2015

CORE 100-24-27 Popular Culture and the Civil Rights Movement

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Description: This seminar examines how popular culture shaped the Civil Rights Movement. Topics include the importance of news accounts of civil rights struggles, the role of freedom songs in building a beloved community, and the contributions of rock-n-roll to changing consciousness in the North and South. We will conclude by examining how popular culture (movies, literature, music, and social media) is implicated in civil rights struggles in the United States today.

This seminar will focus on two central problems that encourage thoughtful reflection on the greater good:

The first is the contradiction between Americans' professed ideals of individual human worth and dignity and the pervasive practice of racial discrimination, especially in the 1950s and 60s. Few questioned the legitimacy of these fundamental U.S. political and religious beliefs, but many were unwilling to make them a practical reality for African Americans. If our central values speak to our understanding of the common good, why are they so often dismissed as impractical in ordinary life?

The second organizing question in the seminar will be how to evaluate the significance of popular culture, words, images, and music that are widely (some would say thoughtlessly) circulated in everyday life. Can popular culture reflect or influence movements for social justice? Is it possible that popular culture is so deeply infused with complexity and implicit moral authority that it can challenge ingrained practices and relationships?

We will examine artifacts of popular culture as texts, evaluating their content and social consequences. For example,

- the importance of news media in publicizing resistance to nonviolent efforts to achieve racial equality
- the power of traditional black music to confront violent opposition
- the influence of rock-n-roll to erode segregation in cities such, contributing to a northern civil rights movement that has been overlooked by historians until recently
- the implications of the ways popular culture addresses contemporary civil rights issues

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (Students will):

1. Interpret challenging readings.
2. Employ effective library research and information literacy skills.
3. Construct arguments supported with evidence.
4. Critique multiple perspectives, including their own.
5. Articulate the evolution of their vocation and aspirations to contribute to the world
READINGS AND DISCUSSIONS: This seminar is an intellectual community; sharing ideas and critiquing each others' ideas are essential parts of such a community. Your "Schedule of Assignments," lists assignments for each class. You are responsible for completing each assignment before it will be discussed so that you can participate in the seminar community.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: The instructor will post discussion questions about some assignments on the course Canvas page. Hard copies of written responses to discussion questions are due in class on the dates listed in the Schedule of Assignments. Twice during the semester you may turn in written responses to discussion questions during the next class meeting. There will be no other extensions on this assignment; electronic responses to discussion questions will not be accepted.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR PRESENT ISSUES: Twice during the semester, you will share an artifact of contemporary American civil rights issues. The contemporary artifact should be accompanied by a formal 2-3 page paper placing the artifact in historical context and relating it to one of the two central problems addressed in this course. More information will be provided in a separate handout.

NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS OF THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT: Students will write three or four-page analyses of newspaper coverage of the boycott. You will receive detailed instructions in a separate handout.

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT: Each student will choose an artifact of popular culture related to the Civil Rights struggle, write a description, compile an annotated bibliography, and prepare a PowerPoint overview of this item. More information and deadlines for each part of the assignment will be provided in a separate handout.

MAKE-UP POLICY:
If for any reason you miss a class, please contact me as soon as possible to find out what work you have missed. In the event that you absolutely cannot complete an assignment on the date it is assigned, please contact me immediately to discuss the problem and the possibility of making up the assignment. Late assignments are accepted at the discretion of the instructor, and grades on late assignments may be lowered.

GRADES will be computed as follows:

Written Responses of Discussion Questions 20%
Historical Context for Present Issues (10% each) 20%
Newspaper Accounts of Montgomery Bus Boycott 10%
Research Assignment 35%
Class Participation 15%

A NOTE ON ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: This class is an intellectual community. Plan to stay until class is over. If you have a medical condition or emergency that requires you
to leave class, please talk to the instructor in advance. You cannot receive credit for class participation if you are asleep, using any electronic device for unrelated tasks or leisure, or text messaging.

You are responsible for all materials covered in readings, media, and discussions. If you do not understand a course requirement or material, please ask about it. I will be happy to meet with you to become better acquainted and to discuss any aspect of this course.

PLAGIARISM:
You will submit all papers to “turnitin.com” an online service that detects plagiarism. Students are also expected to turn in a paper copy of each paper in class the day that it is due.

