

African American Women's Political Activism

GOV371M/AFR352K/WGS340

Unique Number 38420/31345/45755

Fall 2023

TuTh 9:30 am to 11:00 am

PAR 105

Professor

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4.140 Batts Hall

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Student Drop-in Hours: TuTh 11:00 am to 12:30 pm

Description

This course explores how Black feminism, as a guiding ideology, helps to explain how Black women have navigated the U.S. political system. In particular, this course dissects the roles of race, gender, and class (and their intersection) in shaping African American women's orientation towards politics and political participation. In doing so, the course begins with a brief historical overview of the unique political, social, and economic position occupied by Black women in America, followed by an examination of the historical writings of early Black female activists. We will then critically examine the definition of "citizenship" as it relates to American politics and how stereotypes of Black women's sexuality have historically prevented them from wholly benefiting from full citizenship and equal protection under the law. Next, we explore the impact of Black women's activism in the areas of criminal justice and the fight against sexual and domestic violence. Lastly, we shift our focus to how these persistent stereotypes influence current policy debates and restrict Black women's opportunities in electoral politics.

Cultural Diversity in the United States

This course carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. The purpose of the Cultural Diversity in the United States Flag is for students to explore in depth the shared practices and beliefs of one or more underrepresented cultural groups subject to persistent marginalization. In addition to learning about these diverse groups in relation to their specific contexts, students should engage in an active process of critical reflection. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one underrepresented cultural group in the U.S.

Prerequisites

Six semester hours of lower-division coursework in government.

Required Text Books

There are two required text books for this course, both of which can be purchased at the University Co-op or are available for **FREE** as an eBook through www.lib.utexas.edu:

Collier-Thomas, Bettye, and V. P. Franklin, eds. 2001. *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*. New York: New York University Press.

Hill Collins, Patricia. 2002. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.

Additional Required Readings

Readings not found in the required texts can be accessed through Canvas (canvas.utexas.edu) in their respective corresponding modules.

Grading

Your grade will be based on two exams, a group project, and several in-class assignments/quizzes. 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 assignments and exams cannot be made up and late assignments will not be graded. **NO EXCEPTIONS**. Also, grades are non-negotiable. Final grades that fall between .5 and .9 will be rounded up to the nearest whole number. Once final grades have been submitted to the Registrar, the only grade changes that will be accepted are calculation errors.

The weight of each assignment in determining your final grade is as follows:

Group Project	25%
Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
In-Class Assignments/Quizzes	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		

Exams

The format of the two exams will be multiple choice and will cover all of the course lectures, films, and readings. Both exams will be administered via Canvas during the regularly scheduled class time. The second exam will **NOT** be cumulative.

In-Class Assignments/Quizzes

In-class assignments/quizzes will be given during the regularly scheduled class time. Submission of in-class assignments/quizzes will be administered through Canvas and **MUST** be submitted on time in order to receive credit. Late submissions will not be accepted. Each quiz/in-class assignment will be worth 5 points each. You will receive one point just for handing in an in-class assignment/quiz. Credit for the remaining 4 points is determined by the quality of your work. Each student can miss two quizzes without it counting against their grade. Your quiz grade is a weighted average (see above), with a maximum of 25 points.

Group Project

Working in groups of 3 or 4, students will create a 3- (minimum) to 5- (maximum) minute mini documentary that addresses one of the topics below and answers the following questions: How have Black women attempted to influence contemporary American politics? What obstacles have they faced? What have been some of their successes?

Possible Topics

- Black Women and Technology
- Black Women and the Arts
- Black Women Elected Officials
- Black Women and Collective Action
- Black Women and Religion

Your documentary may highlight a particular person/group related to the topic, a subset of issues related to the topic, or address the topic more broadly. However, each documentary must incorporate a thesis that guides the information presented and must have a clear beginning, middle, and end.

The group project will be completed in stages. In the first stage (worth 10 percent of your grade), each group will need to submit a draft of the script of the documentary (minimum of 3 pages) that includes: an introduction of the topic; the thesis; supporting information; and a conclusion. The draft must also be accompanied by a bibliography of the sources used, including the in-class readings you are using to generate your content (minimum of 3) and the outside readings you are using to generate your content (minimum of 3). Please note, non-scholarly sources may be used for background and context but will **NOT** be counted towards your 6-article minimum. All assignments must be typed in a 12-point font and have margins no bigger than 1 inch. All scripts must be uploaded by one member of your group to Canvas.

In the second phase (worth 15 percent of your grade), each group will complete and submit their documentary. One person from each group should be designated to upload a link to the

assignment via Canvas. Evaluation of documentary will be based on aesthetics (visual and musical content) and substance (quality, organization, and persuasiveness of the information presented).

Citation

As stated above, the script of the mini documentary must be accompanied by a bibliography. When citing course material, please cite the original source, not the lectures. Also, please only use scholarly sources. Scholarly sources are written by subject experts and published in books from academic presses, peer-reviewed journal articles, and reports from research institutes. Articles from newspapers and magazines do not count as scholarly sources. All sources must be cited; not citing sources will result in a grade penalty. The complete lack of citation and/or not having a bibliography will result in a zero grade for the assignment. This course will use the American Political Science Association citation style (based on the Chicago Manual of Style). The use of other citations styles will result in a grade penalty. Examples of the American Political Science Association citation style are available on Canvas in the Files section.

