Black Religion and Black Political Thought  
Spring 2013  
Melissa V. Harris-Perry  
Department of Political Science  
Anna Julia Cooper Project on Gender, Race and Politics in the South

OBJECTIVES

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

Class participation (10%)

**NOTE: You will lose points if your papers are late. 1/3 letter grade will be deducted for every 24 hours the assignment is late. No assignment will be accepted after 72 hours late without prior agreement.**

Honor Code

You are bound by the Tulane University Honor Code in all the work that you do for this course at this university. See http://tulane.edu/college/code.cfm
**Students needing accommodations**

Tulane University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Students who need accommodations must be registered with the Office of Disability Services and follow their procedures for obtaining assistance. See [http://tulane.edu/studentaffairs/disability/index.cfm](http://tulane.edu/studentaffairs/disability/index.cfm)

**Required Texts**


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

**Introduction**

**Week 1, Wednesday 1/16**
What is the relationship between religious ideas and political thought and action among African Americans?

Chapters 1 and 2

The Church

**Week 2, Wednesday 1/23**

How should we think about the black church?

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


Pages 1-40

**Week 3, Wednesday 1/30**

The black church as a psychological/cultural resource for politics

Harris, Fred. *Something Within: Religion in African American Political Activism.*
Chapters 1-6


Week 4, Wednesday February 6

The black church as an organizational resource for politics


*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.” Pages 164-182.


Week 5, Wednesday February 13
The day after MARDI GRAS, see you next week!

Week 6, Wednesday February 20

Black Church and Urban Politics, PART I

RELIGIOUS IDEAS

Week 7, Wednesday February 27

Black Islamic tradition and black politics


Week 8, Wednesday, March 6

Black Theology and black politics


*Cone, James. “Calling the Oppressors to Account: God and Black Suffering.”* Pages 3-13


*Butler, Lee. “Testimony as Hope and Care African American Pastoral Care as Black Theology at Work.”* Pages 24-32.

Week 9, Wednesday, March 13

Black Church and Urban Politics, Part II: Trinity United Church of Christ
Grant and Grant, *The Moment: Barack Obama, Jeremiah Wright and the Firestorm at Trinity United Church of Chris.*

**Week 10, Wednesday, March 20**

Womanism and black feminist politics


***SPRING BREAK****

**Week 11, Wednesday, April 3**

Varieties of Black Religious Thought I: Christian traditions


**Week 12, Wednesday, April 10**

Varieties of Black Religious Thought II: Eastern thought

*Adiele, *Meeting Faith: The Forest Journals of a Black Buddhist Nun*

**Week 13, Wednesday April 17**

Varieties of Black Religious Thought III: Humanism/Secularism


**Week 14, Wednesday April 24**

Prosperity

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


Conclusion and Wrap

Final Exam