

AAST 492
THE BLACK POWER MOVEMENT
Tuesdays 3:30-6:15 PM, BSB 163

Cedric Johnson

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Office hours: Tuesdays 10:30 AM- 12 PM or by appointment.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the black power movement and its influence on African American culture and politics. In the years after the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, black power emerged as a popular slogan that encompassed a range of political orientations. Many advocates demanded control of the institutions and resources within black communities. More radical activists and intellectuals rejected Western aesthetic standards, and mainstream party politics, and instead sought to create alternative institutions, build solidarity with oppressed peoples in the Third World and advance revolutionary socialism. Students will examine key figures and organizations, and the different strategies and political visions they expressed. Throughout the course, we will consider the promise and contradictions of the movement.

COURSE GOALS

This course is designed to help students achieve the following learning objectives:

- a) to familiarize students with the central personalities, organizations and events of the black power movement.
- b) To identify the major ideological tendencies that animated black public life during the late sixties and early seventies.
- c) To understand the broader context that shaped the emergence and development of black power, namely the defeat of Jim Crow segregation, the Cold War, and international struggles against imperialism.
- d) To understand the forces that led to movement decline, e.g. state repression, cooptation and internal contradictions.
- e) to further develop online and library research skills, and strengthen student's virtuosity in written and oral presentation.
- f) to enhance student's appreciation and capacity for critical intellectual engagement.

BASIC EXPECTATIONS

I expect you to:

- Be prompt and prepared for each class session;
- Read and follow the written syllabus and ask any clarifying questions in advance;
- Take the initiative in communicating with me before problems get out of control; and
- Evaluate your own work according to the course goals and expectations.

You can expect me (the professor) to:

- Arrive on time and be prepared for class;
- Follow the syllabus and alert you to any changes in advance;
- Respond as quickly and as thoroughly as possible to your work;
- Be available to you during scheduled office hours; and
Evaluate your work fairly according to clearly communicated expectations

REQUIRED READINGS

Donna Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2010).

Amy Sonnie, James Tracy and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Hillbilly Nationalists, Urban Race Rebels, and Black Power: Community Organizing in Radical Times* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2011).

Stephen M. Ward, *In Love and Struggle: The Revolutionary Lives of James and Grace Lee Boggs* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2017).

James Boggs, *The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook* (New York: Monthly Review 2009).

All other readings will be made available on Blackboard as PDFs or as URL links.

GENERAL POLICIES

Cell Phones and Laptops: Cell phones may not be used during class time and must be set so that they are completely inaudible. Laptops may be used for note-taking and presentations only. Students who are caught utilizing cellphones, laptops, tablet computers, etc. for social media, internet surfing or other non-course related activity will be penalized with a F for their participation grade and may be asked to leave the class.

Special Needs: If you have any medical or other condition that affects your ability to participate in any element of the course, you must inform me no later than the second class meeting. Where appropriate, you must provide relevant documentation from the Disability Resource Center (312.413.2183, voice and 312.957.4822, video phone). Once such documentation of a medical or other condition is provided, I will try to meet any special needs you may have. If a new condition arises during the course, official and personal documentation is ABSOLUTELY required.

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty including, but not limited to plagiarism, cheating, and bribes, clearly violates the university's expressed commitment to academic integrity and will not be tolerated. If you are suspected of plagiarism during the course, you will receive an "F" for the assignment and depending on the circumstances, may fail the course. Additionally, all incidences of academic dishonesty will be handled pursuant to student disciplinary policy.

Attendance: You are expected to attend class regularly and be actively involved in the learning process. STUDENTS WITH MORE THAN ONE (1) ABSENCE WILL BE PENALIZED WITH THE REDUCTION OF THEIR FINAL GRADE FOR THE COURSE BY ONE FULL LETTER GRADE (e.g., a student who earns an A- but has missed 2 regularly scheduled classes will receive a B- for the course). Tardiness is greatly discouraged. Out of respect for me and your fellow students, I expect you to arrive on time.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1) Presentation/ Engagement: You are required to lead one (1) discussion during the semester, and to participate fully in all class discussions by offering questions, analysis and constructive feedback on the work of your peers. By taking turns leading classroom discussions, you will also hone your presentation skills. Together we will model and encourage a quality of engagement that is lacking in American public discourse—a kind of public engagement that is reflective and open rather than cynical and dismissive.

In your role as discussion leader, you should briefly summarize the assigned reading, but keep in mind that we have all read the text. Rather than offer paragraph by paragraph summary, you should highlight central lines of argument, contextualize the readings, provide relevant background information on the author, key scholarly debates s/he engages, etc. Most importantly, your presentation should provoke thoughtful discussion through carefully crafted questions that extend or critique elements of the work.

An exceptional presentation will combine concise description of the main arguments, critical analysis and spirited discussion. In preparation, you are expected to consult other relevant materials (such as book reviews/ review essays, interviews with the author, journal symposia, etc.).

If you require any special technological needs (projector, Mac computer adaptor, audio equipment, etc.), please notify me at least one week before your scheduled presentation.

2) Short Paper: You are required to complete one short paper (5-7 pp.) based on your in-class presentation. This paper should summarize the reading you were responsible for and offer some thoughtful commentary. This paper is due in class exactly one week after your presentation.

3) Final Paper: You are required to complete one research paper. While you are free to select the subject of your paper, an abstract and bibliography for your research topic must be submitted to me for approval by mid-term.

The abstract (300-500 words in length) should include your key research question(s) and a working thesis statement. You must also include a bibliography of at least 15 scholarly sources, that is, peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books. You are free to use primary materials (speeches, organizational statements, position papers, etc.), newspaper articles, magazines, blogs postings, etc. but these WILL NOT be counted towards the baseline 15 sources.

