

The Ohio State University  
PS 504: Black Politics  
Summer 2001  
Cockins Hall, Rm 218  
Mon., Wed. 8:30 AM-10:18 AM  
Office Hours: Mon. and Wed. 1-2:00PM,  
And by appointment

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**PS 504  
Black Politics  
Summer 2001**

Course Description:

This course explores the unique political experiences of African Americans with a particular emphasis on both traditional (e.g. voting, office holding, and lobbying) and non-traditional (e.g. riots/protests, music, mass movements) efforts to gain political stamina. By focusing on the quality of Black political leadership, ideology, participation, representation, and strategies for empowerment, we will analyze the following questions: How has the nature of Black politics evolved over time, and what factors have shaped that evolution? What are the institutional conditions that have influenced the relationship between African Americans and the political system? What gains have been made by the increased presence of African Americans in the institutions of government? How have the internal dynamics of African American communities shaped collective efforts to gain empowerment? And finally, what are the contemporary challenges to the endurance of Black Politics? To address these questions, we will rely on a combination of lectures, readings, discussions, videos, and in-class presentations.

This course is a challenging one that will require students to think and write critically and thoughtfully about the topics discussed. Students who want to do well in this course should follow a simple but proven formula for success: come to class regularly and on time; read thoroughly and prior to the class period in which the readings will be discussed; contribute regularly to class discussion; pay attention and ask questions when you don't understand; complete assignments in a timely manner; and finally, contact me if you find that you are having difficulties. The syllabus clearly illustrates what I expect from you, but you can also expect me to be dedicated to helping provide you with the tools necessary to do well in this course. Further, I am committed to making this course a worthwhile experience for each of you.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- ~ Bell, Derrick. 1992. *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Race in America*. Basic Books.
- ~ Cohen, Cathy. 1999. *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*. University of Chicago Press.
- ~ Walton, Hanes and Robert C. Smith. 2000. *American Politics and the African American Quest for Freedom*. Allyn and Bacon/Longman.

These books are available at Long's, SBX, and the OSU Bookstore. A course **packet** with the remaining readings is on sale and available at the **University Bookstore**. **All readings on the syllabus are required and expected to be completed before each class. In addition, all of the required books and a copy of the course packet have been placed on closed reserve at the Main Library.**

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

Student evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

- **Active attendance and participation** **15%**
  - Attendance will be taken each class period and students are permitted two excused absences during the quarter. Although excused absences do include illness (must be accompanied by a doctor's note), routine appointments will not be excused because such appointments should be scheduled outside of class time. Active participation includes completing the assigned reading before each lecture and thoughtfully and respectfully participating in class discussions. Occasionally, unannounced reading quizzes will be given to make sure that students are completing the readings. These quizzes are designed to benefit your understanding of the class themes in general, and the reading themes in particular. Scores on these quizzes will be factored into the student's overall attendance and participation grade.
- **Midterm examination (Wednesday, July 18)** **20%**
  - Students will be expected to complete an in-class examination on material covered in lecture and in the readings. For information about make-up exams please read the exam policy below.
- **Final Examination (TBA)** **30%**
  - Students will be expected to complete a comprehensive, take-home, essay-based examination on material covered throughout the course in lecture and in the readings.
- **Short Essays** **15%**
  - Students will be required to submit three short writing assignments that represent a reaction to the readings. The essay should reflect a critical analysis of the day's topic rather than a summary of the readings. These reaction papers should be no more than 1-2 pages (typed, single-spaced, 10/12 font) and should address points that you find interesting or that you perhaps do not agree with. The papers should be based on the readings, but you are encouraged to move us beyond the readings by raising questions/issues that you find relevant to the topic at hand. All papers are **due at the start of class** and late papers will be dropped 1/3 of a letter grade per day. The first paper is worth a total of 33 points, the second paper a total of 33 points, and the third paper is worth a total of 34 points. Lastly, the papers must draw on readings from at least three sections in the course. For example, a student may write her/his first paper on a topic from Part I of the course, a second paper on a topic from Part III of the course, and the third paper on a topic from Part V of the course.
- **Term Paper (Due Friday, August 10 by 5PM) 20%**
  - Students will be expected to write a well-organized, thoughtful research paper on a topic relating to African-American politics and/or participation. In addition, students will be required to collect original data (i.e. surveys, interviews, etc.) for the research component of the project. Each essay should be typed, double-spaced, using no larger than a 12 point font and no smaller than a 10-point font, and should be at least 10 pages in length (exclusive of the title page and bibliography). Students are expected to follow an accepted social science footnote and bibliographic style (please do not use MLA style). A one to two page statement of the proposed paper topic and a preliminary list of sources is due at the start of class on July 9. In addition, students are required to schedule an appointment to discuss the topic with me. This appointment should occur by July 16. The paper will be graded based on organization and format, consistency and use of logic, use of literature, conceptual formation, substantive value, originality of research, depth of scholarship, and use of language and writing. Students are *strongly* encouraged to take advantage of the services offered by the OSU Writing Center (located in the Younkin Success Center on Neil Avenue) A more detailed handout of paper expectations will be distributed later.

