

African American Politics (POS 4931)
Spring 2009
Dr. Sharon D. Austin
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Dr. Austin's Contact Information:

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Office Hours:

Tuesdays 2pm-5pm
Thursdays 2pm-5pm
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Purpose and Format of Course:

This course will examine the political behavior of African Americans in the United States. During the course of the semester, we will discuss issues such as the civil rights movement, the black power movement, black political thought, (conservatism, liberalism, and nationalism), blacks and the court system, the role of blacks in political parties, blacks and the presidency, and contemporary issues in African American politics. The format will be a combination of lecture and discussion.

Note:

If you have a disability, please inform me so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

The Required Textbook is much cheaper at www.amazon.com and other internet sites.

African Americans and the American Political System. Lucius Barker, Mack H. Jones, and Katherine L. Tate (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1999).

My Grandfather's Son: A Memoir. Clarence Thomas (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007).

The Audacity of Hope. Barack Obama (New York: Random House, 2006).

The Reserve Articles:

These readings are on reserve on the www.uflib.ufl.edu web site. To read or print these articles, click on the course reserves link, type in my last name, and click on the article's title.

Class Participation:

Class participation includes discussion during class meetings, but mostly will be based on attendance. After three classes are missed, you will not receive the percentage points for class participation. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance roster during each class session. If you forget to, sign it during the next class. Also, try to get to class on time. If you are late on an almost daily basis, it will affect your grade because it will be considered as an absence.

The Policy on Cell Phones:

In the past, several of my students have forgotten to turn off their cell phones in class. I am asking you to please turn off your phones before our class begins. If your phone rings more than once during the semester, you may be asked to leave the class for the day or for the entire semester. Remember, a student who takes his/her work seriously will make sure that his/her phone is off during class meetings.

Academic Dishonesty:

Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism and cheating on examinations. The penalty for cheating is a grade of 0 on the exam. In addition, the dean's office may chose to administer a harsher punishment such as a temporary suspension from this class or a permanent expulsion from the university.

The Internship and Fellowship Information:

I receive a lot of information about internships, undergraduate scholarships, and law and graduate school fellowships. At the beginning of most of our classes, I will share this information with you because I strongly encourage you to apply for these things. In the past, several of my students have received a variety of internships and fellowships. I can also provide copies of the materials that I bring to class if you need them. It is not a waste of time to apply for these things because you have nothing to lose by applying and you are just as if not more qualified than other applicants regardless of your major or grade point average.

The Examinations:

You will be tested on all material covered in the films, readings, and class discussions. In order to earn the highest grade possible, show me that you have read the assignments and taken detailed notes. None of the tests, including the final, will be comprehensive. One week before each test, we will have a review

The Paper:

Your research paper should range from approximately 8-12 pages (not including endnotes and the bibliography) and examine a topic concerning African American political activism, political behavior, campaigning, civil rights, public policies, mobilization, etc. You can either examine a topic that we have discussed in class or another relevant topic in African American politics. You must analyze articles in major journals, academic books, or on *credible* internet sites.

Your Grade will be Based on:

Class Participation and Discussion	10%
First Test	20%
Second Test	20%
Third Test	20%
Paper	30%

Grading Scale:

90 - 100	A	76-79	C+	60 - 65	D
86-89	B+	70- 75	C	56 - 59	F+
80-85	B	66 - 69	D+	Below 56	F

Class Schedule: (Films will be shown at the end of classes. Also, I will give you the attendance roster near the end of class on days films are shown.)

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and President Barack Obama
- 1-6 Introduction
- 1-8 Film: No Easy Walk (50 minutes) documents the mass demonstrations in Albany, Georgia, and Birmingham, Alabama from 1961-1963. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. faced one of his greatest defeats in Albany and one of his greatest successes in Birmingham.
- 1-13 Textbook Reading:
Barker, Jones, and Tate, chapter 1
Reserve Readings:
Martin Luther King Jr.: Apostle for Non-Violence (In *Black Leadership in America*)
- 1-15 NO CLASS
- 1-20 Film: The Inauguration of President Barack Obama We will watch the swearing-in ceremony and inauguration of the 44th President of the United States
Textbook Readings:
Barker Jones and Tate, chapter 11 (The Presidency and the Policy Process)
Audacity of Hope, chapter 1, 4, and 5
- 1-22 Textbook Reading:
Audacity of Hope, chapter 6 and 7
- The Concept of Affirmative Action
- 1-27 Reserve Reading:
Californian Ward Connerly Says His Polls Show the State is Ready for a Ballot Initiative Effort to End Affirmative Action
Regents Unanimous for One Florida
Beyond Percentage Plans: The Challenge of Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (focus on pages 1-6 and 52-74)
- 1-29 Film: A Question of Fairness (45 minutes) examines the lawsuits challenging the undergraduate and law school admissions processes at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. In June 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court issues 2 landmark rulings in these cases that will have a major impact on the future use of affirmative action in university admissions.
Textbook Reading:
Barker, Jones, and Tate, pages 340-350
- 2-3 Reserve Reading:
Gratz v. Bollinger

