

**PLS 340**  
**Blacks in American Politics**  
**Spring, 2008**

Instructor: Dr. Earl Sheridan  
Office: Leutze Hall Bldg. Room 269  
Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday, and Wednesdays 10:00-11:00am  
Or By Appointment

**Text**

Black Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century, Meir, Rudwick, Broderick, eds (on reserve); Black Leadership in America, John White; Running for Freedom, Steven Lawson Issues in Race, Ethnicity, and Gender, CQ, plus handouts and other reserve readings (on regular and electronic reserve). We will also utilize segments of the PBS documentary series - Eyes on the Prize.

**Course Description**

The course is designed to look at the place of African-Americans in the overall scheme of American politics. Black politicians of the Reconstruction era, black political thinkers and leaders like Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Jesse Jackson, Colin Powell and Barack Obama will be examined. We will be looking at the place of race in the formation and operation of American political institutions and the influence of African-Americans on American politics. We will probe such questions as: To what extent does the white establishment choose "black leaders"? Is the best method to attain first class citizenship through integration or separation? Is the road to black liberation through political action or economic action? Is race still a factor in American politics? We shall also discuss such controversial issues as affirmative action and reparations for African Americans.

**Course Requirements:**

Three exams; exams will be short answer and essay. One term paper, 6-8 pages in length, typewritten, double-spaced with citations and bibliography on some aspect of black politics.

**Grading**

Each exam will count 100 points, term paper will count 50 points, 50 points will also be assigned for class participation for a total of 400 points. Class participation includes attendance (20pts), participation, in class discussions (10pts), performance on pop tests, pop essays, and assignments (20pts). The 400pts will be averaged by 4 to get your final grade. Grading scale is as follows: 90-100=A; 80-89=B; 70-79=C; 60-69=D; Below 60=F. Make-up exams will be given on Reading Day only with an acceptable written excuse.

**Attendance**

Attendance will be taken. You have 3 unexcused absences. For each unexcused absence over 3, 4points will be deducted from your participation grade. An excuse will only be given for extraordinary circumstances such as illness, death in the family, etc. You should have written verification. If you are late it is your responsibility to make sure you are marked present. *Come to class on time. It is disruptive to have people coming in after class has begun. You are expected to be in class the entire period barring an emergency. If you know you must leave early please inform me prior to the class period.*

**Course Outline**

I. Black Politics in Historical Perspective (The Founding to the Great Depression)

Thurgood Marshall "Race and the Constitution" White chapter 1

Meir, (on e-reserve) ch. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 23; White, chaps. 2,3,4;

**First Exam**

II. Black Politics in Historical Perspective (Great Depression to the End of the Civil Rights Movement)

Meir 29, 31, 32/lecture; Lawson, chaps. 1 & 2

Eyes On the Prize Part I

Eyes On the Prize 2 & 3; Lawson chapter 3; White chapter 5

Mississippi Delta"; Locke "Is this America? Fannie Lou Hamer and the MFDP"

Payne "Men Led, but Women Organized: Movement Participation of Women in

Eyes On the Prize 4, "Letter From a Birmingham Jail" (handout); Lawson chapter 4

Eyes On the Prize 5, "Where Do We Go From Here?", "Time to Break Silence" in Testament of Hope (on reserve); Marable

Eyes On the Prize II, Part 1 Malcolm X "God; Judgement of White America" in The Black Experience in America Politics, Charles V. Hamilton, ed, pp. 165-170. Meir, Chapters 53, 54; Selections from Malcolm X Speaks and the Autobiography of Malcolm X; White, chapter 6.

Stokely Carmichael, Black Power, Chapters 1 & 2; Meir, Chapter 62 The Black Panthers

## **Second Exam**

### III. Contemporary Issues in Black Politics

#### A. Electoral Politics

"Rejecting Electoral 'homelands'" by John Leo; Editorial by Elaine Jones from Wilmington Star News (Sept. 19, 1994); Editorial by William Raspberry; "The Politics of Geography" by Cynthia McKinney; Race Relations chapt. 4 (handout); Barker, et. al. chapter 9; Lawson chaps. 5,6,7,8. Handouts on the 2000 election, chapter 3 (Redistricting) in CQ, Issues

#### B. Political Parties: Which Direction?

Barker and Jones, Chapter 8; Chapter 10; "Black America in Search of Itself" by Manning Marable in Progressive vol 55 pp. 18-23 1991. "Crossover Politics" by Ron Walters from "Washington View Jan. 1991; "A New Black Politics" by Manning Marable from Progressive (August 1990). Tragic Failure by Tom Wicker, chapt. 5; Barker, et. al. chapter 8; Lawson chaps. 5,6,7,8. Excerpts on 2000 election.

#### C. Black Ideology: Which Direction?

Steele "Affirmative Action" from Content of Our Character. "Redefining the American Dilemma" from Time; Race Relations (excerpts - handouts); "Demystifying the New Black Conservatism" by Cornel West; "The Political Thought of the New Black Conservatives" by Mack Jones. "Malcolm X and the Revival of Black Nationalism" by Michael Eric Dyson. "False Prophet: The Rise of Louis Farrakhan" by Adolph Reed Jr.; Barker, et. al. 98-101; Lawson 261-270

#### D. Current Issues in Black Politics

CQ, Issues Chaps 1 (Affirmative Action), 2 (Race in America), 4 (School Desegregation), 5 (Black Colleges), 6 (Reparations), 7 (Environmental Justice), 8 (Rebuilding New Orleans); Blacks and Latinos, excerpts from The Presumed Alliance by Nicolas Vaca

#### E. The Current State of Black Leadership

Barker and Jones, Chapter 11; "The Crises of Black Leadership" by Cornel West from Z Magazine, Pub. 1988; The Diminishing Soul of Black America by Earl Sheridan from Social Theory and Practice. (handout); White, chapter 7. The Candidacies of Jesse Jackson v. Barack Obama

## **Final Exam**

**Tuesday, May 6<sup>th</sup> (11:30am -2:30pm)**