

**African American Politics**  
GOV 371G/AFR 350Q  
Unique Number 37580/30430  
Spring 2024  
TuTh 12:30 pm to 2:00 pm  
CBA 4.332

**Professor**

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4.140 Batts Hall  
Student Drop-in Hours: TuTh 9:00 am to 10:30 am

**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.

**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. 2020. *American Politics and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom*. 9<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 for **FREE** as an eBook through [www.lib.utexas.edu](http://www.lib.utexas.edu).)

**Supplementary Readings**

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

## Grading

Your grade will be based on three exams 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:

Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Exam 3	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 three exams will be multiple choice and will cover all of the course lectures, films, and readings. All of the exams will be administered via Canvas during the regularly scheduled class time. Exams are **NOT** open notes/books. The second and third exams 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.

## Website

For class information and assignments please see the Canvas site at [canvas.utexas.edu](https://canvas.utexas.edu).

## **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 class<sup>1</sup>, and the consumption of tobacco products<sup>2</sup>. I also ask that

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<sup>1</sup> The Elliott Rule

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

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 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 Campus and Community Engagement, Disability 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 <https://community.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 holiday. 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](https://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>

### **Course Topics and Readings**

<b>Module I: America's Dilemma</b>  <b>January 16 – January 18</b>	Reading: Myrdal, Gunnar. 1944. <i>An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy</i> . 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: <i>How Studying Privilege Systems Can Strengthen Compassion</i>
<b>Module II: Black Political Thought</b>  <b>January 23 – January 25</b>	Reading: Barker, Lucius, Mack Jones, and Katherine Tate. 1998. <i>African Americans and the American Political System</i> . 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."
<b>Module III: An Experiment in Democracy: The American Political System</b>  <b>January 30 – February 1</b>	Reading: Walton, Smith, and Wallace, Chapters 1, 2, and 13  Madison, James. 1787. "The Same Subject Continued: The Union as a Safeguard against Domestic Faction and Insurrection." (Federalist No. 10)

		<p>Madison, James. 1788. "The Particular Structure of the New Government and the Distribution of Power among Its Different Parts." (Federalist No. 47)</p> <p>Madison, James and Alexander Hamilton. 1788. "The Apportionment of Members among the States." (Federalist No. 54)</p> <p>Gressman, Eugene. 1952. "The unhappy history of civil rights legislation." <i>Michigan Law Review</i> 50 (8):1323-58.</p>
<p><b>Module IV: Say It Loud...: The Origins and Maintenance of Black Identity</b></p> <p><b>February 6 – February 8</b></p>	<p>Reading:</p>	<p>Philpot and White, Chapters 5</p> <p>Ture, Kwame and Charles Hamilton. 1992 (1967). <i>Black Power: The Politics of Liberation</i>. New York: Vintage Books. Chapter Two.</p> <p>Dawson, Michael C. 1994. <i>Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics</i>. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter One.</p> <p>Philpot, Tasha S. 2017. <i>Conservative but Not Republican: The Paradox of Party Identification and Ideology among African Americans</i>. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4.</p>
<p><b>Module V: Complicating Black Identity: Gender and Sexuality</b></p> <p><b>February 13 – February 15</b></p>	<p>Reading:</p> <p>Video:</p>	<p>Cohen, Cathy J. 1997. "Punks, bulldaggers, and welfare queens: The radical potential of queer politics?" <i>GLQ: Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies</i> 3(4): 437-468.</p> <p>Harris-Perry, Melissa. 2011. <i>Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes and Black Women in America</i>. New Haven: Yale University Press. Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2.</p> <p><i>Black Is...Black Ain't</i></p>
<b>February 20</b>	<b>Exam 1</b>	
<p><b>Module VI: Linking the People to the Politics: Race and Political Parties</b></p>	<p>Reading:</p>	<p>Walton, Smith, and Wallace, Chapter 8</p> <p>Philpot and White, Chapter 10</p> <p>Philpot, Tasha S. 2017. <i>Conservative but Not Republican: The Paradox of Party Identification and Ideology among African Americans</i>. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5.</p>

<b>February 22 – February 27</b>	
<b>Module VII: What’s Going On: Black Public Opinion</b>  <b>February 29 – March 5</b>	<p>Reading: Walton, Smith, and Wallace, Chapter 3-5</p> <p>Philpot and White, Chapters 4, 8, and 9</p> <p>Harris-Lacewell, Melissa V. 2004. <i>Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought</i>. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter One.</p>
<b>Module VIII: Who Will Lead?: Elections and Participation</b>  <b>March 7 – March 19</b>	<p>Reading: Walton, Smith, and Wallace, Chapters 6, 7, and 9</p> <p>Philpot and White, Chapters 6, 11</p> <p>Ture, Kwame and Charles Hamilton. 1992 (1967). <i>Black Power: The Politics of Liberation</i>. New York: Vintage Books. Chapter Three.</p> <p>Philpot, Tasha S., Daron R. Shaw and Ernest B. McGowen. 2009. “Winning the race: Black voter turnout in the 2008 presidential election.” <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> 73 (5): 995-1022.</p>
<b>March 11 – March 16</b>	<b>Spring Break—No Class</b>
<b>Module IX: Having Our Say: Race and Representation</b>  <b>March 21 – March 26</b>	<p>Readings: Walton, Smith, and Wallace, Chapter 10</p> <p>Swain, Carol M. 1993. <i>Black Faces, Black Interests: The Representation of African Americans in Congress</i>. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Chapters One and Ten.</p> <p>Tate, Katherine. 2001. “The political representation of Blacks in Congress: Does race matter?” <i>Legislative Studies Quarterly</i> 26 (4): 623-638.</p>
<b>March 28</b>	<b>Exam 2</b>
<b>Module X: A Matter of Justice: Race, Crime and the Criminal Justice System</b>  <b>April 2 – April 9</b>	<p>Reading: Walton, Smith, and Wallace, Chapter 12</p> <p>Finzen, Margaret E. 2005. “Systems of oppression: The collateral consequences of incarceration and their effects on Black communities.” <i>Georgetown Journal of Poverty Law &amp; Policy</i> XII (2): 299-324.</p>



<b>Module XI:</b> <b>Hail to the</b> <b>Chief: Race and</b> <b>the Executive</b>  <b>April 11 – April</b> <b>16</b>	Reading:      Walton, Smith, and Wallace, Chapters 11  Walters, Ron. 2007. “Barack Obama and the politics of Blackness.” <i>Journal of Black Studies</i> 38(1): 7-29.  Winant, Howard. 2009. “Just do it: Notes on politics and race at the dawn of the Obama Presidency.” <i>Du Bois Review</i> 6 (1): 49-70.
<b>Module XII:</b> <b>The Dream</b> <b>Actualized: Race</b> <b>and Public</b> <b>Policy</b>  <b>April 18 – April</b> <b>23</b>	Reading:      Walton, Smith, and Wallace, Chapters 14-15  Dawson, Michael C., and Rovana Popoff. 2004. “Reparations: Justice and greed in Black and White.” <i>Dubois Review</i> 1(1):47-91.  Payne, Richard J. and Eddie Ganaway. 1980. “The influence of Black Americans on U.S. policy towards Southern Africa.” <i>African Affairs</i> 79 (317): 585-598.  Video: <i>Race: The Power of an Illusion</i> , Episode 3
<b>April 25</b>	<b>Exam 3</b>

### 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.