is presented. In the case of an illness you will need to produce a note from the doctor stating that you could not attend class that day. Generic UHS slips will not be accepted. In all other cases you will need to provide documentation from Student Emergency Services. In the case of planned activities, the documentation must be presented to me at least a week before your scheduled absence. I will not accept a planned activity as a valid excuse for an absence after the fact. In the case of unexpected circumstances, the documentation must be turned in within a week of your return.

### **Expectations**

Meeting the goals of the class requires three things—attendance, preparation and professionalism.

Attendance: Although attendance is not mandatory, it is expected. Therefore, I find it unnecessary to formally take attendance. Nevertheless, missing class will greatly affect your grade. First, I frequently give pop quizzes and in-class assignments. Students that miss a quiz will receive a zero. Second, exams are based on a combination of the course readings, class lectures, and supplementary media presentations.

Preparation: Doing well in this class necessitates that students are informed and prepared. Therefore, you will be expected to complete the readings prior to the first day we are scheduled to cover that topic. This course covers a large amount of material in a short amount of time. If you do not keep up with the readings, your grade will reflect it.

Professionalism: Remember that this is an academic environment. Therefore, I ask that you minimize unnecessary disruptions. This includes (but is not limited to) side conversations, cell phone calls, bringing pets to class<sup>1</sup>, and the consumption of tobacco products<sup>2</sup>. I also ask that you be proactive if any conflict occurs. This means notifying me ahead of time if you are unable to meet the requirements of the course.

### **Ground Rules**

Because this course will sometimes deal with sensitive material, it is imperative that we set a series of ground rules.

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<sup>1</sup> The Elliott Rule

<sup>2</sup> The Mock-Hall Rule.

1. Respect others. There will be times when you disagree with an idea that has been presented to the class. Although you have the right to disagree with someone, you must remember to challenge the idea and not the person.
2. Listen attentively. The purpose of this course is to present and discuss different ideas. In order to reap the benefits of such an exchange, you must be willing to pay attention to what others have to say.
3. Think before you speak. Refrain from making broad, general, and/or unsubstantiated comments. Make sure that you use evidence and provide a rationale for your statements.
4. Maintain the dignity of the academic environment. Your ideas should be presented using Standard English.
5. Raise your hand. This helps to maintain order in the classroom and helps to ensure that everyone has a chance to talk.
6. Be courteous. Refrain from interrupting or engaging in private conversation while others are speaking. Also, limit disruptive behavior, such as newspaper reading, personal grooming, etc.

### **Procedures for Dealing with Grade/Evaluation Concerns**

Grade/evaluation concerns will only be considered if the following procedure is followed:

All grade complaints must be **TYPED** and must clearly express the student's specific concerns. These written statements must be accompanied by citations of support from course materials, i.e. readings, textbook, and/or lecture notes, in order to ensure accuracy. Written statements will not be considered until one week **AFTER** the assignment is returned to students. This allows the student time to reread his/her answers and think carefully about what improvements could have been made. Grievances will not be considered once two weeks have passed. For example, if I return a graded assignment on Monday, the student must submit a complaint **BEFORE** the Friday of the following week. Once class is over on that Friday, no complaints will be considered for that assignment. Since class time is limited, I will only deal with questions or concerns during scheduled office hours. Finally, submitting a grade grievance will result in a complete re-grade of the assignment.

### **University Code of Conduct**

"The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community."

### **Student Honor Code**

"As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity."

### **Academic Dishonesty**

According to the Institutional Rules, scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and falsifying academic records. In the event that a student violates the University policy on scholastic dishonesty, he or she will be subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity web site at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php>.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>.

### **Religious Holy Day Observance**

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

### **Emergency Evacuation Policy**

In the event of a fire or other emergency, it may be necessary to evacuate a building rapidly. Upon the activation of a fire alarm or the announcement of an emergency in a university building, all occupants of the building are required to evacuate and assemble outside. Once evacuated, no one may re-enter the building without instruction to do so from the Austin Fire Department, University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. Students should familiarize themselves with all the exit doors of each room and building they occupy at the university, and should remember that the nearest exit routes may not be the same as the way they typically enter buildings. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructors in writing during the first week of class. Faculty members must then provide this information to the Fire Prevention Services office by fax (512-232-2759), with "Attn. Mr. Roosevelt Easley" written in the subject line. Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>.

### **Outline of Course Topics and Readings**

#### ***I. America's Dilemma: Introduction to Race in the United States***

Reading: Myrdal, Gunnar. 1944. *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. New York: Harper & Bros. Introduction.

McIntosh, Peggy. 1988. "White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in Women's Studies." Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Working Paper No. 189

Video: *The Matrix* (excerpt)

Assignment: Bring in a recent news story that deals with some aspect of contemporary African-American politics. Be prepared to discuss and to turn in the news story at the end of class.

## **II. *Black Political Thought***

Reading: Barker, Lucius, Mack Jones, and Katherine Tate. 1998. *African Americans and the American Political System*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Chapters 1-3.

Obama, Barack. 2008. "A More Perfect Union."

King, Martin Luther, Jr. 1963. "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

Combahee River Collective. 1978. "A Black feminist statement."

