Submitted by Dr. Matthew E. Simmons, Assistant Professor of African American Studies, University of Alabama-Birmingham, July 29th, 2025.

Course Name: 250 Special Topics: Black Politics in the African(a) World

Course Description:

This course aims to provide an introductory overview of the field of Black Politics from a Pan-African/Africological standpoint. Since the late 1960s, Black Politics has evolved into a distinct area of study in the broader field of Political Science. It comprises the historical and contemporary political thought and behavior of Black people as they interact with themselves and other groups in the American political system and with the institutions that formulate and implement public policy. This course provides a survey of the major developments and periods of Black political experience, as well as those orienting concepts and ideas that facilitate contemporary activities of the Black community.

Course Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify critical moments within Africana politics, both historically and contemporary.
- Identify important figures who have shaped Africana politics.
- Describe important theoretical, ideological, and political differences among continental and diasporic Africans.

This course is designed for undergraduate students either majoring in African(a) Studies, African American Studies, Global Black Studies, and/or Pan-African Studies (these terms are usually interchangeable within the larger umbrella of the African American Studies discipline.

Course Module: Africana Political Models of Resistance and Healing Against Western Oppression

Module Overview:

This course module introduces the students to the philosophical and theoretical ideologies that connect South African and African American political thought and resistance movements. This module exposes the students to the socio-political realities and resistance/healing strategies that continental and diasporic Africans has employed since European imposition upon the African continent. Though this module, the students will gain a deeper appreciation and knowledge of how intrinsically linked the struggle against racial oppression is in global, Pan-African context and develop critical thinking skills to formulate strategies that connect Africana healing during resistance movements and long-term strategies to achieve liberation.

Module Objectives:

1. To examine the historical context of the African ways of knowing that connects Africana struggle for liberation in South Africa, United States and across the globe through the lens of African Worldview and Ubuntu philosophies.

2. To compare the strategies, leaders, and movements involved in the Black struggle for liberation in the global context.

3. To analyze the impact of apartheid in South Africa and racial segregation in the United States on the lives of Black communities.

4. To identify indigenous healing strategies that these continental and diasporic African employed to sustain themselves while surviving/navigating oppressive regimes.

5. And to provide a sankofic map of survival & healing for contemporary social struggles.

6. Demonstrate knowledge of major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical patterns, or historical contexts within a given social or behavioral domain in the form of a research paper & a political mixtape as their final projects.

Module Outline:

Week #1: Philosophical Overview of Africana Worldview & Communal Being

This week explores the cultural foundation of African(a) people. The African Worldview is of great importance to the exploration of African(a) political movements due the cultural connectivity of African people in a global context. The African Worldview is the overarching structure that explores how African people view and interpret the world. This worldview will be grounded within the Bantu philosophy of Ubuntu.

Resources for this Week:

1) The Deep Structure of Culture: Relevance of Traditional African Culture in Contemporary Life[i]
2) Ubuntu/Unhu/Vumunhu: A Principal Moral Compass for the southern African World[ii]
3) Ubuntu and Defining Community in America: A 21st Century Viewpoint[iii]

Exercise for the Week: "Who Am I and Who are WE"

The introductory exercise is to familiarize the class with one another's backgrounds and connect themselves culturally with one another. 1) I ask them to place themselves in a circle for them to face each other (I borrow this idea of African spiritual and communal connection described in Dr. Mariambi Ani's *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (1992). This book also talks about African Worldview. 2) Ask the students to introduce themselves to each other and how them to define what and how is Blackness recognized? These are some of the guiding questions:

- Where are you from? (Thinking about different regions of the United States or other global locations).
- What is Blackness? Is Blackness fundamentally different across America? The Globe? The Continent?
- How was your upbringings and familial structures? What were some of the things that your upbringing taught you?
- How do you recognize Blackness? What makes it up? (Is it just racial, economic, or cultural factors)?
- What makes up Black culture?
- How similar and different are you from your classmates? What separates and connects you all?

3) The class will revisit this exercise at the end of the week after reading the articles breaking down African/European Worldview, how differently does looking from an African cultural lens inform you about community?

