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HONORS U.S. HISTORY
Cultures of the Civil Rights Movement

21:512:391

Fall 2017

Class Location: HAH-322

Class Meeting Time: Tuesday 2:30-5:20

Summary

Welcome to this Honors U.S. History seminar!

This course approaches the history of the civil rights and Black Power eras through culture, especially literature, music, film, and television. Many of us may have learned about black freedom struggles in the post-WW II era with a focus on political and legislative accomplishments—the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the mid-1960s passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, for example—and with a focus on mostly male leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. or Malcolm X. By contrast, in this seminar, we will explore the history of black activism with a focus on cultural productions. Our starting point is that culture— theater, music, films, and television-- were not mere background to the ‘real’ politics of the movement, but instead, were crucial expressions of it. Indeed, by expressing black freedom in imaginative realms, writers, musicians, actors, filmmakers, and other artists helped to *forge* the civil rights and Black Power movements.

The format of the course will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and smaller group activities. We will often read, watch, listen to, and discuss together primary sources, including films, television shows, and music. Because of the central role discussion will play, **it is essential that you complete the required reading and/or the required viewing and listening by the date indicated on the syllabus.** Note that you will be evaluated on your understanding of sources that are assigned for homework *and* those you first encounter in class; as such, you will need to attend class regularly, take notes, and engage actively in order to succeed.

Goals

By the end of the semester, students will have learned:

- To identify, discuss, and analyze key African American cultural productions from the 1950s through the 1970s, and will understand these in relation to a longer history of race and popular culture;
- To understand the notion of the “long” civil rights movement, as historians make sense of that phrase within a larger history of the 20th century U.S. history; students will understand civil rights and Black Power not as distinct “phases” but as interrelated dimensions of African American activism and culture;
- To analyze a range of primary sources— written, visual, and aural—critically and as historical documents; students will also learn to read and understand secondary sources and be able to identify the thesis and evidence scholars use to build an argument.
- To write in clear terms about cultural production, with a focus on argument, clarity/organization, and historical evidence.

Required Texts

All required readings and most required clips and viewings will either be available through links on the syllabus or on blackboard under course documents. You may also purchase the following books, and I encourage you to get the least expensive versions you can find.

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*
James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

The following films are required; these should be available for free online or through the Dana Library. Others can be rented inexpensively through Amazon, Netflix, GooglePlay, etc.

A Raisin in the Sun (1961)
A Raisin in the Sun (2008)

Sing Your Song (2012)
I Am Not Your Negro (2017)
Wattstax (1974)
The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman (1974)
Selma (2014)
What Happened, Miss Simone? (2015)
The Amazing Nina Simone (2015)

Grading and Requirements

- Attendance and Class Participation (including 3 response papers and 2 sets of discussion questions): 20%
- Quizzes: 15%
- Two mid-semester exams: 20% combined
- 5-6 page essay, including draft and revision/expansion: 25%
- Final Exam: 20%

1. Attendance and Class Participation (20%). This crucial component of the course includes:

- **Showing up.** Attendance is mandatory. Please notify me in advance if you need to miss a class meeting and your absence may be excused; if an emergency arises, please email when it is possible to do so. If you miss more than one class for medical reasons, you must provide a doctor's note. You must attend the entire class to be counted as present on any given day. Missing more than **two classes total** will affect a final grade. **Any student who misses four or more class sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences may not earn credit in this class.** Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F.

- **Being prepared.** Attendance *combined with* consistent and thoughtful participation in class discussions is required. You must do all of the assigned reading/listening/watching, and come to class with required texts in hand. This is a seminar and not a passive learning environment; it is your responsibility to engage thoughtfully and respectfully—with the material and with each other.

- **THREE** written response papers. To support your participation and to help you prepare for the essay-writing part of the class, you must come to class with a typed response to the question listed for that week on the syllabus at **three points** during the semester (please also submit these responses on blackboard). You will receive a check, check+, or check – on these response papers, and not a letter grade; they will count, however, toward the numeric grade that you will receive for class participation. I must receive these responses by 9 am on Tuesday mornings, and they **must relate to the material we will be covering in class that day.** (In other words, you may not turn in a response to a question about *A Raisin in the Sun* in November.) These response papers are the first step toward your final essay and are essential building blocks.

There are two options for when you may submit the first two response papers.

