The Black Lives Matter Movement

The purpose of this course is to trace and investigate the development of the Black Lives Matter movement. The course will explore the historical, political, social, and economic forces that gave rise to the movement. Specifically, the course will focus on racial disparities in law enforcement and institutional racism. Case studies will center on those Black individuals killed by law enforcement officials and the response of the justice system. The course will also compare and contrast the Black Lives Matter movement with the Civil Rights movement from 1954-1968. The effective use of social media and technology as tools to promote racial justice will also be analyzed.

Primary Objectives

1. Study, analyze and critique the role of the law in the Black community.
2. Explore the role of race and the law.
3. Understand methods of legal analysis and reasoning including critical race theory.
4. Understanding why diversity matters.
5. Understanding, analyzing and discussing current events including the impact of America’s first Black president.
6. The course will also explore the political, economic, religious, social, intellectual and artistic changes which led to the evolution of the Black Lives Matter movement.
7. The philosophical underpinnings of the theory of nonviolent direct mass action will be analyzed.
8. The strategies of proponents of racial justice to transform Jim Crow societies into integrated societies will be studied.

9. Major historical figures including Martin Luther King Jr., Bayard Rustin, Lyndon Baines Johnson, Malcolm X, Earl Warren, and Thurgood Marshall will be analyzed.

10. The students will also learn of the growth of black empowerment; from rural Mississippi to Watts and Oakland, California.

Class Requirements

1. Examinations: One (1) midterm exam counts as 25% of the student’s final grade and one (1) final examination counts as 30% of the student’s final grade.

2. Class attendance and participation: failure to attend class, defined as more than six (6) absences, will result in the failure of this course. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Students will debate selected topics during the semester. 20% of the student grade will be based upon class participation which includes their debate performance.

3. Prepared documents: One (1) research paper on an approved topic relating to the Black Lives Matter movement. The paper must be at least ten (10) pages, not including the bibliography, typed, no more than 12 point, and double spaced. This paper will constitute 15% of the student’s final grade.

4. Students will give an oral presentation of their paper. This presentation will count 10% of the student’s final grade.

Undergraduate Academic Regulations:

Students are expected to comply with all rules and regulations for student conduct as described in the University’s Undergraduate Bulletin, which can be found at http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html.

Students who are found guilty of plagiarism will at a minimum fail the specific assignment and, according to University guidelines, could fail the course. Plagiarism is defined as the use of another person’s wording without indicating the source using quotation marks and the appropriate citation. Paraphrased or borrowed ideas are to be identified with the appropriate citation.

Required Readings


Useful Web Sites

Supremecourt.gov

www.census.gov/pubinfo

Cornell Law

Oxford Press

NY Times

WEEKLY OUTLINE

Week 1  1/23

Introduction and Overview: Race, Law, and Society
A Short History of the Black Lives Matter Movement

Week 2  1/30

The Black Lives Matter Platform
The American Legal System
Constitutional Dilemma
Dred Scott v. Sandford
Reading: The New Jim Crow

Week 3  2/6

The History of Blacks in America
Reading: Glaude Chapter 1; Bonilla-Silva, Chapter 1
Constitutional Amendments 13, 14, and 15
Research Paper Selection

Debate topic selected

Social Media

Week 4  2/13

The Civil Rights Movement
Bonilla-Silva, Chapter 2  
Glaude, Chapter 2  

U.S. Justice Department Reports  
Ferguson  
Baltimore  

**Week 5  2/20**  

Leaders of the BLM movement  
The Black Liberation Movement  
Black Nationalism  
Bonilla-Silva, Chapter 3  
Glaude, Chapter 3  

**Week 6  2/27**  

The Use of Social Media  
The American Labor Movement  
Reading: Bonilla-Silva, Chapter 4  
Glaude, Chapter 4  

Debates  

**Week 7  3/6**  

Civil Rights Act 1964  
Voting Rights Act 1965  

Midterm Exam  

**Week 8  3/13**  

Spring Break  

**Week 9  3/20**  

Principles of the Movement
Week 10  3/27  
The Women’s Rights Movement 
Papers due 
Reading: Bonilla-Silva, Chapter 5 
Glaude, Chapter 5  

Week 11  4/3  
The Criminal Justice System  
Assigned Reading: Alexander, Chapters 1-3; Glaude, Chapter 6  

Week 12  4/10  
Papers presented  
Assigned Reading: Alexander, Chapters 4-6  

Week 13  4/17  
The LGBT Movement  
The Strange Career of Jim Crow revisited  
Solutions to current issues in the Black community  
Reading: Bonilla-Silva, Chapter 6 
Glaude, Chapter 7  

Week 14  4/24  
Reforms  
Bail/ Legal Representation  
Reading: Bonilla-Silva, Chapter 7; Glaude, Chapter 8  

Week 15  5/1  
Resurrection  
Review
Week 16        5/8

Review

FINAL EXAM    May 16   10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

GENERAL POLICIES

1. Readings should be done before the class for which they are assigned.

2. Students should attend all classes. Attendance will reflect on your final grade. Students who leave the classroom before the period is over will be considered absent for that day.

3. The classroom is an open learning environment: therefore, all students’ ideas, suggestions, comments, questions, and viewpoints must be respected.

4. Students must only talk during discussions or when asking or answering questions.

5. All cell phones and other electronic devices must be off and out of sight in the classroom unless the student has been granted permission by the instructor.