This introductory exercise helps the students to recognize that their cultural experiences are similar in ways that they didn't recognize. This sets them up to look at African(a) socio-political foundations from a different perspective for the coming weeks.

Module Objective that this exercise satisfies: (Module Objective #1)

Module Objective:

- To examine the historical context of the African ways of knowing that connects Africana struggle for liberation in South Africa, United States and across the globe through the lens of African Worldview and Ubuntu philosophies.

Week #2: Historical Trajectories of European Oppression Upon African(a) Bodies

This week is a short overview of how Western oppression influenced and interrupted African(a) ways of life and culture. It showcases how both European imposition and conquest & Apartheid (South Africa) and Enslavement/Jim Crow laws negatively disrupted African norms and tried to force conformity to Western standards on being and knowing. It provides an overview of how destructive these laws and physical use of force was upon all aspects of African life: spiritually, socially, physically, and geographically.

Resources for this Week:

1) 1619-Virginias-First-Africans[iv]
2) Slavery in America Didn't Start in Jamestown in 1619 | TIME[v]
3) (40) Amend: The Fight for America | Episode 1[vi] | Netflix - YouTube/ Amend: The Fight for America | Episode 2[vii] | Netflix/ Amend: The Fight for America | Episode 3 | Netflix[viii]
4) Race Classification – Apartheid Museum/ Segregation – Apartheid Museum/ Apartheid – Apartheid Museum[ix]

5) (40) Apartheid in South Africa - Documentary on Racism | Interviews with Black & Afrikaner Leaders | 1957 - YouTube[x]/

Exercise #2: Asking an Elder about their experiences

This exercise requires the student to identify an elder either in their family or in their communal circle that has experienced first-hand the impact of either segregation or the immediate aftermath ending of de facto/de jure segregation in America. They would have to ask this person a series of questions that explores their first-hand experiences regarding racial oppression and their responses to that oppression. Did/How did they protest? What methods, whether active or passive, did they resist? What methods did they employ to sustain themselves (church, communal resistance? What self-care or communal care practices did they employ to continue resistance tactics? This exercise will require them to go into their communities and engage in methods of indigenous storytelling methods to chronicle instances/sites of resilience within their own cultural centers. They will need to interview their chosen elder (after they sign a consent form and go through the IRB process, use a tape recorder and field notes, and transcribe the interview.[xi] This interview will be utilized for their final project (see below).

Week #3: Africana Politics – What are the Cultural Connections Between Africa and America

This week explores the historical and foundations of Black political ideologies within South Africa and the America. This week is important because it showcases the connection between Black South African and African American political trajectories. This part of the module builds upon Africana Worldview while that worldview navigates within the oppressive regimes of South Africa and America. It showcases various political ideologies but grounds them within the African Worldview. The students will identify Ubuntu concepts within the political ideologies put forth in this portion of the module.

Resources for this Week:

1) The Politicization of African American Racial Group Interests[xii]
2) A Frame of reference for Black Politics[xiii]
3) Chapter 1: The Contours of Black Political Ideologies[xiv]
4) White Racism and Black Consciousness (1971) [xv]
5) Black Consciousness: The Movement and its Historicity[xvi]

Exercise #2: Locating your Center: Choosing your Ideological Home

Utilizing Dawson's Chapter 1 of Black Political Ideologies as a reference point, the students will choose their ideological home(s). They will read the various ideologies from that chapter and choose which one they most identify with and discuss with the class why they chose what they