Response Paper 1 (1 page, brief description plus quotes): **Sept. 12 or Sept. 19**

Response Paper 2 (2 pages, close reading with evidence): **Sept. 26 or Oct. 3**

There is one due date for the third response paper.

Response Paper 3 (3 pages, television show analysis, with thesis): **Oct. 10**

You may submit up to two additional responses as extra credit during the second half of the semester. To receive extra credit, these response papers must be 1-2 pages (double spaced), and offer thoughtful and clear considerations of the material for that week; you may answer a discussion question on the syllabus or react in another way to the required materials. When you are not writing a response paper, please use both the response paper and discussion questions to help guide your reading and be prepared to discuss those topics.

- Also to facilitate participation and assist with writing, at **TWO** points during the semester (at any point when you are not writing a response paper), you must submit **TWO** discussion questions based on the required materials for that week. These discussions questions must be posted on blackboard by Tuesdays at 9 am. These questions must show that you have read/watched/listened with care, and are asking thoughtful questions about the material. In other words, these questions should not generate answers that simply summarize the material. I encourage you to check the discussion board each week to see what questions others have posted and to respond, but these responses are not required.

2. FOUR unannounced quizzes (15%).

During the first —OR THE LAST--10 minute of four classes, there will be a quiz, based on the material required for that day of class OR based on the material we cover that day in class. These quizzes are designed both to ensure that you keep up with the homework, and to encourage you to pay attention and take notes during class. The lowest quiz grade may be dropped at the end of the semester. Please note that class will begin promptly at 2:35 pm each week and we will generally meet until 5:10 pm. If you arrive late or leave early without being in touch first for an excused absence, you may not take the quiz and you will receive an F/60 for that quiz. If you have specific issues complying with this rule on a consistent basis, please be in touch as soon as possible.

3. Two exams. October 24 and December 5. (20%, combined).

These two short exams will consist of an in-class “blue book” exam. More TBA.

4. Essay. (5-6 pg., 12 pt Times font), Monday, November 20 (25%)

Everyone must write and then revise **and expand** on that essay. You will receive lists of potential topics from which to choose based on required class materials, and you will have two possible due dates for submitting an essay draft. You will receive comments (but no grade) on your drafts, and will then revise **and expand** on your draft for your final graded essay. The revision/expansion will require you to draw on an additional required source or sources from the syllabus.

Your grade will be based on how you engage with the process as a whole and not just your final essay. The draft and revision/expansion are mandatory; if you turn in one component and not the other, you will receive an “F” for half of this assignment—even if the one component itself is well-written.

Draft (3-4 pages) due dates:

- **Friday, October 20** (for the first set of possible topics)

OR:

- **Friday, November 3** (for the second set of topics).

Final, Revised and Expanded Essay (you will have to draw on primary and secondary sources in the final essay):

- **Monday, November 20 (bb)**

5. Final Exam (20%). Thursday, December 21, 11:45-2:45

More TBA.

A few other things...

--Deadlines matter. All assignments are due on the dates indicated. **Grades will be lowered on late (or missing) papers**, unless you have talked with me in advance and received an official extension.

--Academic integrity matters. Rutgers University treats cheating and plagiarism as serious offenses. In any/all of your papers, you must cite and provide a reference for all language **and/or** ideas that are not your own (including response papers). The essays for this class are based ONLY on required readings on the syllabus. You need not—and indeed should not—be going to any sources beyond the syllabus as you write your papers. However, should you make the choice to look at other sources, you **must** cite those sources. Violations of the university honor code will be prosecuted to the full extent that is permitted. All students will sign the Rutgers University Honor Code Pledge.

--Respect matters. In this course, we will be reading and discussing material on which we may not all agree; some of the themes and imagery we encounter in the sources may seem offensive or otherwise controversial. In this context especially, it is crucial for us to combine the free expression of ideas with respect for each other.

--Technology matters. Please turn cell phones off and **put phones and all devices away** before class begins. I strongly prefer that everyone bring hard copy of readings and take notes on paper in class. If you feel that it's particularly important for you to take notes on a laptop, please email me in advance to explain and to receive written permission (and note that I may say no); if you do receive permission to have a laptop in class, only that document (or related required sources) may be open. Texting or emailing or otherwise using technology in an inappropriate way at any time during class is **prohibited**. If your phone rings during class, I will ask you to leave the room to turn it off. If this happens more than once, a student will be counted as absent for that entire day. If any phones or other

devices are visible during class, this will create an impression of texting, etc. That student will be counted as absent for that day.

