

Black Religion and Black Political Thought

Course Syllabus
Spring 2007
Thursday 1:30-4:420
McCosh 04

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Office Hours: Thursday 10:00-12:00
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Scholars of the African American experience have located the black church as the cultural, social, and political womb of the black community. This research tends to think of the church as a structure that brings actors into contact with one another; it has paid less attention to the church as a place that brings actors into contact with ideas. This course will use a variety of classic and contemporary texts about black political thought as an entry into investigating the connections between black religious ideas and political activism. The class links the work on religion to an intensive introduction to black political thought. This course focuses on the various 20th century ideologies and strategies, which have informed the African American quest for human fulfillment, self-actualization, and equity in the United States of America.

Assessment

Annotated Bibliography for class (20%)

You will develop an annotated bibliography of 10-12 sources that will be shared with your classmates. It can be related to any of the ideas presented in class.

Short paper (6-8 pages) in response to readings (35%)

You must write one short paper focusing on the readings from one week. This can be turned in anytime between week 4 and 8.

Final Exam (35%)

This course has final exam. The exam is in an essay format, is cumulative and will include some choice.

Class/ precept participation (10%)

Required Texts

Baldwin, James, *Go Tell it on the Mountain*.

DuBois, W.E.B. *Souls of Black Folk*

Jackson, Sherman. *Islam and the Black American: Looking toward the Third Resurrection*. Oxford University Press. 2005.

Harris, Fred. *Something Within: Religion in African American Political Activism*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1999

Harrison, Milmon. *Righteous Riches: The Word of Faith Movement in Contemporary African American Religion*

Hopkins, Dwight. *Introducing Black Theology of Liberation*. New York: Orbis Books.

Kelley, Robin. D.G. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*

McRoberts, Omar. *Streets of Glory: Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood*. University of Chicago Press. 2003

Pinn, Anthony. *Varieties of African American Religious Experience* Fortress Press: Minneapolis. 1998

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*

Readings marked with a * are available as links from the course website

Readings marked with a + are available on reserve

Introduction

Week 1, February 5

What is the relationship between religious ideas and political thought and action among African Americans?

+Dawson, Michael. *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies*. University of Chicago Press. 2002. Chapters 1 and 2

The Church

Week 2, February 12

How should we think about the black church?

DuBois, W.E.B. *Souls of Black Folk*, all

* Barbara Dianne Savage. W. E. B. Du Bois and "The Negro Church" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 568, The Study of African American Problems: W. E. B. Du Bois's Agenda, Then and Now. (Mar., 2000), pp. 235-249.

Pinn, Anthony. *Varieties of African American Religious Experience*.. Chapters 1 and 5

+C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamyia. *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Duke University Press: Durham. 1990. Chapter 1

Week 3, February 19

The black church as a psychological/cultural resource for politics

Harris, Fred. *Something Within: Religion in African American Political Activism*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1999.

+Harris-Lacewell, Melissa. Chapter 2 from *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought*.

* Robert Joseph Taylor; Michael C. Thornton; Linda M. Chatters. Black Americans' Perceptions of the Sociohistorical Role of the Church. *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2. (Dec., 1987), pp. 123-138.

*Pattillo-McCoy, Mary. "Church Culture as a Strategy of Action in the Black Community." In *American Sociological Review*, 63 (1998): 767-784.

Week 4, February 26

The black church as an organizational resource for politics

+Calhoun-Brown, Allison. What a Fellowship: Civil Society, African American Churches, and Public Life. pp. 39-57

+Daniels, David D. "Doing all the Good We Can": The Political Witness of African American Holiness and Pentecostal Churches in the Post-Civil Rights Era. pp 164-182.

+Owens, Michael Leo. Doing Something in Jesus' Name: Black Churches and Community Development Corporations. Pp. 215-247.

+Roberts, Samuel. On Seducing the Samaritan: The Problematic of Government Aid to Faith-Based Groups. Pp. 278-292

All from R. Drew Smith, Editor. *A New Day Begun: African American Churches and Civic Culture in Post-Civil Rights America*

* Brian D. McKenzie. Religious Social Networks, Indirect Mobilization, and African-American Political Participation. *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 4. (Dec., 2004), pp. 621-632.

