

## HERTOG 2022 POLITICAL STUDIES PROGRAM

### AFRICAN AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

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This course examines the writings of those African Americans who have reflected most profoundly on the American regime and their place in it, from the time of the nation's founding to the present.

#### Course Materials:

- Course Reader
- Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character* (Harper Perennial, 1998)

#### Resources:

To learn more about the ideas and figures discussed in this course, we encourage you to explore a project supported by the Hertog Foundation: **The Great Thinkers** (<http://thegreatthinkers.org/>) and **Contemporary Thinkers** (<http://contemporarythinkers.org/>) websites.

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**Monday, July 11, 2022**

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**9:30 AM – 12:30 PM ET**

**Session I**

#### Readings:

- Augustus Washington, "African Colonization—By a Man of Color," 1851
- Frederick Douglass, "Prejudice Not Natural," 1849
  - "African Civilization Society," 1859
  - Chs. 6 and 7 from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 1845
  - "The Last Flogging" from *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 1855
  - "What Are the Colored People Doing for Themselves," 1848
- Martin Delany, "Means of Elevation" and "A Glance at Ourselves—Conclusion" from *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (Humanities Press, 2004)
- Frederick Douglass, "American Slavery," 1847 (Excerpts)
  - "The Address of the Southern Delegates in Congress to their Constituents," 1849
  - "The Constitution and Slavery," 1849
  - "Change of Opinion Announced," 1951
  - "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision," 1857
  - "The Constitution of the United States: Is It Pro-Slavery or Anti-Slavery," 1860

#### Discussion Questions:

- 1) What were the main arguments of those who embraced emigration/colonization (either back to Africa or to other lands in the New World)? What was their assessment of the prospects for racial equality and racial comity in the United States?

- 2) Douglass was foremost among those black thinkers who opposed schemes of colonization, whether proposed by white organizations like the American Colonization Society or black organizations like the African Civilization Society. What are the grounds for his opposition?
- 3) What do Delany and Douglass mean by self-elevation? Why is it necessary? Are there internal as well as external obstacles to self-elevation resulting from the experience of slavery? What does the stress on self-elevation indicate about their understanding of freedom? How is self-elevation to be accomplished? What is the rhetorical purpose and effect of the stern language used by Delany and Douglass in speaking to their own people?
- 4) Over the course of his career as an abolitionist, Douglass moved from regarding the Constitution as an iniquitous compact that ought to be annulled to regarding the Constitution as “a glorious liberty document” that would bring about an end to slavery. What were the reasons for and the effects of this transformation? Select a particular constitutional clause that relates to slavery and explain the change in his interpretation of it.

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**Tuesday, July 12, 2022**

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**9:30 AM – 12:30 PM ET**

**Session II**

**Readings:**

- Frederick Douglass, “Why Should a Colored Man Enlist?,” 1863
  - “What the Black Man Wants,” 1865
  - “The Nation’s Problem,” 1889
- Booker T. Washington, “The Struggle for an Education,” from *Up from Slavery* (Dover October 1995)
  - “The Educational Outlook in the South,” 1884
  - “Atlanta Exposition Address,” 1895
  - “Democracy and Education,” 1896
  - “Early Problems of Freedom,” 1907
  - “The Intellectuals and the Boston Mob,” 1911
  - “Letter to J.R. Barlow,” 1911
  - “My View of Segregation Laws,” 1915

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Why does Douglass favor justice (“fair play”) over charity (“benevolence”) for black Americans? What does his repeated call to “Do nothing with us” mean in terms of societal and governmental responsibilities toward the freed people?
- 2) Why does Douglass counsel black Americans against “race pride”? Why does Douglass consider “the Negro problem” a misnomer for “the nation’s problem” and how does this affect the kind of solutions proposed to help black Americans? What principles and policies does Douglass recommend in order to eliminate color prejudice from American society?

- 3) On what do Douglass and Washington agree? Where do they disagree? You might especially consider their differing judgments with respect to the 15th Amendment. To what do you attribute this difference?
- 4) What understanding of human nature informed Washington's policy of gradualism?
- 5) Washington always made clear that he believed African Americans had a high destiny in America and a particular contribution to make to the life of the nation. What were the essential features of that destiny?