--Communication matters. Note that this syllabus is a work in progress; we may make some changes to the required readings and homework along the way. We will use email through blackboard to communicate and will assume that you receive and read these emails. If you do not use your Rutgers email regularly, please have these emails forwarded to you so that you can keep up.

--Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. For more information please contact Kate Torres at (973) 353-5375 or in the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219 or by contacting odsnewark@rutgers.edu.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

September 5: Introductions

Optional Reading:

- Peniel Joseph, "Rethinking the Black Power Era," *Journal of Southern History* 75 (August 2009): 707-716.

September 12: Staging Housing and Race

Required Reading:

- Lorraine Hansberry, "A Raisin in the Sun" (1959)
- Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: How the Struggle Over Race and Real Estate Transformed Chicago and Urban America* (Knopf, 2010), chapter 2: "The Noose Around Black Chicago," pp, 36-63.

NOTE: The play is the main reading for the day and you should focus on that; we will discuss both sources in class, and will review Satter's main ideas and arguments together.

Response paper I, option 1: What scene or episode stands out to you in *Raisin*, and why? Briefly *describe* what happens in that scene (about 2 paragraphs); below that summary, please *list* 2-3 quotes from Hansberry which highlight the significance of what you describing. Please include page numbers for the quotes.

Discussion Questions:

Hansberry begins her play with a poem by Langston Hughes that asks, "What happens to a dream deferred?" What are some of the different dreams that each of the main characters in this play has?

Who or what was Hansberry critiquing with this play? Who or what was she celebrating?

Which characters are the most likable or appealing and/or the least likable/appealing? Why?

What story is Satter telling about real estate in Chicago? What is redlining?

September 19: Intersecting Battles on Film and in Music

Required Reading:

- Finish *Raisin*, if you did not complete it yet.

- Victoria Brownworth, “Twice Militant: Lorraine Hansberry,” *Lambda Literary*, Feb. 25, 2014.
- Lorraine Hansberry, “Letter to the Editor of *The Ladder*” (1957)

Required Viewing:

- *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961 film version, OR 2008 made for television version).

Optional Reading and Listening:

- Susan Douglas, “Why the Shirelles Mattered,” chapter 4 in Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (Penguin, 1995), pp. 83-98.
- The Shirelles, “Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnPIJxet_ac

Response paper I, option 2: What scene or episode stands out to you from either the second half of the play or the film version of *Raisin*, and why? Briefly *describe* what happens in that scene (about 2 paragraphs); below that summary, please *list* 2-3 quotes which highlight the significance of what you are saying and describing. Please include page numbers for the quotes if you are using the play script.

Discussion Questions:

How are the play and the film version of the play similar and how are they different?

In what ways was Hansberry “twice militant” according to Victorian Brownworth, and how does that matter to an understanding of *Raisin*?

Why does it matter that she wrote letters to a lesbian periodical in the 1950s?

(What is the thesis or main argument that Susan Douglas makes about “girl groups”?)

September 26: Celebrity Superstars and the Jazz Avant Garde

Required Reading:

- 4 *Chicago Defender* articles about Harry Belafonte by Alfred Duckett (1956 and 1968).
- Judith Smith, *Becoming Belafonte: Black Artist, Public Radical* (Columbia, 2014), pp. 155-175; 200-217.
- Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Jazz Calls Out to Civil Rights* (Oxford, 2007), chapter 5, pp. 170-181.

Required Viewing/Listening:

- Harry Belafonte, tracks from the album, *Calypso* (1956); more TBA
- Max Roach and Oscar Brown, track from the album, *We Insist!: Freedom Now Suite* (1961):
“Triptych: Prayer/Protest/Peace” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMaUDAeiSIY>

Response Paper II, option 1: Choose one specific passage or element from one of the *Chicago Defender* articles or the required music clips, and in 2 pages (about 4 paragraphs), discuss its significance. Consider what the article or song says (the content or lyrics), but even more, focus not just on content; instead, consider **how** the article is written or the song is performed (the style, rhythm, performance strategies, tone, images, etc.). In other words, do not tell me (for example) what Duckett says about Belafonte or what you learned about the star from reading these profiles; instead, consider what stands out about how the journalist chose to write about the star in 1956 or 1968. Draw on at least two quotes to support your ideas about how/why that passage is significant.