### **COURSE POLICIES**

Late assignments will be penalized 10 points for each day that they are late. Assignments that are more than one week late will not be accepted. Failure to take exams at the scheduled time will result in a grade of zero with no exceptions. Students with legitimate reasons ("I overslept" is **NOT** an appropriate reason) for missing an exam must notify me **in advance** so that arrangements can be made for a make-up exam. Please note that students must provide me with appropriate documentation before a make-up exam will be administered. Students who notify me after the exam will be allowed to take a make-up, but will be penalized 15 points unless they can demonstrate to my satisfaction that it was impossible to notify me sooner. Since make-up exams are always harder than the original exam, students are strongly encouraged to take exams at the scheduled time.

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY :**

All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be handled according to university policy, and, when appropriate, reported to the university committee on Academic Misconduct.

### **DISABILITY :**

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disabilities Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor of their needs during the first week of the quarter. Students may also contact the department's coordinator, Mr. Wayne DeYoung (292-2880) for more information about specific services.

### **OFFICE HO URS :**

Students are strongly encouraged to meet with me throughout the quarter to discuss their progress in the course, the course material, papers, or any other relevant topic. Students who are having difficulty in the course are especially encouraged to meet with me to discuss strategies for improving your mastery of the course material. My office hours are Mondays and Wednesdays from 1PM-2PM in Derby 2120, but if these times are not convenient for you please schedule an appointment with me.

### **COURSE OUTLINE AND READING SCHEDULE:**

\*\*Please note that I reserve the right to alter this schedule as necessary\*\*

June 18                    What is Black Politics?: Course Introduction and Overview

#### **Part I: Establishing the Theoretical Framework: Race, Racism, and Power**

June 20                    **Can We All Just Get Along?: Race and Racism** in America  
Hacker, Andrew, "Race and Racism: Inferiority vs. Equality," pp.17-30  
King, Martin Luther, "Where are We?," pp.1-12  
King, Martin Luther, "Racism and the White Backlash," pp.67-96

June 25                    **Realizing the American Dream or Hitting the Political Glass Ceiling?: Race and Political Power in America**  
Carmichael, Stokely (Kwame Ture) and Charles Hamilton, "White Power," pp.2-31  
Bell, Derrick, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, Preface and Introduction, pp. xiii-14  
Walton, Hanes and Robert Smith, *American Politics and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom*, Foundations and Chapter 1, pp.1-18

June 27                    **The Struggle for Self-Definition: Black Political Thought**  
**Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet," pp.23-44**  
**King, Martin Luther, "Black Power," pp.23-66**

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July 2                    **Fighting for Social Change: Social Movements and the African American Struggle for Political Recognition**  
Walton and Smith. Chapters 2 and 7

