

**Black Radicalism and Public Policy**  
**21:014:356**

**Class Meeting Time: Wednesday 6-9 p.m.**  
**Location: Conklin Hall, 455**

**Instructor:** Shana A. Russell  
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**Course Description**

This course is an examination of the American government's response to black liberatory movements from abolition to black power. The course applies a critical lens to the impact of black radicalism on law and public policies. This covers everything from the Fugitive Slave Act to COINTELPRO to Jim Crow. By the end of the semester, students will develop an understanding of the impact that activism can have on public policy and social change, but also the way in which American policy makers have consistently used legal/political avenues to cripple black liberation.

**Course Objectives**

By the end of the course students should be able to:

1. Understand the chronology of laws/policies related to black citizenship from enslavement to black power
2. Identify relationships between these policies
3. Critically examine the rhetoric surrounding black protest movements and related public policies
4. Understand strategies for resistance to restrictions to black freedom/liberation
5. Grasp the ways in which current laws (like stop and frisk and voter id restrictions) are the result of a long history of racialized policies

**Course Policies**

**Attendance and Punctuality:** Attendance in this course is mandatory and participation is worth a large portion of your grade. I will take attendance at the beginning of every class. Out of respect for the instructor and your colleagues, I expect that you will be in class on time. Late arrivals disrupt the class environment. If you must miss class for any reason, you are responsible for the information transmitted during class time, whether that is a change in the schedule, an adjustment in the reading, notes, etc. I recommend that every student partner with one of your peers whose notes you can borrow in case you are absent. I will not be responsible for telling a student what they missed in class. Also, quizzes and other assignments can only be submitted late if the student has a documented excuse.

**Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism will not be tolerated under any circumstances. This includes using another's ideas in a written assignment without proper citation, cheating on an exam, or using an assignment that you have written in another class to fulfill the requirements for this one. For more information see the University's Academic Integrity Policy at: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>

**Classroom Courtesy:** Please be respectful of the classroom space by minimizing the number of disruptions. This means showing up on time, not having side conversations, and silencing all electronic

devices. You are permitted to use electronic devices for the purposes of taking notes and accessing the readings if necessary. Anyone who is caught using a computer for anything other than class work or similarly using your cell phone to talk or text will be asked to leave and your participation grade will be lowered.

This class covers a significant number of controversial ideas and you are all encouraged to disagree with the assigned texts or with each other. This is both healthy and productive. However, you must remain respectful at all times. Failure to do so will result in removal from the classroom and possibly a lower grade.

**Special Accommodations:** If you are impacted by a documented disability or require special accommodations for any reason please contact me as soon as possible.

### **Course Requirements**

**Journals:** For selected reading assignments there will be a short writing prompt that will be posted on Blackboard as a journal entry (which is located in the course tools section). Each journal entry should be at least 250 words. Journal entries are informal reflections. Because this is not a formal essay, you may use first person pronouns or vernacular language. Use this space to speak freely. Journals will only be evaluated based on completion. Journals are due at noon on the day of class. Late entries will not be accepted.

**Presentations:** Each week we will have a 10 minute presentation from a student concerning popular music as a form of protest. The list of songs can be found on blackboard and will be distributed in class so students can select which week they would like to present. I will provide links to the audio and lyrics. For each presentation the student must first play the song for the class and briefly summarize the historical event, resistance movement, or policy that the song is referencing. Secondly, students are required to perform a close reading of key lyrics. The close reading should address the following: What is the message of the song? What kind of rhetoric is used by the songwriter or performer to convey this message? In what way does the performance mirror the political strategies, language, or imagery of black resistance movements (contemporary or historical)? Lastly, offer your own commentary regarding the effectiveness of the song as a form of protest. Presentations will be graded on the students knowledge of the subject matter of the song, their ability to address the aforementioned questions, and their analysis of the song and its effectiveness.

**Quizzes:** Quizzes will be unannounced and given within the first fifteen minutes of class. They will be simple and short and are designed to reward students who are actively keeping up with the reading. The more students are participating in class, the less quizzes there will be.

**Grading:** Participation—20%, Journals—20%, Presentation—20%, Final—30%, Quizzes—10%.

### **Required Texts:**

Wells-Barnett, Ida B. *On Lynchings*. New York: Humanities Books, 2002.

Newton, Huey P. *Revolutionary Suicide*. New York: Penguin Books, 1973, 2009.

## **Book Chapters (Available on Blackboard)**

McGuire, Danielle. *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance--A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011. (Prologue and Chapter 3)

Baldwin, Bridgette. "In the Shadow of the Gun: The Black Panther Party, The Ninth Amendment and Discourses of Self-Defense,." In *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement*, edited by Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams, 67-96. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006.

## **Schedule of Reading and Assignments**

### **Part 1: Slavery and Freedom**

January 22: Intro to course and discussion of transatlantic slave trade

January 29: The Fugitive Slave Act/Origins of Abolitionism. *Required Reading: Full text of Fugitive Slave Act and Articles 1-3 of Walker's Appeal (BB)*.

February 5: David Walker's Appeal. *Required Reading: Conclusion of Walker's Appeal (BB)*. **Journal 1 due at 12:00 p.m.**

February 12: Dred Scott Decision. *Required Reading: Fredrick Douglass Speech on Dred Scott (BB)*.

### **Part 2: Citizenship and Reconstruction**

February 19: Plessy v. Ferguson. *Required Reading: Full text of Plessy v. Ferguson (BB)*. **Journal 2 due at 12:00 p.m.**

February 26: Ida B. Wells-Barnett/Anti-Lynching. *Required Reading: On Lynching (Intro and Southern Horrors)*

March 5: Wells-Barnett continued. *Required Reading: On Lynching (Red Record) and Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill(BB)*. **Journal 3 due at 12:00 p.m.**

### **Part 3: The Fight for Civil Rights**

March 12: Brown v. Board. *Required Reading: Full text of Brown v. Board Decision (BB)*.

March 19: **Spring Break**

March 26: Montgomery Bus Boycott. *Required Reading: Danielle McGuire (Prologue and Chapter 3) (BB)*. **Journal 4 due at 12:00 p.m.**

April 2: The Moynihan Report/Introduction to Black Power. *Required Readings: Full Text of the Moynihan Report and Selections from The Black Panthers Speak (BB)*.

**Part 4: The Black Panther Party**

April 9: The Early Days of the Black Panther Party. *Required Reading: Baldwin, In the Shadow of the Gun (BB)*. **Journal 5 due at 12:00 p.m.**

April 16: *Revolutionary Suicide* Parts 1 & 2.

April 23: *Revolutionary Suicide* Parts 3&4.

April 30: *Revolutionary Suicide* Parts 5&6. **Journal 6 due at 12:00 p.m.**

**Final Exam: May 14.**