Remember: This response asks you to analyze a primary source. Your goal is not simply to summarize what the source says, but to consider HOW and WHY it does so.

Discussion Questions:

What made Belafonte unique according to the *Chicago Defender* articles about him written in the 1950s and 60s?

What made Belafonte unique according to historian Judith Smith?

What was it about *the production history* of the album *We Insist!* that was significant according to Ingrid Monson?

What was it about *the music* on the album (especially the required song) that was significant according to Ingrid Monson?

October 3: Birmingham to Selma- Writing, Organizing, Performing

Required Reading:

• James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (1963), excerpts: “My Dungeon Shook: Letter to my Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation,” pp. 1-10; “Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in My Mind,” pp. 97-106.

• Brian Ward, “‘People Get Ready’: Music and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s,” *History Now: The Journal of the Gilder Lehrman Institute*

NOTE: Baldwin is the main reading for the day and you should focus on that and the required clips; we will discuss all the sources in class, and will review Ward’s main ideas and arguments together.

Required Listening:

• Fannie Lou Hamer (singing and tv coverage of her speaking):

1. “This Little Light of Mine,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhiV6DB_h_8;

2. At the Democratic National Convention, Atlanta 1964,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07PwNVCZCeY>

• The Freedom Singers, *Newport Broadside: Topical Songs at the Newport Folk Festival, 1963*:

“This Little Light of Mine”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOZJg2KyP5M>

• Nina Simone, *In Concert* (1964), “Mississippi Goddam”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scGVEwaUsdg>

Response Paper II, option 2: Choose one specific passage or element from Baldwin or from one of the required music clips, and in 2 pages (about 4 paragraphs), discuss its significance. Consider what Baldwin or the song says (the content or lyrics), but even more, focus not just on content; instead, consider **how** the passage is written or the song is performed (the style, rhythm, performance strategies, tone, images, etc.). Draw on at least two quotes to support your ideas about how/why that passage is significant. Remember: This response asks you to analyze a primary source. Your goal is not simply to summarize what the source says, but to consider HOW and WHY it does so.

Discussion Questions:

What is the significance of the title, *The Fire Next Time*?

What stands out to you about Baldwin’s style and technique (and not just his content)?

Are there any echoes between *The Fire Next Time* and any of the music?

How are these different musicians similar to and different from one another?

In particular, how is Simone like and unlike Hamer and the Freedom Singers?

What is “Mississippi Goddam” about?

October 10: Network TV: Selling and Consuming Blackness in the late 1960s

Required Reading:

• John O. Killens, “Our Struggle is Not to Be White Men in Black Skin” *TV Guide*, July 25, 1970.

• Aniko Bodroghkozy, “Is This What You Mean By Color TV?: *Julia*,” in Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement* (University of Illinois, 2012), pp. 180-202.

Required Viewing and Listening

• *Julia* (selections from TV series, 1968-69):

1. “I’m Dreaming of a Black Christmas, parts 1-3 on Youtube,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c->

[OvBbSk0ck&list=PLEhWFgNzHINESZxMvR2Dd8NrhKXnOq9iQ&index=2](#) (see link on side of screen to get to parts 2 and 3).

2. Susan Olsen guest stars, parts 1-3, on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmOXa2-wBkc&list=PLEhWFgNzHINESZxMvR2Dd8NrhKXnOq9iQ> (scroll down link on right side of screen to see parts 2 and 3).

Response Paper III, (3 pages): How does the film or the television show characterize the experiences of African Americans in middle class America? How would you assess the show in light of other sources? This response must offer a thesis—your own idea and argument as an organizing framework—and at least two examples from the episodes as evidence.

Discussion Questions:

How does *Julia* represent white characters?

Why did some audiences like and some not like the television series? Why was it both celebrated and criticized in 1968?

What is Bodroghkozy's thesis about *Julia*? What sources did she consult to develop her thesis?

October 17: Public TV: Selling and Consuming Blackness

Required Reading:

• Devorah Heitner, *Black Power TV* (Duke, 2013), chapter 3, "No Thanks for Tokenism: Telling Stories from a Black Nation, *Black Journal*, 1968-1970," pp. 83-123.