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**Wednesday, July 13, 2022**

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**9:30 AM – 12:30 PM ET**

**Session III**

**Readings:**

- W.E.B. DuBois, "The Conservation of Races," 1897
  - "The Philadelphia Negro," 1899
  - "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," from *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903
  - "Of the Training of Black Men," from *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903
  - "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," 1903
  - "The Talented Tenth," 1903
  - "Agitation," 1910
- Ralph Ellison, "In a Strange Country," 1944
- James Baldwin, "Stranger in the Village," 1953

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Why does DuBois seek to "conserve" the races? How would this conservation help the future of the Negro race as well as the future of world civilization?
- 2) What does DuBois mean by "double consciousness"? Would Douglass, Delany, and Washington consider this an accurate rendering of the acculturation of blacks in America?
- 3) DuBois is known as one of the great defenders of higher education, particularly for the "talented tenth." What does he understand the purposes of liberal education to be? Is his understanding of liberal education compatible with his call for "the conservation of races" and the preservation of racial and cultural distinctness?
- 4) According to DuBois, what is the role of "agitation" in securing equal rights under the law? How would Washington respond to DuBois on this point?
- 5) Does Ellison hint at a solution to the problem of double consciousness? What does Parker learn about how to be a "black Yank" while among the Welsh?

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Thursday, July 14, 2022

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9:30 AM – 12:30 PM ET

Session IV

**Readings:**

- Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Power of Nonviolence,” 1958
  - “The Social Organization of Nonviolence,” 1959 Commitment Card
  - “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” 1963
  - “I Have a Dream,” 1963
  - “Nonviolence: The Only Road to Freedom,” 1966
- Joseph Jackson, Annual Address,” 1964
- Zora Neale Hurston, “Letter to the *Orlando Sentinel*”
- Malcolm X, selection from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (Ballantine Books, 1992)
  - “Message to the Grass Roots,” 1963
  - “A Declaration of Independence,” 1964
  - “The Ballot or the Bullet,” 1964
  - “At the Audubon,” 1964

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Why does King reject violence as a response to oppression? Why does Malcolm X endorse violence (or at least the threat of violence)? How does Malcolm X’s understanding of political action compare to the right of revolution as articulated by John Locke and enshrined in the Declaration of Independence?
- 2) King famously argues for the technique of civil disobedience. (Note: many forms of non-violent direct action, such as boycotts, do not involve civil disobedience.) In their own ways, both Joseph Jackson and Malcolm X reject this technique. Explain the criticism of either Jackson or Malcolm X and then describe what King might say in response.
- 3) Both Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King, Jr. could be described as integrationists. Other black thinkers believe it is a mistake to posit integration as the aim of the struggle for civil rights. Some elements of this critique can be seen in Booker T. Washington. It becomes much more emphatic and explicit in Zora Neale Hurston and Malcolm X. Explain and explore the reasons for their rejection of integration.

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Friday, July 15, 2022

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9:30 AM – 12:30 PM ET

Session V

**Readings:**

- Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, Chs. 2 and 3, pp. 24–56, 58–60, 75–84, from *Black Power* (1967)
- Bayard Rustin, “The Myth of Black Studies,” from *Time on Two Crosses* (Cleis Press, 2015)
- Ralph Ellison, “When Does a Black Join the Middle Class,” 1975
- Henry Louis Gates, “Breaking the Silence,” 2004
- bell hooks, “Killing Rage: Militant Resistance,” 1995

- “Refusing to be a Victim,” 1995
- “Overcoming White Supremacy: A Comment,” 1995
- Cornel West, “Malcolm X and Black Rage” from *Race Matters* (Beacon Press, 1993)
- Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* (Harper Perennial, 1998)
  - Ch. 1, pp. 1–8, 14–20
  - Ch. 2, pp. 26–30
  - Ch. 3, pp. 40–49
  - Ch. 4, pp. 57–61, 70–75
  - Ch. 5, pp. 77–80, 86–92
  - Ch. 6, pp. 93–96
  - Ch. 7, pp. 111–25
  - Ch. 8, pp. 138–48
  - Ch. 9, pp. 149–51, 164–65

