

Civil Rights and Religion
Fall Semester 2018
Tuesdays 4th Period
(10:40 – 11:30)
Anderson Hall – Room 13
Thursdays 4th & 5th Periods
(10:40 – 12:35)
Anderson Hall – Room 13

Format: Discussion & Research Projects

Instructor: Gwendolyn (Zoharah) Simmons, Ph.D.

Office: Religion Department – 107-A Anderson Hall

Telephone: 392-1625 (Rel. Dept. Main Number/ Prvt. Office Number: 273-2940

E-Mail Addresses: Zoharah@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays: 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm
& By Appointment

Course Description:

This Course will examine the African American Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s. We will also look at some of the historical events that made a Civil Rights Movement necessary for African Americans to secure a modicum of equal rights and fair play. We will investigate the men and women who were both leaders and followers and the organizations they formed. The Civil Rights Movement has been hailed as the most successful social movement in American History. It was a Movement that transformed the American South with its racial apartheid systems of government and institutions into a more racially equitable society offering some of the benefits of American life to its African American citizens and other persons of color who chose to live in this part of the United States. It also transformed this whole nation as institutional racism and a racial caste system operated in the North as well as in the South. We will explore the role of Religion and Politics in this African American led Movement, which galvanized people of all races in the effort to make this nation truly one of liberty and justice for ALL.

Course Goals:

This Course Meets Diversity and Gordon Rule Requirements:

- Review in brief the history of African Americans in the United States from the slavery period until the Civil War and the development of racism that was used to justify their enslavement and continued oppression after slavery ended.
- Explore (briefly) African American history from the Reconstruction Era to the early 20th Century and the development of the Jim Crow system of black-white apartheid in the

South that persisted until the latter half of the 20th century. Learn about the class and political underpinnings of this U.S. brand of apartheid.

- Learn about the critical role of the black church which was one of the main foundations of the black resistance movement and its call for equality.
- Learn about organization like the *NAACP* (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), *CORE* (Congress of Racial Equality), and the impact of WWII on the African American soldiers and others that led up to the launch of the modern day Civil Rights Movement.
- Gain knowledge of the details of the 1954 Brown v. Board School Desegregation Decision and its political and social impact on the South. Also, learn about the 1954 Montgomery Bus Boycott that is often cited as the first modern era major black organized and led event in the South that launched the modern day Civil Rights Movement and the highly public roles of Mrs. Rosa Parks, and the *Women's Political Action Committee* (of which she was a member) as well as of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. both of whom were very critical for the success of this watershed event in our Nation's history.
- Acquire more knowledge of Dr. King and his philosophy of non-violence, the founding of the *Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)* that he led and also of the role of Miss Ella Baker in its founding.
- Gain knowledge of the Student led 1960s Sit-In Movement that began in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1960 and the students who led this Movement.
- Learn about the founding, movement philosophy and activities of the *Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)* and its leaders; Miss Ella Baker, James Foreman, John Lewis, Ruby Doris Robinson, Bob Moses, Stokely Carmichael and others. Learn how SNCC evolved from a movement whose symbol was two hands, one black and one white clasped together to one whose rallying cry became BLACK POWER! and one of its logo became the Black Panther. Examine the political and social changes in thought that accompanied these symbolic and ideological conversions.
- Acquire knowledge of the Freedom Rides and the brave Riders –women & men, black & white - who risked life and limb to end segregation on interstate public transportation.
- Learn about the on-going debate about Self-Defense vs. Non-Violence as a way of life.
- Learn about the Deacons for Defense and their armed protection of Civil Rights Workers.
- Learn about the founding and work of the Black Panther party (BPP); assess the BPP's advocacy of the right to self-defense vs the non-violent resistance theology of Dr. King.
- Learn what enraged and frightened white Americas most about the BPP.
- Gain knowledge of the ideas and the roles of some of the key players in the Civil Rights Movement, including: Dr. King, Mrs. Rosa Parks, Miss Ella Baker, James Farmer, James Foreman, John Lewis, Diane Nash- Bevel, Ruby Doris Robinson, Mrs. Fannie Lou

Hammer, Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, Mrs. Victoria Gray, Bob Moses and others.

- Assess the short and long term impact of the Civil Rights Movement on the caste and class system in U.S. South and the whole of this country and its role in making the Presidencies of Barak Obama and Donald J Trump possible.