The Xavier University Handbook contains the following statement on academic honesty:

The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation. All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own. Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an "F" in the course, and expulsion from the University. The dean of the college in which the student is enrolled is to be informed in writing of all such incidents, though the teacher has full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course. If disputes of interpretation arise, the student, faculty member, and chair should attempt to resolve the difficulty. If this is unsatisfactory, the dean will rule in the matter. As a final appeal, the academic vice president will call a committee of tenured faculty for the purpose of making a final determination.
FIRST YEAR SEMINAR, FALL 2015
POPULAR CULTURE & THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Monday, 8/24: Course Introduction

Wednesday, 8/26: *Eyes on the Prize, Awakenings 1954-1956: View on Films on Demand* library database


⇒ *Respond in writing to Discussion Questions*

Friday, 8/28: Gwyneth Mellinger. *Chasing Newsroom Diversity: From Jim Crow to Affirmative Action*, 1-18. (This book is available online from the Xavier library)

⇒ *Respond in writing to Discussion Questions*

Monday, 8/31:

Wednesday, 9/2: Dr. Gwen Mellinger, in-class discussion

Friday, 9/4: Work in Library with Ms. Anne Davies on library databases and finding aids for newspaper assignment (Due Wednesday, 9/21)

Newspapers (New York *Times*; Chicago *Defender*)

Monday, 9/7: Labor Day, Class Does Not Meet

Wednesday, 9/9: Research Day, Class Does Not Meet


⇒ *Respond in writing to Discussion Questions*

Monday, 9/14:

9/14-9/18: Individual meetings with professor

*Freedom on My Mind*, video (110 min)

Wednesday, 9/16: SPARK

*Freedom on My Mind*, video (110 min)

Friday, 9/18:
Monday, 9/21:  **Newspaper Assignment Due**  
Meet in library with Ms. Anne Davies  
Zotero bibliographic software

Wednesday, 9/23:  **Songs are Free**, Xavier Library database  
*Films on Demand*  
⇒ **Respond in writing to Discussion Questions**

Friday, 9/25:

Monday, 9/28:  **Research Assignment--Topic and Description Due**

Wednesday, 9/30:  King Studios, Traveling Suitcase Exhibit  
⇒ **Respond in writing to Discussion Questions**

Friday, 10/2:

Monday, 10/5:  **Bibliographic Research Assignment #1 Due**

⇒ **Respond in writing to Discussion Questions**

Friday, 10/9:  Fall Holiday—Class does not meet

Monday, 10/12:

Wednesday, 10/14:  **Raisin in the Sun** (video)

Friday, 10/16:  **Raisin in the Sun** (video)  
⇒ **Respond in writing to Discussion Questions**

Monday, 10/19:  **Bibliographic Research Assignment #2 Due**

Wednesday, 10/21:

⇒ **Respond in writing to Discussion Questions**

Monday, 10/26:

Wednesday, 10/28:  **Bibliographic Research Assignment #3 Due**
Friday, 10/30: James Brown, “Say it Loud”
⇒ Respond in writing to Discussion Questions

Monday, 11/2:

http://xroads.virginia.edu/~PUBLIC/civilrights/a0146.html
⇒ Respond in writing to Discussion Questions

Friday, 11/6:

Monday, 11/9: Historical Context for Present Issues Due

Wednesday, 11/11:

⇒ Respond in writing to Discussion Questions

Monday, 11/16: Bibliographic Research Project Rough Draft Due

Wednesday, 11/18: 11/18-23 In Class: PowerPoint Presentations

Friday, 11/20:

Monday, 11/23:

Wednesday, 11/25: Thanksgiving Holiday—Class does not meet

Friday, 11/27: Thanksgiving Holiday—Class does not meet

Monday, 11/30: Selma

Wednesday, 12/2: Selma

Friday, 12/4: AHA articles
⇒ Respond in writing to Discussion Questions

Monday, 12/7:

Wednesday, 12/9: Historical Context for Present Issues Due

Friday, 12/11:

FINAL EXAMINATIONS: 9:00 A.M. (CORE 100-24)- Friday, 12/18, 8:00 a.m.
10:00 A.M. (CORE 100-27)-Wednesday, 12/16, 10:00 a.m.