### Discussion Questions:

- 1) Carmichael and Hamilton, the authors of *Black Power*, and Shelby Steele in his book *The Content of Our Character* are centrally concerned with self-esteem. Compare and contrast their analyses of what self-esteem is, why it is so important, how demeaning stereotypes affect self-esteem, and how self-esteem can be achieved.
- 2) The *Black Power* authors deny there is a conflict “between the so-called American Creed and American practice. The Creed is supposed to contain considerations of equality and liberty, at least certainly equal opportunity, and justice. The fact is, of course, that these are simply words which were not even originally intended to have applicability to black people.” What is the authors’ understanding of black people’s place in America? What does this assessment mean for political practice? How would thinkers like Douglass, King, and Jackson respond to this argument?
- 3) Shelby Steele and bell hooks agree in certain respects. They both call for a renewed focus on personal responsibility and both stress the need to “decolonize the mind” (freeing oneself from the psychological legacy of slavery). However, they disagree profoundly in their assessment of the nature and extent of racism today. bell hooks analyzes white supremacy. Shelby Steele analyzes white guilt. Explain and explore each analysis.
- 4) The authors of *Black Power* are extremely critical of the middle class, claiming that “the values of that class are in themselves anti-humanist.” Ellison, Gates, and Steele offer defenses of the middle class. What are the essential elements of those vindications?
- 5) The expression and provoking of rage is central to Malcolm X. Later thinkers disagree about whether this rage is healthy or unhealthy. bell hooks argues for rage; Cornell West is more critical of it. Explain their respective positions.

## Key Dates

### *Colonial America*

- 1619** The first enslaved Africans are brought to the English colony of Jamestown, VA.
- 1705** The **Virginia Slave Code** codified the status of slaves.

### *The Fight for Independence*

- 1770** Escaped slave, Crispus Attucks, is killed by British forces in Boston. He is one of the first colonists to die in the war for independence.
- 1774** The **First Continental Congress** bans trade with Britain and vows to discontinue the slave trade after December 1.  
  
In April, the first battles of the Revolutionary War are waged between the British and Colonial armies at Lexington and Concord, MA.
- 1775** In July, Gen. George Washington, revising an earlier edict, orders recruiting officers to accept free blacks in the American Army. More than 5,000 blacks, mostly Northerners, fought against the British.
- 1776** The Continental Congress adopt the **Declaration of Independence**.
- 1777** VT is the first of the 13 colonies to abolish slavery and enfranchise all adult males.  
NY enfranchises all free propertied men regardless of color or prior servitude.
- 1781** **Articles of Confederation** ratified.
- 1782** Paris Treaty signed. VA, followed by other Southern colonies, encourages private manumission.  
  
**Constitutional Convention** takes place from May 14 to September 17.
- 1787** In July, Congress enacts the **Northwest Ordinance**, outlawing slavery in the new territories (later OH, IN, IL, MI, and WI).

### *The Early Republic*

- 1789** **U.S. Constitution** ratified.
- 1791** Slave insurrection in St. Domingue and founding the nation of Haiti, the first independent black country in the Americas.

- 1793** Invention of the cotton gin, making production of cotton more profitable.  
First **Fugitive Slave Law**
- 1794** **Slave Trade Act of 1794** prohibits American vessels to transport slaves to any foreign country from outfitting in American ports.
- 1795–1820** Second Great Awakening
- 1804** In PA, the **Underground Railroad** is officially established. NJ enacts laws meant to introduce gradual emancipation.
- 1808** US bans African slave trade.
- 1809** Abraham Lincoln born in Kentucky.
- 1812** **Martin Robison Delany** born in VA to a slave father and free mother.
- 1816** **American Colonization Society** founded.
- 1818** **Frederick Douglass** born into slavery in MD.
- 1819** U.S. law declares slave trading to be a capital offense.
- 1820** **Missouri Compromise** forbids slavery in the LA territory north of MO's Southern border.
- 1822** Liberia is founded as a colony for blacks.  
Delany's mother takes her children to PA to avoid enslavement.

## **Sectional Crisis**

- 1831** William Lloyd Garrison founds *The Liberator*, an abolitionist newspaper.  
**Nat Turner**, an enslaved Baptist preacher, leads a violent rebellion in Southampton, VA.
- 1838** **Frederick Douglass** escapes slavery and arrives in NY.
- 1839** Africans aboard the Spanish slave ship **Amistad** commit mutiny. When the ship lands off the coast of Long Island, the slaves plead for freedom in court.
- 1841** The U.S. Supreme Court declares that the mutinous Africans from the slave ship *Amistad* are now free.
- 1843** Emancipated slave **Sojourner Truth** begins her campaign against slavery.
- 1845** Douglass publishes his first autobiography.
- 1846–48** Mexican-American War

**1847** **Frederick Douglass** founds a black abolitionist paper called *The North Star*.

**1848** Anti-slavery groups organize the **Free Soil Party**, a group opposed to the westward expansion of slavery.

### **Compromise of 1850**

**1850** **Second fugitive slave law**

Delany enters Harvard Medical School.