E-mail

All assignments are to be submitted via Canvas; please do not e-mail me assignments to me directly. Also, I regularly check my e-mail, but sometimes I am unable to respond quickly. Please allow one to two business 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 all cases, you will need to provide documentation from Student Emergency Services (<https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>). 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 in this class is not mandatory, it is expected. While I don't formally take attendance, it is unimaginable that you could pass this course without near perfect attendance. However, I understand that there are legitimate reasons for occasionally missing a class. If you need to miss a class, I expect you to e-mail me in advance to notify me of any anticipated class absences.

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 it is not limited to) side conversations, cell phone calls, bringing pets to class¹, and the consumption of tobacco products². 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.

Course Conduct

I am committed to creating a learning environment where diverse perspectives are recognized and valued as a source of strength. Therefore, I request that all students work with me to create a class culture based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. As a class, we will approach all discussions with respect and civility. Disagreements and debates in academic discourse are expected and welcome, but personal attacks are never okay, and will not be tolerated. I strive to ensure an open and welcoming classroom for all students. If I ever miss the mark, please don't hesitate to come and talk to me. We are all learning together.

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

¹ The Elliott Rule

² The Mock-Hall Rule.

scheduled office hours. Finally, submitting a grade grievance will result in a complete re-grade of the assignment.

Academic Integrity

I believe you are all capable of meeting my expectations for this course. If you are concerned about how well you are doing in this course, please come speak with me instead of considering academic misconduct. According to the Institutional Rules, academic misconduct 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, they 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>.

Special Accommodations

Many students have visible or invisible disabilities, and the University offers accommodations that allow them to achieve their full potential. Students with special challenges or disabilities should notify me at the beginning of the semester so that we can work together to create the conditions that allow you to excel in this class. Also, the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Diversity and Access Office collaborates with academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities, without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. Please contact them at 512-471-6259 or <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/> if you require accommodations.

Religious Holy Day Observance

I respect your religious beliefs and practices and will make accommodations for students who choose to miss a class in observance of a religious holy day. You need to inform me by email at least two days in advance if you will miss class for religious reasons so that I can arrange appropriate accommodations, make-up quizzes, etc.

Campus Safety and Other Resources

Classroom Safety and COVID-19

To help preserve our in-person learning environment, the University recommends (but does not mandate) the following:

- Adhere to the University's mask guidance.
- Get vaccinated in order to help protect against the transmission of the virus and reduce serious symptoms in those who are vaccinated.

- Engage in proactive community testing.

For more information, please visit protect.utexas.edu.

UT Counseling and Mental Health Resources

The Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) is committed to serving UT's diverse campus community by providing counseling and prevention services that facilitate students' academic and life goals and enhance their personal growth and well-being.

- Location: Student Services Building (SSB), 5th floor
- Hours: Monday–Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM
- Phone: 512-471-3515 (for appointments)
- Crisis Phone: 512-471-CALL (2255)
- Web: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu>

The Behavior Concerns Advice Line is a service that provides The University of Texas at Austin's faculty, students, and staff an opportunity to discuss their concerns about another individual's behavior.

- Phone: 512-232-5050 (caller can remain anonymous)
- Web: <https://besafe.utexas.edu/behavior-concerns-advice-line>

Emergencies and Immediate Threats

Cases that present an immediate threat to self, others, or property should be considered an emergency and should be directed to the Police Department by calling 911.

In the case of an emergency evacuation, please follow the guidelines provided by the Office of Campus Safety and Security.

- Phone: 512-471-5767
- Web: <http://www.utexas.edu/safety>

Outline of Course Topics and Readings

Module 1: A Prelude to the Study of Black Women's Political Activism August 22 – August 24	Reading: Hill Collins, Patricia. 2002. <i>Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment</i> . New York: Routledge. Chapter 9. Springer, Kimberly. 1999. "Introduction: African American women redefining activism for the millennium." In <i>Still Lifting, Still Climbing: African American Women's Contemporary Activism</i> , ed. Kimberly Springer. New York: New York University Press.
September 4	Prof. Philpot's Birthday (also Beyoncé's, but Prof. Philpot's is more important)