Required Viewing:

• *Black Journal* excerpts from the first episode (June 1968):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7g9ROouhpQ>

You may watch the entire episode, which is very interesting, but what's REQUIRED is:

1. the opening and the first segment on Coretta Scott King (opening-6:30);
2. the last 15 minutes (47-1:18): the end of the segment about the Black Panther Party and Eldridge Cleaver; miscellaneous news items, the comedy sketch that follows; the conclusion.

• *Sesame Street*, two sketches:

1. "Roosevelt Franklin's Alphabet" (1969): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ww3RAgnVOIs>
2. "Sesame Street: Africa" : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7iv81G39mnw>

Discussion Questions:

What was significant about the content of *Black Journal*? What was significant about the production of *Black Journal*? How and why did the leadership team at *Black Journal* change, and what made that significant?

What stood out the most about the *Sesame Street* skits and why?

FRIDAY, October 20: Due Date 1 for Essay Drafts (bb)

October 24:

Exam 1

October 31: The Black Arts Movement: Poems, Literature and Music

Required Reading:

• Larry Neal, “The Black Arts Movement,” (1968), excerpts

• Selected poems.

Amiri Baraka,

1. “Black Art”, <http://genius.com/Amiri-baraka-black-art-annotated>
2. “SOS,” <http://genius.com/Amiri-baraka-sos-annotated>

Sonia Sanchez,

“blk/rhetoric”

Nikki Giovanni,

1. “Woman Poem,” <http://www.csun.edu/~abj8181/nikki.html>
2. “For Saundra,” <http://ww.ctadams.com/nikkigiovanni16.html>

Required Viewing/Listening:

• Nina Simone,

1. “Four Women” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSU5n7MEIw>
2. “To Be Young Gifted and Black” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdVFiANBTk>
3. Marvin Gaye, “What’s Going On?” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbZYRZpNc64>

Discussion Questions: What made the Black Arts Movement unique? What was Larry Neal calling for? What themes recur across the different poems and in the music? What are some of the differences between and among the poems? What are some of the differences between and among the songs?

FRIDAY, November 3: Due Date 2 for Essay Drafts (bb)

November 7: “Desegregating the Hollywood Documentary”: Performing and Documenting Watts, LA

Required Reading:

• Scott Saul, “What You See is What You Get: *Wattstax*, Richard Pryor, and the Secret History of the Black Aesthetic,” <http://post45.research.yale.edu/2014/08/what-you-see-is-what-you-get-wattstax-richard-pryor-and-the-secret-history-of-the-black-aesthetic/>

Required Viewing:

• *Wattstax* (film, 1973)

Discussion Questions: What some of the questions that Scott Saul asks in his article? Why does he think that the *Wattstax festival* mattered? Why does he think that the *Wattstax film* mattered? How is *Wattstax* (the film) similar to or different from other documentaries you have seen? What, if anything, surprised you most about the film?

November 14: “What Time is It?”: 1970s Popular Culture Narrates Civil Rights/Black Power and Black History

Required Reading:

• Gary Declaration, National Black Political Convention, 1972”
(http://faculty.washington.edu/qtaylor/documents_us/gary_declaration.htm)

Required Viewing:

- *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1974) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSDIm2LqAes>

Revision Workshop: Please bring your drafts to class.

Discussion Questions:

What were some of the goals of activists who went to Gary? What strikes you as significant about this event?
Why do you think that *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* was so celebrated in 1974?
What made it unique for television audiences in the 1970s, and what made it appealing as well?
What stands out to you as significant about who and what is present in—and how and what is absent from—this landmark production?

FINAL ESSAY DUE: MONDAY 11/20, 10 pm (bb)

November 21: No Class

Tuesday is Thursday at R-N

November 28: Legacies and “Memories”, I: From Selma to Black Lives Matter

Required Readings:

• Daphne Brooks, “How #BlackLivesMatter Started a Musical Revolution,” *The Guardian*, March 13, 2016.

Required Viewing:

- *Selma* (2014)
- John Legend and Common,
 1. Performance at the Oscars, 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9MKXR4gLjQ>
 2. Acceptance speech at Oscars, 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U4n4Fy6iyjo&t=196s>

December 5:

Exam 2.

December 11: Legacies and “Memories” II: Nina Simone as Icon for a New Century of Activism

Required Viewing:

- *What Happened, Miss Simone?*
- *The Amazing Nina Simone*

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, December 21, 11:45-2:45

More TBA