Black Mayors and the Revitalization of American Cities

- 2-5 Film: The Marcus Dixon Case (45 minutes) is a recent episode of the Oprah Winfrey Show that includes interviews with Marcus Dixon, an African American teenager acquitted by a Georgia jury of rape, but found guilty of aggravated child molestation under a Georgia Statutory rape law. Dixon's supporters argued that his race factored into his 10-year sentence of child molestation because his accuser was a white female.

Reserve Readings:

New Orleans: A City that Care Forgot (*In In Search of the New South*)

9th Ward: History, Yes, But A Future?

Rootedness May Save Lower 9th

Textbook Reading:

Barker, Jones, and Tate, chapter 2 (The Nature of the Problem)

- 2-10 **First Test**

Black Politics and the Criminal Justice System

- 2-12 Reserve Readings:

Dixon v. State of Georgia

Georgia High Court Overturns Teen's Sentence for Having Sex with Minor

Wilson v. State of Georgia

- 2-17 Film: Investigative Reports (50 minutes) shows the confessions of African American and Latino teenagers accused of brutally raping "the Central Park Jogger" – an upper middle class white woman. In December 2002, it was found that their confessions were coerced and their convictions were overturned. Each teen had served between 6 and 10 years in prison for the rape.

Reserve Readings:

Al Sharpton

Textbook Reading:

Barker, Jones, and Tate, Chapter 7 (Change through Politics: Interest Groups)

- 2-19 Reserve Readings:
House of Cards Interrogation
Judge Dismisses Jogger Rape Conviction
New Light on Jogger's Rape Calls Evidence Into Question
No Superhero: The Psychology of a Serial Rapist Behind the Blue Wall

Gay Rights, Racial Profiling, and Welfare

- 2-24 Film: Brother Outsider (55 minutes) examines the life of gay African American activist Bayard Rustin who organized the 1963 March on Washington, but was ostracized by many because of his sexual orientation.

Textbook Reading:
Barker Jones and Tate, pages 122-125

- 2-26 Reserve Readings:
Churches Pushes Passage of Marriage Amendment
Gays, Blacks Divided on Proposition 8
The Gay Marriage Paradox: Why Americans Won't Tolerate a Constitutional Amendment
Banning Gay Marriage

- 3-3 Reserve Reading:
Racial Profiling (Focus on the criticism and the U.S. debate on racial profiling sections)

- 3-5 Continued Discussion of 3-3 Readings

- 3-10 NO CLASS (Spring Break)

- 3-12 NO CLASS (Spring Break)

- 3-17 **Second Test**

- 3-19 Reserve Readings:
Fast Times as a Welfare Queen
Star Parker: A Star is Reborn
The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996

African American Political Thought

- 3-24 Textbook Reading:
Barker Jones and Tate, chapter 8 (Change through Politics: Political Parties)

- 3-26 Reserve Readings:
Critics Dog Jesse Jackson's Corporate Donors
Jesse Jackson's Empire

- 3-31 **Papers are due today.**
Film: The Justice Nobody Knows (45 minutes) is a 60 Minutes interview with U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas shortly before the publication of his memoir, *My Grandfather's Son*.

- 4-2 Textbook Reading:
Barker, Jones, and Tate, Chapter 6 (Courts, Judges, and the Interaction of Law and Politics) and pages 98-122
My Grandfather's Son, chapters 1-4 (These chapters discuss his childhood, education, and first marriage)

4-7 Film: Who Lied? (45 minutes) includes interviews with the four other African American women, in addition of Anita Hill, who wanted to testify that Clarence Thomas had harassed them in the workplace.

Textbook Reading:

My Grandfather's Son, chapters 5-7

4-9 Reserve Readings:

Who Lied?

Textbook Reading:

My Grandfather's Son, chapters 8-10

Immigration Reform

4-14 Reserve Readings:

Diversity Bringing Change to North Miami Politics

Haitian-Americans: Their Search for Political Identity in South Florida

4-16 Reserve Readings:

Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007

Evaluate Class

4-12 4-22 **Third Test**