

**African-American Political Thought  
Political Science 551  
Fall 2006**

Instructor: Dr. Michael Lipscomb  
Tuesday, 6:30 to 9:15, 339 Bancroft

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 5:00 to 6:15;  
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appointment.

**Students with Disabilities**

**Winthrop University is dedicated to providing access to education. If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact Gena Smith, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities, at 323-3290, as soon as possible. Once you have your Professor Notification Form, please tell me so that I am aware of your accommodations well before the first assignment.**

**I. Goals of the Course**

This course explores the historical experience of “blackness” as it has been constructed, contested and affirmed in various historical and narrative contexts, assessing that concept’s history as a political resource by carefully reading selected texts within the African-American political theoretical tradition. Such an investigation will address ways in which constructed notions of racial identity have functioned to oppress African-Americans on the basis of ascriptive characteristics, but it will also look at how African-American notions of self, community, and agency are utilized and contested by African-Americans themselves across a variety of political and social contexts. By closely reading the assigned texts, participating in class discussions, and writing about their analyses of their readings and their reactions to issues raised in class, students are encouraged to explore how the conceptual reality of “blackness” fits into their own political self-understandings.

This class is a writing intensive class, and it will be taught in a seminar format. The seminar format is premised on the idea that advanced students are themselves largely responsible for bringing the requisite intellectual energy to the class, and that students understand themselves as partners in the search for and the production of knowledge related to the focus of this class.

**II. Required Texts**

DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*  
Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*  
King, *Why We Can’t Wait*  
*Autobiography of Malcolm X*  
Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*

Rose, *Black Noise*  
Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*  
Morrison, *Beloved*  
Ford, *Racial Culture: A Critique*

**III. Assignments**

- 1) **Attendance is not optional**, and will be taken daily. I will excuse absences because of religious holidays, but it is your responsibility to inform me that this is the reason for your absence. I will also excuse absences caused by sickness or family emergency if you provide me with proper written documentation.
- 2) You are expected to have **completed all reading assignments before you come to class**.
- 3) You will be graded on both the frequency and quality of your **participation in class discussions and, when appropriate, class exercises**.
- 4) To make sure that you keep up with and understand the readings, and to facilitate lively class discussion, you will be given **pop quizzes** throughout the semester.

- 5) Each student will be a **seminar leader for two different class periods**. We will talk about this responsibility in class, but for your turns as a seminar leader, you must submit **4 – 5 discussion questions for that class’s assigned reading by Monday, 8 a.m. the week of your assignment**. Your questions and your contributions to class discussion that week (that is, the degree to which you and the other seminar leaders are able to generate lively, focused, and intelligent discussion) will be counted as a quiz grade.
- 6) You will take an in-class **midterm**.
- 7) You will take a **final** during the final exam period at the end of the semester.
- 8) You will write and research a **term paper** on a topic pertaining to African-American Political Thought. Your discussion must be supported by reasoned argument and reliable evidence, and your papers will be graded on both the quality of their content and the competency with which they are written. A paper proposal and outline is due October 10<sup>th</sup>, at which time you will present your topic to the class. Together, this proposal will count 10% of your final grade. A rough draft, also counting 10%, will be due November 14<sup>th</sup>. I will use your draft to make suggestions about how you might improve your final draft, due December 1st at 5:00 p.m.
- 9) **All written work will be penalized half a letter grade (four points) for each day that it is late. This policy will be strictly enforced.**

**NOTE ON PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** Any act of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will result in an “F” for the course and will lead to appropriate administrative action. Ignorance as to what constitutes plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty is not a valid excuse for such transgressions. For clarification about matters of academic dishonesty, students should consult Section V of the **Student Conduct Code** in the **Student Handbook**. For specific questions about plagiarism, the Writing Center, located on the second floor of Bancroft, is an excellent resource. The Center’s web page ([www.Winthrop.edu/wcenter](http://www.Winthrop.edu/wcenter)) has specific links that can help you with questions about how to cite source material and how to avoid plagiarism. Your instructor is more than glad to talk to you about these matters.

#### IV. Final Grade Distribution

Pop Quizzes	10%
Participation	10%
Term Paper Proposal/ Presentation	10%
Rough Draft	10%
Term Paper	20%
Midterm	20%
Final	20%

#### V. Grading Criteria For Written Work

I will grade your written work using the General Education Writing Competency Rubric developed by the English Department. I will hand out and discuss this rubric in class. Across the University, and specifically in this class, writing competency is expected and taken very seriously. A student and a citizen who cannot write can neither think clearly nor communicate effectively.

#### VI. Schedule

**Note on schedule:** the instructor reserves the right to make changes to this schedule and to add reading assignments as he sees fit, depending on the unfolding needs of the class. Any such changes will be announced in class, and it is the sole responsibility of the student to be aware of such changes.

Date	Reading Assignment	Seminar Leaders	Writing Assignment Due Dates and Test Dates
August 22	Introduction	Lipscomb	

August 29	W. E. B. DuBois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> <a href="http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DubSoul.html">http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DubSoul.html</a>	1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____ -	
September 5	Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>	1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____ -	
September 12	James Baldwin, <i>Notes on a Native Son</i>	1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____ -	
September 19	Martin Luther King, <i>Why We Can't Wait</i>	1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____ 4) _____ -	

September 26	Malcolm X and Arthur Haley, <i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i>	1) _____ - 2) _____ - 3) _____ - 4) _____ -	
October 3	Spike Lee, "Do the Right Thing"	Full class discussion	
October 10	<b>Term Paper Proposal Presentation/ Midterm Review</b>	<b>Term Paper Proposal Presentation/ Midterm Review</b>	<b>Term Paper Proposal Presentation/ Midterm Review</b>
October 17	<b>Midterm</b>	<b>Midterm</b>	<b>Midterm</b>
October 24	Patricia Williams, <i>The Alchemy of Race and Rights</i>	1) _____ - 2) _____ - 3) _____ - 4) _____ -	
October 31	Richard Ford, <i>Racial Culture: A Critique</i>	1) _____ - 2) _____ - 3) _____ - 4) _____ -	
November 7	Patricia Hill Collins, <i>Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism</i>	1) _____ - 2) _____	

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November 14	Tricia Rose, <i>Black Noise</i>	1) <hr/> $\bar{2}$ ) <hr/> $\bar{3}$ ) <hr/> $\bar{4}$ ) <hr/> -	<b>Rough Drafts Due</b>
November 21	<b>Paper Presentations</b>	<b>Paper Presentations</b>	<b>Paper Presentations</b>
November 28	<b>Paper Presentations/Review</b>	<b>Paper Presentations/Review</b>	<b>Paper Presentations / Review</b>
December 1	<b>Final Draft of Term Paper Due, 5:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Final Draft of Term Paper Due, 5:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Final Draft of Term Paper Due, 5:00 p.m.</b>
December 9	<b>Final</b>	<b>Final</b>	<b>Final</b>