July 4                    **Independence Day: Class Cancelled**

**Part II: From Margin to Mainstream: African American Politics in the Institutional Arena**

**July 9                    Knocking Down Boundaries: The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and Black Political Participation**

Davidson, Chandler, "The Voting Rights Act: A Brief History," pp.7-27  
Guinier, Lani, "The Triumph of Tokenism: The Voting Rights Act and the Theory of Black Electoral Success." (not in packet, will be distributed in class)

**July 11                    A Force to be Reckoned With?: African Americans in the Electorate**

Dawson, Michael, "The Changing Class Structure of Black America and the Political Behavior of African Americans," pp.3-12  
Dawson, Michael, "The Politicization of African-American Racial Group Interests," pp. 44-63  
Walton and Smith, Chapters 5 and 10

**July 16                    The Life of the Party: African Americans and Party Politics**

Walton and Smith, Chapter 9  
Tate, Katherine, "Blacks and the Democratic Party," pp.50-74

**July 18                    MIDTERM**

**Part III:                    Representation and Empowerment**

**July 23                    Subordination or Empowerment?: The Substance and Quality of African American Leadership**

Barker, Lucius and Mack Jones, "Black Leadership and the Continuing Struggle for Racial Justice," pp.353-360  
Cohen, Cathy, *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*  
Chapter 8

**July 25                    The Quest for Representation at the National Level**

Walton and Smith, Chapters 11 and 12

**July 30                    The Quest for Representation at the Local Level**

Persons, Georgia, "Black Mayoralties and the New Black Politics," pp.38-65  
McCormick, Joseph and Charles Jones, "The Conceptualization of Deracialization," pp. 66-84  
Persons, Georgia, "The Election of Gary Franks and the New Black Conservatives," pp. 194-208

**PART IV: Taking it to the Streets: Black Politics in the Social Arena**

**August 1                    Social Expressions of Discontent: The Politics of Popular Culture**

Pratt, Ray, "Popular Music and Politics," pp.1-19  
Rose, Tricia, "Hidden Politics: Discursive and Institutional Policing of Rap Music," pp. 236-251  
Walton and Smith, Chapter 6

**PART III:**

**July 23                    The Mules of the Earth?: African American Women**

Giddings, Paula, "The Women's Movement and Black Discontent," pp.299-324  
Locke, Mamie, "Deconstruct to Reconstruct: African American Women in the Post-Civil

Rights Era, pp.375-395

**PART V: Contemporary Themes and Challenges: The Politics of Community**

August 8            **Contested Boundaries: AIDS and the African American Community** Cohen, Cathy, *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*, Entire Book

***FINAL PAPER DUE FRIDAY, AUGUST 10 BY 5PM***

August 13    **African Americans and the Criminal Justice System**  
Henderson, Wade, "The Color Line and the "Thin Blue Line,"" pp.217-226  
Brown, Khalilah L. and Javonne A. Paul, "Stolen Democracy: Felony  
Disenfranchisement Laws and the Future of Black America"

August 15        **Permanent Dilemma or Permanent Excuse?: Racism Revisited** Bell, Derrick, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*

**FINAL EXAM TBA**

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**Top Ten List of Ways to Irritate Your Professor**

Adapted from Dr. William Nish, Georgia College

- 10) Do not read your assignments in advance of class lecture and discussion.
- 9) Label as "busy work," "irrelevant," **and** "boring" anything that you do not like or do not understand.
- 8) Read a newspaper or talk to a friend if you are not interested in the lecture topic.
- 7) Avoid using the professor's office hours for appointments.
- 6) Be consistently late to class and other appointments.
- 5) Be very casual about class attendance.
- 4) Avoid taking exams at the same time and under the same conditions as the rest of the **class**.
- 3) Always be ready with reasons why you are an exception to the rules established for the class.
- 2) Expect your professors to be waiting at home to take your phone calls.
- 1) Do not participate in such mundane activities as departmental advising appointments.