Requirements: This is a reading and writing intensive research course.

- This Course meets the Gordon Rule # 6- Requirement of 6000+ words. The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures that the students both maintain their fluency in writing and learn to use writing as a tool to facilitate and enhance their learning and retention of knowledge.
- To receive your **Writing Credit** you must receive **a grade of C or higher** as well as a satisfactory completion of the writing components of the Course.

While this Course embraces serious political, social and cultural issues regarding systemic racial discrimination in U.S, society and the African American led Movement to defeat this system this course will be fun, lively and engaging. In addition to our readings, we will view documentary films, news clips and recordings from that period. We will also discuss some of the most critical issues that shaped this nation and are still facing us in this post President Obama era, with the election of President Donald Trump, the Black Lives Matter Movement and the rise of overt white nationalist groups and their public displays of racial animus toward African Americans and immigrant populations of color. Therefore we will focus on the role of racism and white supremacy in the history and legacy of America and its current role in the public policies of today. Hopefully you will find the issues we will engage in this class will be even more interesting since it is an election year that many believe is the most critical in our country's history in decades. Race and racism will play a major role in our November 2018 Elections.

Some of your work will be done in small research groups focused on a topic you will select by the 3rd week of class and continue working on throughout the term, which is explained below.

- 1) Attendance and **active** participation in your group and class discussions are important. Roll will be taken at each class after the first two classes. You are permitted three unexcused absences, after which your grade will be negatively impacted by additional unexcused absences. Such absences after the first three will lower your cumulative grade by 2 grade points per absence. To be chronically late for class will also negatively impact your grade and can count as absences too. Leaving the class before it ends without cause and without notifying me in advance can be counted as an absence also. Therefore please let me know in advance if you will be late (and the reason) or if you need to leave class early.

- 2) **Four Reaction Papers** to assigned readings that are to be five pages in length minimum will be written during the course of the term (Reports on these readings will be made in class by an assigned person in each class and along with the instructor's comments on the readings will serve as the basis for our class discussions). The teacher will grade each paper and return it with my comments and critique of your writing. Each student will be given the opportunity to re-write a paper that has less than a B grade. A signup sheet for these reaction papers and presentations will be circulated at the 3rd meeting of this class. The four reaction papers will count for **40% of your grade.**

- 3) **Small Group Projects.** Each student will participate in a small (2 or more persons) research projects on a major Civil Rights Organization, such as CORE, the NAACP, SCLC, SNCC, BPP, The Deacons for Defense and/or key leaders in the movement such as, Mrs. Fannie Lou Hammer, Mrs. Rosa Parks, Diane Nash Bevel, James Forman, Stokely Carmichael, or some other topic related to the Civil Rights Movement that two or more people are interested in researching and writing about. Each group will make periodic reports in class on your findings; dates for these reports will be listed on the Course Outline which will be sent to you. Students should forward interesting info to me regarding things you discover in your research or civil rights issues confronting us today for immigrants, gay and lesbian people, etc. for sharing with the class. If you have an idea for another group topic and there is interest, it can be added to the list.

Each group will prepare an **in depth final written report** at the end of the term on their organization, individual or Civil Rights topic that they did their research on. **Each individual member of the group is responsible for writing some specific subset of the overall project, (ten pages minimum). This can be combined with the others and bound or it can be turned in separately. Each part of the group report must have its author identified as each person's work will be graded individually.** The group will make an oral presentation on your research at the Mid-Point of the Term and at the End of the Term with each group member preparing a written synopsis of their research to be distributed to the class at the time of the groups' oral presentations. Everyone will be asked to sign up for one of the groups by the date listed on the Course Outline, generally on the 4th meeting of the class and to hold the first meeting of the group at that time.