The final paper must be an original composition with a clear, well- developed thesis. The estimated length should fall between 10-14 pages (type written, double- spaced, 12 pt. type size). See handout for additional details.

Grading Policy

Engagement	30%
Short Paper (5-7 pp.)	30%
Final Paper (10-14 pp.)	40%

COURSE SCHEDULE

PART I VANGUARD OF THE REVOLUTION?

August 29: Introduction & Course Overview

In-class film screening: *Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*, a 2015 documentary film written and directed by Stanley Nelson, Jr.

September 5: The Roots Of Black Power—The New Afro-American Nationalism and the Limits of Civil Rights

Harold Cruse, “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American,” from *Rebellion or Revolution?* (blackboard).

Malcolm X, “Message to the Grassroots,” (blackboard)
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~public/civilrights/a0147.html>

In Class Film screening: Malcolm X's 1963 appearance on WMAQ's *City Desk*, a local Chicago television program. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yq-Q-omi3U8>

September 12: The Rise of the Panthers

Donna Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (whole book).

September 19: Liberating the Black Colony

Huey Newton, "In Defense of Self-Defense," Parts I and II (blackboard).

Cedric Johnson, "Huey Newton and the Last Days of the Black Colony," (blackboard).

Jakobi Williams Chapter 5, "Law Enforcement Repression and the Assassination of Chairman Fred Hampton," from *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* (blackboard).

September 26: Black Chicago and the Original Rainbow Coalition

Amy Sonnie, James Tracy and Roxanne Ortiz, *Hillbilly Nationalists, Urban Race Rebels and Black Power* (whole book).

In Class Film Screening: *American Revolution II: The Battle of Chicago*, a film that examines radical protests at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, and the formation of the first rainbow coalition.

PART II BEYOND THE PANTHERS

October 3: The Boggses, Black Detroit and the American Left

Stephen M. Ward, *In Love and Struggle: The Revolutionary Lives of James and Grace Lee Boggs* (whole book).

October 10: Postwar Prosperity and Revolution

James Boggs, *The American Revolution* (whole book).

October 17: Black Militancy on the Shop Floor

Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, Chapter 4, "The League of Revolutionary Black Workers," from *Detroit, I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* (blackboard).

In Class Film Screening: *Finally Got the News*, a classic propaganda film produced by the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

October 24: Black Power and Women's Liberation

Tracye Matthews, "No One Ever Asks, What a Man's Role in the Revolution Is: Gender and the Politics of the Black Panther Party, 1966-1971," from Charles Jones, ed. *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered* (blackboard).

Frances Beal, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/196.html>

Paulette Pierce, "Boudoir Politics and the Birthing of a Nation: Sex, Marriage and Structural Deflection in the National Black Independent Political Party," from Brackette F. Williams (ed.), *Women Out of Place: The Gender of Agency and the Race of Nationality* (London: Routledge, 1996), 216--244 (blackboard).

October 31: Queering Black Power

Huey P. Newton, "Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements," Speech delivered on 15 August 1970.

<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/newtonq.html>

View *Portrait of Jason*, Shirley Clarke's 1967 documentary film about aspiring cabaret performer, Jason Holliday (on reserve).

In-class Film Screening: *Born in Flames*, a 1983 queer feminist science fiction film directed by Lizzie Borden.

November 7: Black Power as Ethnic Politics

Dean Robinson, "Black Nationalism as Ethnic Pluralism," from *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought* (blackboard).

Adolph Reed, Jr. Chapter 3, "The Black Urban Regime: Structural Origins and Constraints," from *Stirrings in the Jug: Black Politics in the Post-segregation era* (blackboard).

PART III AFTERSHOCKS AND NEW TERRAIN

November 14: The Black Arts Movement, Cultural Nationalism and Mass Culture

William Van Deburg, "Black Power in Afro-American Culture: Folk Expressions," from *A New Day in Babylon* (blackboard).

Listen to Gil Scott Heron's 1974 compilation album, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*.

In Class Film Screening: *Wattstax*, documentary footage of the historic 1972 music festival staged by Stax Records.

November 21: Blaxploitation and Popular Culture

Cedric J. Robinson, "Blaxploitation and the Misrepresentation of Liberation" *Race & Class* 40 (July 1998): 1-12. (blackboard).

View *Killer of Sheep* Director Charles Burnett's landmark 1977 cinematic portrait of black working class life in the Watts section of Los Angeles (on reserve).

View at least one (1) of the following films:

Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song (1971)

Superfly (1972)

Foxy Brown (1974)

Pete's Dragon, *the Devil's Son in Law* (1977)

November 28: Researching the Images and Afterlives of Black Power Chicago

Class meets at the Photography Study Room at the Art Institute of Chicago (111 S. Michigan Avenue), hosted by Assistant Curator Michal Raz-Russo.

December 5: Watts 1965, South Central 1992, Ferguson 2014 . . . The Fire Next Time

Rhonda M. Williams, "Accumulation by Evisceration: Urban Rebellion and the New Growth Dynamics," from Robert Gooding-Williams, ed. *Reading Rodney King/ Reading Urban Uprising* (blackboard).

View *Bastards of the Party*, a 2005 documentary film directed by former Bloods gang member Cle "Bone" Sloan which explores the complex history of social struggle and street gangs in Los Angeles.

<http://dotsub.com/view/c81a88ea-7136-429b-9339-c6eadf9dec9a>

FINAL PAPER DUE: Monday December 11 by 5:00 PM.