chose. The instructor will then ask the student what factors/ideologies influenced their decision to choose that ideology(ies). The instructor will also ask the students if they are drawn to any other African(a) political ideologies. As the semester progresses for the next following several weeks, the class will be exposed to the works and people who embody those political ideologies: 1) Black Conservatism (Booker T. Washington/Zora Neale Hurston), 2) Radical Egalitarianism (Douglass, Wells, Du Bois, Mandela, Tutu), 3) Disillusioned Liberalism (Post 1930s Du Bois, Late King), 4) Black Marxism (Du Bois and Davis), 5) Black Feminism/Womanism/Africana Womanism (hooks, Combahee River Collective, Collins), 6) Black Nationalism (Garvey, Malcolm X, Biko), and 7) BlaQueer/Black Queer/Quareness (Rustin, Baldwin, Nkabinde). After the eleventh week, the professor will check-in with the students again to ask if they would like to either change or continue their political ideology trajectory. They will also have to write a ten (10)-to-fifteen (15)-page comparative political ideology paper that compares their chosen Black political ideology(ies) to one that they did not choose. They will compare their philosophical similarities and differences, perceived strengths and areas of growth, and how their philosophical foundations are grounded in African Worldview/Ubuntu philosophies (or not).

Module Objective that this exercise satisfies: (Module Objective #1, 2, & 3)

Module Objectives:

1. To examine the historical context of the African ways of knowing that connects Africana struggle for liberation in South Africa, United States and across the globe through the lens of African Worldview and Ubuntu philosophies.

2. To compare the strategies, leaders, and movements involved in the Black struggle for liberation in the global context.

3. To analyze the impact of apartheid in South Africa and racial segregation in the United States on the lives of Black communities.

Week #14: To Resist (Ukumelana) While Healing (Ukuphulukisa): African(a) Ways of Healing

This week will not just look at resistance. It also examines healing practices that African(a) people utilize under oppressive regimes to sustain themselves for short-term maintenance and long-term healing. Political Science usually does not look at healing practices as vital to Black liberation. Africana Studies does look at the whole person and community in ways that sustains the whole community. If one of us is sick, then all of us are ill. Therefore, communal care is not just necessary, it is revolutionary in nature.

Resources for this Week:

1) Endleleni: Political activism of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela as pastoral caregiving[xvii]
2) The Suitcase Project | District Six[xviii]
3) We Are Committed to Building a Single Nation in Our Country: Speech at Rally in Durban, February 25, 1990[xix]
4) Dope Is Death - Alexander Street, a ProQuest Company[xx]
5) Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements[xxi]
6) The Black Feminist Breathing Chorus Promotes Action Through Meditation - For Harriet | Celebrating the Fullness of Black Womanhood[xxii]
7) (41) "Exhibiting Forgiveness" Powerful Clip - YouTube[xxiii]
8) Knowledge Base | Healing Trauma for Communities and Individuals - Institute for Healing of Memories[xxiv]

Final Project: African(a) Political Mixtape

Political Mixtape Rubric

The Political Mixtape (or things that I am looking for) is as follows:

1) Have an overall theme. A soundtrack has a major theme (heartache, loss, mental illness, etc). Your political soundtrack must be a play on your political trajectory for your soundtrack. You can also look at the different types of Black Political ideologies as a reference point.
2) You must have at least nine (9) songs. These songs can range from any artists that speaks to your overall theme. Kendrick Lamar, Beyonce, Samoht, etc. Connect these songs to the individuals that we went over in class. Cite them and tell how their lyrics speak to the individuals that we looked over as well as how it personally speaks to you. Cite lyrics, quotes, etc to connect the scholars to the songs. A good way to do this is to place your artists into subthemes that speak to your overall theme (Self-Care/Communal Care, Revolution, Police Brutality, Pan-Africanism, Anarchy, Black/Brown Joy, etc.).
3) Tell a story. A soundtrack tells a story. This is a project about yourself and how you are connecting to changing the world. Be creative. Sample certain lyrics. Be creative with the media/pictures. Let us into your playlist. This should be a fun project.
4) Also, have your playlist and works cited/reference page be at the end of the playlist in a creative way. This way you can share the playlist with your classmates and cite the work that you utilized to ground your playlist.

It's not hard. Just be creative. And be open to feedback!

Module Objective that these exercises satisfy:

Modules Objective #4 & #6:

4. To identify indigenous healing strategies that these continental and diasporic African employed to sustain themselves while surviving/navigating oppressive regimes.

6. Demonstrate knowledge of major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical patterns, or historical contexts within a given social or behavioral domain in the form of a research paper & a political mixtape as their final projects.

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