* Allison Calhoun-Brown. While Marching to Zion: Otherworldliness and Racial Empowerment in the Black Community. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 37, No. 3. (Sep., 1998), pp. 427-439.

Week 5, March 5

Black Church and Urban Politics

McRoberts, Omar. *Streets of Glory: Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood*. University of Chicago Press. 2003

RELIGIOUS IDEAS

Week 6, March 12

Black Islamic tradition and black politics

Jackson, Sherman. *Islam and the Black American: Looking toward the Third Resurrection*. Oxford University Press. 2005.

+Lincoln, C. Eric. *Black Muslims in America Third Edition*. Eedermans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids. 1994. Chapter 1

Pinn, Anthony. 'The Great Mahdi Has Come! Islam, Nation of Islam, and the Minneapolis Study Group. Chapter 3 from *Varieties of African American Religious Experience*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis. 1998. pp. 104-453

*Christopher E. Smith. Black Muslims and the Development of Prisoners' Rights. *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2. (Dec., 1993), pp. 131-146.

*Davis, Darren and Christian Davenport . 'The Political and Social Relevancy of Malcolm X: The Stability of African American Political Attitudes. *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 2. (May, 1997), pp. 550-564.

SPRING BREAK

Week 7, March 26

Black Theology and black politics

+Cone, James. Calling the Oppressors to Account: God and Black Suffering. pp. 3-13

+Wright, Jeremiah. Doing Black Theology in the Black Church. pp 13-23.

+Butler, Lee. Testimony as Hope and Care African American Pastoral Care as Black Theology at Work. Pp. 24-32.

All from *Living Stones in the Household of God: the Legacy and Future of Black Theology*. Edited by Linda Thomas. Fortress Press: Minneapolis. 2004

Hopkins, Dwight. Introduction, Chapters 1-3. *Introducing Black Theology of Liberation*. New York: Orbis Books. Pp 1-121.

Week 8, April 2 and 4

Womanism and black feminist politics

+Cannon, Katie. The Emergence of Black Feminist Consciousness. pp. 38-46. Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick: the Womanist Dilemma in the Development of a Black Liberation Ethic. Pp. 122-128. Both from *Katie's Cannon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*.

+Campbell, A. Elaine Brown. Hope in the Holler. Chapter 4 in *Hope in the Holler: A Womanist Theology*. pp. 67-89

+ Guy-Sheffhall, Beverly (editor). *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, Selections TBA

*Clyde Wilcox. Race, Gender Role Attitudes and Support for Feminism *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 1. (Mar., 1990), pp. 113-121.

*Rosalee A. Clawson; John A. Clark. The Attitudinal Structure of African American Women Party Activists: The Impact of Race, Gender, and Religion *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 2. (Jun., 2003), pp. 211-221.

Week 9, April 9

Varieties of Black Christian Thought

*Darren E. Sherkat; Christopher G. Ellison. The Politics of Black Religious Change: Disaffiliation from Black Mainline Denominations *Social Forces*, Vol. 70, No. 2. (Dec., 1991), pp. 431-454.

Hayes and Davis (Editors) *Taking Down Our Harps: Black Catholics in the United States*. Orbis. 1998.

*Gilkes, Cheryl Townsend. *Women in the Holiness Tradition*.

Week 10, April 16

Humanism/ Secularism

Robin Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: Black Radical Imagination*.

Pinn, Anthony. What if God Were One of Us? Humanism and African Americans for Humanism. Chapter 4 from *Varieties of African American Religious Experience*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis. 1998. pp. 154-185

+Holmes, Barbara. At the Crossroads: Secular Reclamations of the Contemplative Life. Chapter 7 from *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis. pp. 169-183.

Week 11, April 23

Prosperity

Harrison, Milman. *Righteous Riches: The Word of Faith Movement in Contemporary African American Religion*

+Jakes, TD. *The Great Investment: Balancing Faith, Family and Finance to Build a Rich Spiritual Life*. Chapters 1-3.

+Melissa Harris-Lacewell. Liberation to Mutual Fund: The Politics of Differing Conceptions of Christ in the African American Church. From Religion and American Political Behavior. Matthew Wilson (editor)

Week 12, April 30

Religion and politics in black literature

Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (selections)

James Baldwin, *Go Tell it on the Mountain* (selections)