Module 2: Black Feminist Thought August 29 – September 5	<p>Reading: Hill Collins, Patricia. 2002. <i>Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment</i>. New York: Routledge. Chapters 1 and 2.</p> <p>James, Stanlie M., Frances Smith-Foster and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, eds. 2009. <i>Still Brave: The Evolution of Black Women's Studies</i>. New York: Feminist Press. Pages 3-44.</p> <p>Guy-Sheftall, Beverly, ed. 1995. <i>Words on Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought</i>. New York: The New Press. Pages 25-68; 77-88; 95-100.</p> <p>Video: <i>Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice</i></p>
Module 3: Black Women as Citizens September 7 – September 12	<p>Reading: Harris-Perry, Melissa. 2011. <i>Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes and Black Women in America</i>. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapters One and Two.</p>
Module 4: The Black Family September 14 – September 19	<p>Reading: Hill Collins, Patricia. 2002. <i>Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment</i>. New York: Routledge. Chapters 8.</p> <p>Franke, Katherine M. 1999. "Becoming a citizen: Reconstruction Era regulation of African American marriages." <i>Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities</i> 11(2): 251-309.</p>
September 21	<p style="text-align: center;">Documentary Script Due</p>
Module 5: Civil Rights Activism September 21 – September 26	<p>Reading: Collier-Thomas, Bettye, and V. P. Franklin, eds. 2001. <i>Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement</i>. New York: New York University Press. Chapters Two, Four, and Six.</p> <p>Video: <i>Fannie Lou Hamer: Stand Up</i></p>
Module 6: Black Power	<p>Reading: Collier-Thomas, Bettye, and V. P. Franklin, eds. 2001. <i>Sisters in the Struggle: African</i></p>

September 28 – October 3	<i>American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement.</i> New York: New York University Press. Chapters Twelve and Thirteen.	
Module 7: Activism through Work October 5 – October 10	Readings:	Hill Collins, Patricia. 2002. <i>Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment.</i> New York: Routledge. Chapter 3. Gill, Tiffany M. 2010. <i>Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry.</i> Urbana: University of Illinois Press. Chapters Two and Five.
October 12	Exam 1	
Module 8: Activism Against Sexual and Domestic Violence October 17 – October 19	Reading:	Hill Collins, Patricia. 2002. <i>Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment.</i> New York: Routledge. Chapters 6 and 7. White, Aaronette M. 1999. "Talking Black, talking feminist: Gendered micromobilization processes in a collective protest against rape." In <i>Still Lifting, Still Climbing: African American Women's Contemporary Activism</i> , ed. Kimberly Springer, 189-219. New York: New York University Press. Irving, Toni. 2007. "Borders of the body: Black women, sexual assault, and citizenship." <i>Women's Studies Quarterly</i> 35(1/2): 67-92.
	Video:	<i>Not Another Victim—I'm An Empowered Survivor Defendant</i>
Module 9: Demanding Justice in the Criminal Justice System October 24 – October 26	Reading:	Smith, Jennifer E. 1999. "ONAMOVE: African American women confronting the prison crisis." In <i>Still Lifting, Still Climbing: African American Women's Contemporary Activism</i> , ed. Kimberly Springer, 219-240. New York: New York University Press.

		Finzen, Margaret E. 2005. "Systems of oppression: The collateral consequences of incarceration and their effects on Black communities." <i>Georgetown Journal of Poverty Law & Policy</i> XII (2): 299-324.
Module 10: Hip Hop Feminism October 31 – November 2	Reading: Video:	Rebollo-Gil, Guillermo and Amanda Moras. 2012. "Black women and Black men in Hip Hop: Misogyny, violence and the negotiation of (White-owned) space." <i>The Journal of Popular Culture</i> 45(1): 118-132. Peoples, Whitney A. 2008. "'Under Construction': Identifying foundations of hip-hop feminism and exploring bridges between Black second-wave and hip-hop feminisms." <i>Meridians</i> 8(1): 19-52. Armstrong, Edward G. 2001. "Gangsta misogyny: A content analysis of the portrayals of violence against women in rap music, 1987-1993." <i>Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture</i> 8(2): 96-126. <i>Hip-Hop (Beyond Beats & Rhymes)</i>
November 7	Documentary Due	
November 7	Documentary Viewing	
Module 11: Black Women and Electoral Politics November 9 – November 14	Reading: Video:	Smooth, Wendy. 2006. "Intersectionality in electoral politics: A mess worth making." <i>Political Gender</i> 2(3): 400-414. Philpot, Tasha S. and Hanes Walton, Jr. 2005. "An historical election in context: The 2001 Atlanta mayoral election." <i>National Political Science Review</i> 10: 43-53. Philpot, Tasha S. 2018. "Race, gender, and the 2016 presidential election." <i>PS: Political Science & Politics</i> 51(4): 755-761.
Module 12: Black Women and Public Policy	Reading:	Jordan-Zachary, Julia S. 2009. <i>Black Women, Cultural Images, and Social Policy</i> . New York: Routledge. Chapters Two and Six.

November 16 – November 28	<p>Smooth, Wendy. 2011. “Standing for women? Which women? The substantive representation of women’s interests and the research imperative of intersectionality.” <i>Politics & Gender</i> 7(3): 436-441.</p> <p>Marby, Marcus. 2007. <i>Twice As Good: Condoleezza Rice and Her Path to Power</i>. New York: Modern Times. Chapters Twelve and Thirteen.</p>
November 20 – November 25	Thanksgiving Break – No Class
November 30	Exam 2

One Final Note...

Many students face obstacles to their education as a result of work or family obligations or unforeseen personal difficulties. If you are experiencing challenges throughout the term that are impacting your ability to succeed in this course, or in your undergraduate career more broadly, please reach out to me immediately so that we can work together to form a plan for your academic success. If you are unable to attend my student drop-in hours, please email me to set up a time that better works for you.