## **III. *An Experiment in Democracy: The American Political System***

Reading: Walton and Smith, Chapters 1, 2, and 13

Madison, James. 1787. "The Same Subject Continued: The Union as a Safeguard against Domestic Faction and Insurrection."

<https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers#TheFederalistPapers-10>

Madison, James. 1788. "The Apportionment of Members among the States."

<https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers#TheFederalistPapers-54>

Madison, James. 1788. "The Particular Structure of the New Government and the Distribution of Power among Its Different Parts."

<https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers#TheFederalistPapers-47>

Gressman, Eugene. 1952. "The unhappy history of civil rights legislation." *Michigan Law Review* 50 (8):1323-58.

## **IV. *Say It Loud...: The Origins and Maintenance of Black Identity***

Reading: Philpot and White, Chapters 5

Ture, Kwame and Charles Hamilton. 1992 (1967). *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*. New York: Vintage Books. Chapter Two.

Dawson, Michael C. 1994. *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter One.

Shingles, Richard. 1981. "Black consciousness and political participation: The missing link." *American Political Science Review* 75(1): 76-91.

Video: *Black Is...Black Ain't*

#### ***V. Complicating Black Identity: Gender and Sexuality***

Reading: Cohen, Cathy J. 1997. "Punks, bulldaggers, and welfare queens: The radical potential of queer politics?" *GLQ: Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3(4): 437-468.

Harris-Perry, Melissa. 2011. *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes and Black Women in America*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2.

#### ***VI. Linking the People to the Politics: Race and Political Parties***

Reading: Walton and Smith, Chapter 8

Philpot and White, Chapter 10

Philpot, Tasha S. 2007. *Race, Republicans, and the Return of the Party of Lincoln*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press. Introduction, Chapters 2 and 5.

#### ***VII. What's Going On: Black Public Opinion***

Reading: Walton and Smith, Chapter 3-5

Philpot and White, Chapters 4, 8, and 9

Harris-Lacewell, Melissa V. 2004. *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter One.

Video: *Barbershop* (excerpt)

#### ***VIII. Who Will Lead?: Elections and Participation***

Reading: Walton and Smith, Chapters 6, 7, and 9

Philpot and White, Chapters 6, 11

Ture, Kwame and Charles Hamilton. 1992 (1967). *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*. New York: Vintage Books. Chapter Three.

Philpot, Tasha S., Daron R. Shaw and Ernest B. McGowen. 2009. "Winning the race: Black voter turnout in the 2008 presidential election." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73 (5): 995-1022.

Video: *Eyes on the Prize* #9

### **IX. Having Our Say: Race and Representation**

Readings: Walton and Smith, Chapter 10

Swain, Carol M. 1993. *Black Faces, Black Interests: The Representation of African Americans in Congress*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Chapters One and Ten.

Tate, Katherine. 2001. "The political representation of Blacks in Congress: Does race matter?" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 26 (4): 623-638.

Video: *Fahrenheit 9/11* (excerpt)

### **X. A Matter of Justice: Race, Crime and the Criminal Justice System**

Reading: Walton and Smith, Chapter 12

Finzen, Margaret E. 2005. "Systems of oppression: The collateral consequences of incarceration and their effects on Black communities." *Georgetown Journal of Poverty Law & Policy* XII (2): 299-324.

Video: *Ku Klux Klan: A Secret History*

### **XI. Hail to the Chief: Race and the Executive**

Reading: Walton and Smith, Chapters 11

Walters, Ron. 2007. "Barack Obama and the politics of Blackness." *Journal of Black Studies* 38(1): 7-29.

Winant, Howard. 2009. "Just do it: Notes on politics and race at the dawn of the Obama Presidency." *Du Bois Review* 6 (1): 49-70.



## ***XII. The Dream Actualized: Race and Public Policy***

Reading: Walton and Smith, Chapters 14, 15

Dawson, Michael C., and Rovana Popoff. 2004. "Reparations: Justice and greed in Black and White." *Dubois Review* 1(1):47-91.

Payne, Richard J. and Eddie Ganaway. 1980. "The influence of Black Americans on U.S. policy towards Southern Africa." *African Affairs* 79 (317): 585-598.

### Course Schedule at a Glance

|                             |                                    |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| August 30 – September 6     | America's Dilemma                  |
| September 4                 | Professor Philpot's Birthday       |
| September 6                 | Assignment 1 Due                   |
| September 11 – September 13 | Black Political Thought            |
| September 18 – September 20 | An Experiment in Democracy         |
| September 25 – September 27 | Say It Loud...                     |
| October 2 – October 4       | Complicating Black Identity        |
| October 9                   | Exam 1                             |
| October 11 – October 16     | Linking the People to the Politics |
| October 18 – October 23     | What's Going On                    |
| October 23                  | Assignment 2 Due                   |
| October 25 – October 30     | Who Will Lead?                     |
| November 1 – November 6     | Having Our Say                     |
| November 8                  | Exam 2                             |
| November 13 – November 15   | A Matter of Justice                |
| November 20 – November 27   | Hail to the Chief                  |
| November 22                 | Thanksgiving Break—No Class        |
| November 29                 | The Dream Actualized               |
| December 4                  | Wrap-up, Review, and Conclusion    |
| December 6                  | Exam 3                             |