African American Women’s Political Activism

History 410/510  
Spring 2012  
M/W 4-5:20

Instructor: Professor Melissa Stuckey  
185 Lillis Hall

Contact information:  
mstuckey@uoregon.edu
Office: 323 McKenzie Hall
Office Hours:  
M/W 12:30-1:30PM  
or by appointment

Course Description
This course will explore the history African-American women political expression in the United States from slavery to the late twentieth century. Through a combination of books, primary sources, and film we will formulate answers to the question of how black women in the United States articulated themselves as political actors in spite of the fact that for most of their time in this nation they have been defined outside of the body politic. What did political expression look like to enslaved black women? How did African-American women, during the long decades after slavery and still not recognized at full citizens because of both their race and sex, continue to develop a political voice and push forward an agenda to advance their goals? What obstacles did they struggle against in this endeavor? What kind of alliances did they form? How have these struggles impacted black women and other parts of American society? Certainly broadening our understanding of political history is crucial to forming answers to these questions. By looking at politics as expressed “from the ground up” we can begin to develop an understanding of and appreciation for African-American women’s struggles for personal autonomy, parental rights, labor rights, sexual rights, social rights, civil rights, and political rights, all as being important parts of their political history in the United States.

Course Requirements and Grading
Class Participation—20%  
See details below
Group Presentation—20%  
See details below
Take Home Midterm Exam—15%  
Due April 30
Take Home Final Exam—20%  
Due June 13
Final Paper/Project—25%  
Due June 4

Required Readings
The following books are required and will be available for purchase at the Duck Store.  
Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America*  
Course Packet  
Additional readings may be posted on Blackboard or occasionally distributed as handouts.
**Class Participation**
This class runs through a combination of lecture and discussion. Thoughtful and active participation is essential, so come prepared to participate each week. If you do not speak, I will assume that you have not done the reading. Questions, comments, and healthy and respectful debate are both welcome and necessary as we explore the themes of the course. Strive to engage in dialogue with your peers instead of directing your comments exclusively to me.

**Note Taking**
You are required take notes on the lectures and readings. Your reading notes must be taken prior to class. Because we will be working with digitized primary sources, you are welcome to bring and use your laptop in class for academic purposes. Personal use of computers is strictly prohibited. It is also fine to not bring your computer.

**Undergraduate Assignments**

**Class Discussion/Discussion Board**
Post questions, thoughts, responses to the readings on our discussion board on blackboard. Read each other's posts and respond to them. I will consider this to be part of your class participation grade. It is my desire that these discussions generate free flowing discussion in class. We discuss readings on most Wednesdays. Some suggestions:
--You can ask your classmates to contemplate specific passages before we meet.
--You can post a few discussion questions before we meet.
--You can highlight intriguing contradictions, and hypothesize about what is at stake in the reading.

**Take Home Midterm Exam and Take Home Final Exam**
The midterm and final examinations will consist of essay questions based on the readings we have covered at each point. You will receive the midterm exam on April 25 and it is due in class on April 30. You will receive the final exam on June 6. It is due on or before June 13 at 3pm (our exam day and time). You will hand it in at my office in McKenzie Hall.

**Group Presentation**
Using a relay race a metaphor, each group member will present on the findings of their research. This means, your work should have a relationship to your fellow group members’ work, a “thread” that connects them thematically. You will coordinate, communicate, and work with each other to create a cohesive presentation with individual components that are researched and presented by individuals. You will be graded on your individual presentation, but also on how well the pieces work together. Visual aids and handouts are encouraged. Each person should present for between 5 and 7 minutes.

**Final Paper**
You will write an eight to ten page paper based on your primary source research findings.
Graduate Student Assignments
Midterm and Final exam as above.

Individual Presentation
Plan and deliver a short lecture or class lesson based on your research topic.
Approximately 40 minutes in length.

Final Assignment
For your final assignment you will either write a research paper, 12-15 pages, in one of the four research categories covered in the course or upon consultation with me create an assignment that helps you advance toward your graduate degree.

Class Rules and Policies

Attendance
It is important that you attend every class session. One unexcused absence will lower your class participation grade by one letter grade (A lowers to B). Two unexcused absences will result in class participation grade of zero. More than two unexcused absences will result in failure of the course. Properly excused absences will not harm your grade. This includes flu related absences affecting you or someone in your household and under your direct care (i.e. an ill child).

Email
All email communications will be sent to your University of Oregon email address. Please use only your university email address when contacting me. I will not respond the messages sent via commercial email accounts (i.e. Gmail or Yahoo).

Late work
Late work will not be accepted.

Assignments
All assignments must be typed, double spaced, and in Times New Roman font, with standard margins.

Academic Integrity
Unless otherwise specified, all assignments, presentations, and examinations are to be completed independently.

Plagiarism is using others' ideas and/or words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information. Plagiarism with result in failure of the course and will be reported. Please ASK if you have any questions.
**Classroom Decorum**
In this classroom people and ideas are respected. Interrupting and other outbursts will not be tolerated. Please put turn your cell phones off prior to the start of class. Absolutely no text messaging. No computer use without prior permission. No eating or gum chewing in class, beverages are acceptable.

**Disability Statement**
The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability related barriers to your participation, please notify me as soon as possible. You may also wish to contact Disability Services in 164 Oregon Hall at 346-1155 or disabsrv@uoregon.edu.

This syllabus is subject to modification as necessary.

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**Week 1 Antebellum Enslaved Women**
April 2

April 4
*A Shining Thread of Hope*, Prologue and Chapter 3

**Week 2 Antebellum Free Women**
April 9

*A Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter 4

April 11

**Week 3 The Civil War**
April 16
*A Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter 5

April 18
Week 4  Reconstruction  
April 23  
*A Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter 6  

April 25  


Week 5  Late Nineteenth Century  
April 30  
*A Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter 7  

May 2  


Week 6  Early Twentieth Century  
May 7  
*A Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter 8  

May 9  

Week 7  The Great Migration  
May 14  
*A Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter 9  

May 16  

Class Presentations
Week 8  
1930 through World War II

May 21

*A Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter 10

Class Presentations

May 23


Class Presentations

Week 9  
Post-war through 1960s

May 28

*A Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter 11

Class Presentations

May 30


Class Presentations

Week 10  
1970s and 1980s

June 4

*A Shining Thread of Hope*, Chapter 12 and Epilogue

Class Presentations

June 6


Class Presentations