This course provides an introduction to the political experience of African Americans. The course is contemporary in focus. Topics include African American political thought, voting and participation, urban politics, race and elected office, and issues of gender, class, age and sexual identity at the intersections of black politics. The course is decidedly introductory and is not meant to be comprehensive. There is a substantial reading requirement. Students are expected to write frequently and to complete an independent final project.

**ASSESSMENT**

**Reading Responses** (50%) Students will write FIVE (5) 700-1000 word essays in response to the assigned readings. Students will sign up in Week 1 of class for the weeks they will respond. Each response paper is worth 10% of the grade. Together these papers account for 50% of the grade.

Response Papers are due at **12 Noon each Wednesday** via Sakai. Students may choose to write in any five weeks of their choosing. At least two (2) papers must be submitted in response to readings before midterm.

**Midterm Essay** (15%) Students will write a midterm essay from one of several possible prompts. Students will have 24 hours to complete the essay. The midterm essay should not exceed five (5), double-spaced, 12-point font, pages with standard one-inch margins.

**Final Project** (25%) Students will identify an African American political writer, government official, elected office holder, activist or policy maker at the local, state, or national level. Students will conduct an original interview with this individual. The interview must last at least 20 minutes and needs to be either audio taped or video taped. It can be conducted via phone or in-person. Students will
submit a full transcript of the interview with the final project. Students will write an original essay about the individual using themes/ theories from the course. The essay is not to exceed eight (8), double-spaced, 12-point font, pages with standard one-inch margins. More details about the final project will be forthcoming.

Class Participation (10%) Students are expected to complete all readings before each class. The professor will call on students to contribute. Lack of familiarity with the assigned material will have a negative affect on student assessment. Written attendance will be taken.

Extra Credit: Throughout the semester Professor MHP will provide opportunities to attend events or participate in programs to earn extra credit. Students may participate in up to 10 of these opportunities. Each Extra Credit opportunity is then added to the final grade at .33 rate. A student who completes 10 extra credit opportunities can earn up to 3.3 points on the final grade average at the end of the semester.

**Late Assignment Policy**

All students have one Free Pass to be used on any written assignment except the final project. One assignment can be turned in up to 48 hours late with no questions asked and no negative consequences for the grade. After the Free Pass is used, any assignment submitted late will be subject to the late assignment policy. Assignments submitted late will lose 1/3 letter grade for any late submission within the first 48 hours. Each additional 24 hours results in another 1/3 letter grade reduction. Exceptions to this policy will only be made for emergencies or health challenges that are documented by a physician or university administrator.

Required Texts

Readings marked with * are available as links from the course Sakai website our course reserves. Books are all available through the university bookstore.


Transportation

Class will begin promptly at 3:30 pm in the main classroom of the PHI/AJC house. The address is 2599 Reynolda Road. (The corner of Reynolda and Polo Roads). There is ample parking at the house if you drive. The PHI/AJC House is a stop on the Gray Line West shuttle, with stops every 30 minutes. Please plan accordingly.

Attendance Policy

As a course that meets only once per week, attendance is particularly crucial for the learning environment. More than three (3) unexcused absences will result in 1/3 letter grade reduction from the final grade of the course.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious violation of ethical conduct and academic integrity. Plagiarism need not be intentional. All cases of plagiarism – the theft of words, ideas, sources, and conclusions whether from written, audio, oral, or digital materials – will not be tolerated and will be reported to appropriate departmental and dean leadership.

Expectations for Classroom Behavior

We acknowledge that racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, and other forms of interpersonal and institutionalized forms of inequality exist in society. This does not mean we all agree on the causes, consequences, or solutions for these forms of inequality. It does mean we agree to do our best to better understand them, refrain from repeating misinformation, and refrain from personal attack. No student is expected to have all the answers. Mistakes and questions are welcomed in the spirit of cooperative learning.