**1853** **Augustus Washington** emigrates to Liberia.

**1854** **Kansas-Nebraska Act**

The Republican Party is formed out of the Free Soil Party.

**1856** Bleeding Kansas

**Booker T. Washington** born into slavery in VA.

**1857** ***Dred Scott v. Sanford***

The last slave ship to bring slaves into the US lands in Mobile Bay, AL.

**1859** John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, VA

Delany leads an emigration commission to West Africa.

**1860** **Abraham Lincoln** elected president.

## ***The Civil War & Reconstruction***

SC secedes from the Union. The **Civil War** begins.

**1861** Delany returns to the U.S. to recruit men for the Union Army, and later commissions in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Colored Troops Regiment.

**1863** **Emancipation Proclamation**

**1864** The Fugitive Slave Law is repealed.

End of Civil War. Lincoln assassinated.

**1865**  
**Juneteenth**

**1865–  
70** **Reconstruction Amendments**

**1868** **W.E.B. DuBois** born in MA.

**1871** Civil Rights Act

**1877** Douglass named US Marshal for the District of Columbia.  
End of Reconstruction



## *Jim Crow*

1881	Booker T. Washington founds the <b>Tuskegee Institute</b> in Atlanta.
1885	A majority of Southern states pass individual state laws requiring separate schools for black and white students. Delany dies in OH.
1887	Thibodaux massacre in LA
1891	<b>Zora Neale Hurston</b> born in AL.
1895	Douglass dies in Washington, DC. Washington's <b>Atlanta Address</b>
1896	<b><i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i></b>
1900	A majority of Southern states pass laws that required African Americans to be separated from white citizens in railroad cars and depots, hotels, theaters, restaurants, barber shops, and other establishments.
1906	Brownsville Affair Atlanta Race Riot
1909	<b>NAACP</b> is formed.
1912	<b>Bayard Rustin</b> born in PA.
1913	<b>Ralph Ellison</b> is born in Oklahoma City.
1915–50	<b>The Great Migration</b>
1915	Washington dies in AL.
1917	US enters WWI.
1918	The <b>Dyer Anti-lynching Bill</b> , making lynching as a federal crime, is introduced. However, the bill is halted in the Senate by a filibuster from Southern states.
1920	<b>Harlem Renaissance</b>
1921	Greenwood Massacre in Tulsa
1924	<b>James Baldwin</b> born in Harlem.
1925	<b>Malcolm X</b> born in Omaha.
1929	<b>MLK Jr.</b> born in Atlanta.
1931	Scottsboro Boys
1932	The Tuskegee Institute collaborates with the U.S. government to conduct syphilis experiments on African American men.

WWII begins.  
**1941** The Tuskegee Airmen become the first graduates from an all-African American pilot training program to subsequently fight in World War II.

**1942** Civil-rights leader, James Farmer, founds the **Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)**.

**1946** Malcolm X sentenced to prison for larceny, converts to the Nation of Islam.  
*Morgan v. Commonwealth of Virginia* bans racial discrimination in interstate travel

**1947** Jackie Robinson becomes the first African American to play on a Major League Baseball team.

**1948** President Truman orders desegregation of the U.S. military.  
Baldwin moves to Paris.

## ***Civil Rights Movement***

**1952** ***Invisible Man*** published.

**1954** ***Brown v. Board of Education***

**1955** Emmett Till is murdered in MI.  
**Montgomery bus boycott**

**1957** **Southern Christian Leadership Conference** formed.  
Little Rock Nine

**1960** Greensboro Sit-ins. **Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)** emerges from sit-in movement.  
Hurstons dies in FL.

**1961** **Freedom Rides**

**1963** Letter from a Birmingham Jail  
**March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom**  
Chicago Public Schools Protest  
DuBois dies in Ghana.

## **Civil Rights Act**

- 1964** *Heart of Atlanta Motel, Inc. v. United States* prohibits discrimination in public accommodations  
Malcolm X founds the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), visits Mecca and Africa.
- 1965** **Malcom X** is shot during a speaking engagement in Harlem.  
Three marches are organized from Selma to Montgomery to protest the obstruction of African Americans from voting.  
**Voting Rights Act**
- 1966** Led by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton, the **Black Panther Movement** rises.
- 1967** *Loving v. Virginia*  
Fair Housing Act
- 1968** **MLK** is assassinated in Memphis.  
Shirley Chisholm, first black woman elected to Congress.