

**BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**The City University of New York**  
**Center for Ethnic Studies**

**Course Title:** Modern Black Political Thought

**Course Number:** AFN 152, Section 001

**Semester:** Spring 2014

**Time:** Mondays (F/204) and Wednesdays (S/724) from 12:30 to 1:45 p.m.

**Instructor:** Dr. Douglas Ficek

**Email:** dficek@bmcc.cuny.edu

**Office:** TBA

**Credits:** 3

**Class Hours:** 3

**Course Description:**

“At the heart of Black politics,” writes Manning Marable, “is a series of crimes: the brutal exploitation of the human and natural resources of the African continent; the perpetuation of chattel slavery and the transatlantic slave-trade for nearly four centuries; the sexual abuse, rape and physical oppression of Black women; the lynching, assassination and castration of Black men; the denial of basic human rights and simple dignity which have been given to others without question; the imposition of educational institutions which fetter the mind and crush the spirit; the confiscation of billions of hours' worth of unpaid or low-paid [labor] in the process of capitalist production; the attempted obliteration or distortion of indigenous cultural, religious and social institutions among African people; [and] the expropriation of our land and economic institutions.”

“Modern Black Political Thought” is about these crimes and how people of African descent have responded to them over time. We will not be studying African history prior to the transatlantic slave-trade and colonial domination. Rather, we will focus on the modern struggles throughout the African Diaspora – struggles, in fact, that continue today.

Let me stress that we will focus not on history or biography, but rather on *thought*.

In the first part of this course, we will look at African political thought. We will read selections from Kwame Gyekye, Leopold Senghor, Julius K. Nyerere, Awa Thiam, Steve Biko, and finally Elias K. Bongmba. Many of these readings explicitly address colonialism and the anticolonial imperative – themes that will appear elsewhere in this course – and we will discuss them carefully and critically.

In the second part of this course, we will look at Afro-Caribbean political thought. We will read selections from Edward W. Blyden, Marcus Garvey, C.L.R. James, Amié Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and finally Walter Rodney. One of the major themes in these readings is racism – institutionalized as white supremacy – and we will discuss it thoroughly. We will also discuss black nationalism as a dialectically negative response to racism.

In the third part of this course, we will look at African-American political thought. We will read selections from Frederick Douglass, Anna Julia Cooper, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Angela Y. Davis. Among other things, we will discuss the tension between *assimilationism* and *exceptionalism* – a tension that continues to exist in contemporary African-American political thought.

**Basic Skills:** ENG 088, ESL 062, and ACR 094

**Prerequisites:** None

**Corequisites:** None

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

1. Become familiar with key debates/issues
2. Develop critical orientation

**Measurements:**

1. Pop quizzes, final paper, and final exam
2. Class discussion, pop quizzes, and final paper

	<b>General Education Goals:</b>	<b>Measurements:</b>
X	<b>Communication Skills:</b> Students will write, read, listen and speak critically and effectively.	Class discussion, pop quizzes, final paper, and final exam
	<b>Quantitative Reasoning:</b> Students will use quantitative skills and the concepts and methods of mathematics to solve problems.	
	<b>Scientific Reasoning:</b> Students will understand and apply the concepts and methods of the natural sciences.	
	<b>Social and Behavioral Sciences:</b> Students will understand and apply the concepts and methods of the social sciences.	
	<b>Arts and Humanities:</b> Students will develop knowledge and understanding of the arts and literature.	
X	<b>Information and Technology Literacy:</b> Students will collect, evaluate and interpret information and effectively use information technologies.	Blackboard 8
	<b>Values:</b> Students will make informed choices based on an understanding of personal values, human diversity, multicultural awareness and social responsibility.	

**Texts:**

The required texts for this course are available at [www.douglasficek.com](http://www.douglasficek.com). Download and print them out ASAP. *Always bring the appropriate texts to class.*

**Requirements:**

You are responsible for all of the assigned readings, and to encourage your preparedness (and your participation), I will give you several pop quizzes throughout the semester. Together, these pop quizzes will count for thirty percent of your final grade, *so do not get lazy with the readings*. Be ready for multiple-choice and/or short essay formats. *You can use your notes on the quizzes.*

You will be writing two papers for this course. I will give you a list of questions, and you will choose from among them. This will not be a research paper, and you will be limited to the course texts. I will give you more information later in the semester, but begin thinking about those aspects of “Modern Black Political Thought” that interest you the most.