At the groups' first meeting members of each group will exchange telephone numbers and e-mail addresses as each group will need to meet periodically and to communicate regularly via e-mail. Also the groups will be given time to meet throughout the term during class time. I will rotate among your groups during your in class meetings. This Project (the research, individual written segments { 10 pgs minimum}, oral presentation with handout) will count for - **40% -(a substantial portion of your grade) in this class**

- 4) **A written 5 to 7 page book report** is to be written by each student on a book to be selected by each of you, preferably related to your group project. All book titles are to be submitted to me for approval. Additionally, an oral presentation {with a minimum two-page synopsis of the book review to be distributed to the class at the time your oral presentation} is to be made. Guidelines for the book report will be e-mailed and posted on Canvas. The written book report plus your oral presentation with synopsis for the class will count for **20% of your class grade.**

In Summary, Grades will be based on the following:

- 1) Four reaction papers (5 pgs. minimum) during the term, which each student will be assigned to read at least once aloud in class. These four papers will be turned in for grading and will be returned. **40%**
- 2) Small group project on a selected title with each member having a specific component on which to write a 10 pg (minimum) paper and make oral presentation in class. **40%**
- 3) Book Review (5 pp minimum) on book plus oral presentation with two-page synopsis for distribution to the class. **20%**

Required Texts for this Class

Required texts will be available at the UF Bookstore. You may want to purchase your books on line as they are much cheaper even than the used books at the book store.

- 1). *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*, by Aldon D. Morris, New York, The Free Press, 1984, ISBN 0-02-922130-7 pbk.
- 2). *A More Beautiful and Terrible History, The Uses and Misuses of Civil Rights History*, by Jeanne Theoharis, Boston, Beacon Press, 2018, ISBN 0807075876.
- 3). *This Non-Violent Stuff Will Get You Killed*, by Charles Cobb, Jr., Duke University Press, 2015, ISBN 082236123X

Additionally, I will post chapters from some other texts on Canvas from several additional books including from:

DO NOT PURCHASE

The REVOLUTION HAS COME: Black Power, Gender, And The Black Panther Party In Oakland, by Robyn C. Spencer, Duke U.P. 2016

The Blood of Emmett TILL, By Timothy B. Tyson, Simon & Schuster, 2017.

Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and the Black Struggles For Human Rights 1960-1977, by Winston Grady Willis, Durham, N.C.: Duke U.P. 2006.

In Struggle: SNCC & The Black Awakening of the 1960s, by Claiborne Carson, Cambridge: Harvard U.P

Sisters In The Struggle: African Women in the Civil Rights – Black Power Movement by V. P. Franklin & Bettye Collier-Thomas, N. Y.: New York University Press, 2001.

Eyes On The Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, And First Hand Accounts From the Black Freedom Struggle 1954-1990, General Editors: Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding & Darlene Clark Hine, Penguin Books, 1991,

Students with disabilities:

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to me with your requests for specific accommodations.

Policy on Absences

Because of the importance of class attendance, **Roll will be taken at each class. Only three unexcused absences are permitted before it impacts negatively upon your grade. All unexcused absences above the first three will decrease your grade by 2 points. Chronic lateness can cause you to be recorded as absent for that day unless you have alerted me in advance that you will be late for a valid reason.**

Excused absences include:

a). **Serious illness.** You must have a note from your doctor **written on her or his stationary** from the **University Infirmary or your private physician** saying that you were too ill to attend class on the **specific date (s)** that you missed. Also serious illness of a close family member (mother, father, child, sibling, grandparents) that requires your assistance verified on a doctor's stationary will be considered as an excused absence.

b). **Death of a close family member** whose funeral or other service you attend that is certified by a letter from the funeral director or religious official who handled your family member's service. **This must be on official stationary from the funeral home or the religious official.**

c). **Attendance and participation in university activities**, i.e. choirs, debating teams, sports teams, etc. Please inform the instructor at the beginning of the term of your membership in these activities and your expected days of absence. I need official documentation of your membership and confirmation from the university official advising the group of your scheduled absence on official stationery with a phone number. Also graduating seniors who have interviews for jobs, internships and the like will be excused with official papers confirming such meetings.

Please be responsible and let me know about other problems not on this list that might have caused you to be absent. Let's discuss any problems with your assignments early in term before they become big problems. Everyone should make an A in this class! I am here for you and want to be helpful in any way that I can. TALK TO ME AND LET ME KNOW IF THERE IS A PROBLEM! I WANT TO HELP!!!!

Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, Ph.D.
Gainesville, Fl 32611-7410
(O) 392-1625 /Prvt. line: 273-2940
Zoharah@ufl.edu

P.O. Box 117410
107-A Anderson Hall
Fax: 392-7395