We will work to create an atmosphere where:

- We keep an open mind and listen;
- Everyone is valued and respected;
- Everyone can work and learn;
- Everyone engages in the thoughtful presentation of ideas, shares the floor, and can critically assess each other’s ideas;
- No individual is ridiculed or demeaned for sharing personal experiences and ideas;
- Personal experiences shared in the context of the classroom remain confidential unless otherwise agreed upon;
- No individual is expected to be a representative spokesperson for a given group of people, given there is intra-group diversity of skills, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.
WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION
August 30

Jelani Cobb, “The Battle of Charlottesville”

Isaac Chotiner, “Are the Charlottesville White Supremacists Really “Nazis”? A Conversation with Jelani Cobb on what to call them”

WEEK 2: STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK
September 6

Walton, Smith, and Wallace. Chapters 1 and 2


WEEK 3: BLACK POLITICAL THOUGHT TRADITIONS
September 13

*Martin Luther King, Jr. “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”

*Coalition Statements:
Combahee River Collective, “Black Feminist Statement”
Black Lives Matter, Black Lives Matter Network
Limits of Anti-Racism, Adolph Reed

*Dawson, Michael, Black Visions: the Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies Chapter 1 and 2

*Thomas Sowell ”Is the Family Becoming Extinct”, “Life at the Bottom”, “Minimum Wage Laws” and “Role of Economics” all from The Thomas Sowell Reader, 2011

WEEK 4: BLACK IDENTITY, CONSCIOUSNESS, LINKED FATE
September 20

Walton, Smith, and Wallace. Chapters 3

*Michael Dawson, Behind the Mule, Chapters 1-3

WEEK 5: INTERSECTIONS- GENDER AND SEXUALITY  
September 27  
Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*  

WEEK 6: INTERSECTIONS-GENERATION  
October 4  
Cathy Cohen, *Democracy Remixed*

WEEK 7: MIDTERM ESSAY AND FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL  
October 11  
**No class meeting. Midterms essay and final project proposals due by 5pm**

WEEK 8: RETHINKING COMMUNITY CONFERENCE  
October 18  
No regular class meeting on Wednesday  
Students will assist with Rethinking Community events  
October 19-21

WEEK 9: PUBLIC OPINION  
October 25  
Walton, Smith, and Wallace Chapter 4  
*Harris-Lacewell, Melissa. *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought.* Chapter 1  
*Schuman, Steeth and Bobo *Racial Attitudes in America Trends and Interpretations*, Chapter 4  
*Sigelman and Welch. *Black Americans’ Views of Racial Inequality.* 1991. Chapter 5,  
*Dawson, Michael, *Black Visions*, Chapter 1 and 2
WEEK 10:  VOTING AND CANDIDACY  
November 1  
Walton, Smith, and Wallace Chapter 9  

WEEK 11:  POLITICAL PARTIES  
November 8  
Walton, Smith, and Wallace Chapter 8  
Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances*, Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5 and  
*Nancy Weiss, Farewell to the Party of Lincoln, Chapter 10, Why Blacks Became Democrats*  

WEEK 12:  OBAMA  
November 15  
Walton, Smith, and Wallace Chapter 11  

Public Addresses by Barack Obama

   Philadelphia “Race” Speech, 2008  
   DNC Nomination Acceptance, 2008  
   First Inaugural Address, 2009  
   Second Inaugural Address, 2013  
   On the George Zimmerman Verdict, 2013  
   Eulogy for Charleston Murder Victims, 2015  
   CBC Phoenix Dinner, 2015  
   2016 DNC Speech, 2016

WEEK 13: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
November 22
NO CLASS

WEEK 14: CONGRESS

   Walton, Smith, and Wallace Chapter 10

   *Katherine Tate, Black Faces in the Mirror Chapters 1 and 2

   *Kerry Haynie, African American Legislators in the American States. Chapters 1 and 2

   *Richard Fenno. Going Home: Black Representative and Their Constituents. Chapter 1 & 7 November 29

WEEK 15: FLEX WEEK
December 6 Possible Guest Speaker