There will also be a comprehensive final exam, which will count for thirty percent of your final grade. I cannot give you any details, as I have not yet written the thing, but I can tell you that you will be allowed to use your notes for part of the exam. So make sure to take good notes, not only when you are in class, but also when you are reading on your own.

Attendance is mandatory, and excessive absences (more than three) will negatively affect your final grade. The same goes for tardiness. Get to class on time! Excessive tardiness will also negatively affect your final grade. The bottom line: *If you cannot fully commit yourself to this course, then you should not take it.*

### **Grading:**

Attendance – 10%  
Pop Quizzes – 20%  
First Paper – 20%  
Second Paper – 20%  
Final Exam – 30%

### **Caveats:**

As an instructor, I am fairly easy-going. I do, however, insist upon a respectful atmosphere in the classroom. What exactly does this mean? It means: no phone calls, no texting, no sleeping – O, if this were obvious! – and no ridiculously long bathroom breaks. If your cell phone does go off during class, you can either sing a song for the class, or I can assign an additional writing assignment that *everyone* must do.

“My flash drive is broken” has become the new “My dog ate my homework,” and I will no longer accept it as an excuse for late work. As an alternative, I recommend setting up an account with dropbox.com. It is an amazing service – and free, too.

### **College Attendance Policy:**

The maximum number of absence hours is limited to one more class hour than the contact hours as indicated in the BMCC college catalog. For example, you may be enrolled in a four hour class that meets four times a week. You are allowed five hours of absence, not five days. In the case of excessive absence, the instructor has the option to lower the grade or assign an “F” or “WU” grade.

### **Academic Adjustments for Students with Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations or academic adjustments for this course must contact the Office of Accessibility. BMCC is committed to providing equal access to all programs and curricula to all students.

### **BMCC Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:**

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else’s ideas, words or artistic, scientific, or technical work as one’s own creation. Using the idea or work of another is permissible only when the original author is identified. Paraphrasing and summarizing, as well as direct quotations, require citations to the original source. Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Lack of dishonest intent does not necessarily absolve a student of responsibility for plagiarism. Students who are unsure how and when to provide documentation are advised to consult with their instructors. The library has guides designed to help students to appropriately identify a cited work. The full policy can be found on BMCC’s website. For further information on integrity and behavior, please consult the college bulletin, which is also available online.

### **Schedule:**

January 27 – Course Introduction

AFRICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

January 29 – “Traditional Political Ideas” by Kwame Gyekye

February 3 – “On African Homelands and Nation-States, Negritude, Assimilation, and African Socialism” by Leopold Senghor

February 5 – “Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism” by Julius K. Nyerere

February 10 – “Feminism and Revolution” by Awa Thiam

February 12 – NO CLASS

February 17 – NO CLASS

February 19 – Film: *The Life and Death of Steve Biko*

February 20 – Selections from *I Write What I Like* by Steve Biko

February 24 – “Beyond Pessimism to Optimism: In Love with Africa” by Elias K. Bongmba

#### AFRO-CARIBBEAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

February 26 – “The Call of Providence to the Descendants of Africa in America” by Edward W. Blyden

March 3 – “The Future as I See It” by Marcus Garvey

March 5 – “Every Cook Can Govern” by C.L.R. James

March 10 – Selections from *Discourse on Colonialism* by Aimé Césaire

March 12 – Film: *Frantz Fanon: His Life, His Struggle, His Work*

March 17 – Selections from *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon

March 19 – “Some Questions on Development” by Walter Rodney

#### AFRICAN-AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

March 24 – “What the Black Man Wants” by Frederick Douglass

March 26 – “Womanhood: A Vital Element in the Regeneration and Progress of a Race” by Anna Julia Cooper

March 31 – “Atlanta Exposition Address” by Booker T. Washington

April 2 – “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others” by W.E.B. Du Bois

April 7 – Film: *Malcolm X: Make It Plain*

April 9 – “The Ballot or the Bullet” by Malcolm X

April 14 – NO CLASS

April 16 – NO CLASS

April 21 – NO CLASS

April 23 – “Nonviolence: The Only Road to Freedom” by Martin Luther King, Jr.

April 28 – “A More Perfect Union” by Barack Obama

April 30 – “Democracy, Social Change, and Civil Engagement” by Angela Y. Davis

May 5 – Catch-Up

May 7 – Catch-Up

May 12 – Catch-Up

May 14 – Course Conclusion