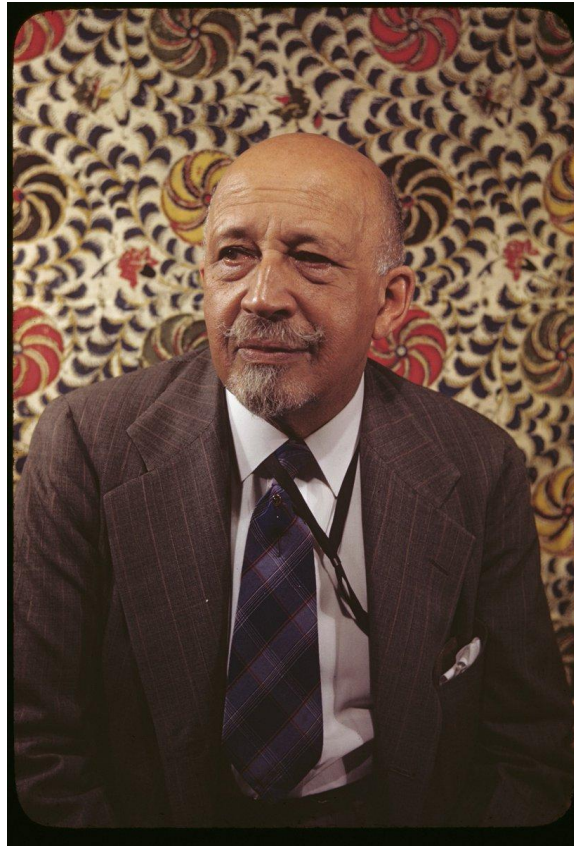


PLPT 3200: African American Political Thought

Daniel Henry
drh5zv@virginia.edu

Office Hours: 11am-12pm, Tue/Thurs.
(or by appointment)



Portrait of W.E.B. Du Bois by Carl Van Vechten, 1946

This course offers an introduction to central themes in the history of African American political thought, from David Walker's 1829 *Appeal* to the #BlackLivesMatter movement. We will consider the (not mutually exclusive) traditions of African American liberal, feminist, Marxist, and nationalist thought across a wide array of movements and thinkers; as well as the crucial critiques and reconstructions they pose to the hegemonic ideologies and structure of the Atlantic world. In so doing, the course engages, among other themes, the meaning of democracy and the American founding; race and liberal individuality; contested concepts of gender and class; national belonging and black self-determination; and the politics of memory. More than this, throughout the semester we will explore the continued relevance of these writings and histories in navigating the "present-past" of slavery and Jim Crow. Discussions in the course's final weeks will concern debates surrounding reparations, prison abolition, "post-racial" ideology, and the Movement for Black Lives platform.

Assignments and Exams

1. **Class Participation (20%)**

- a. Attendance is mandatory for every session, absent unavoidable scheduling conflicts. Students with more than one unexcused absence will receive a penalty to their class participation grade. Please email me if you will not be able to attend.
- b. Each of the texts assigned deserve careful, respectful reading (I will offer some guidelines on effective reading practices on our first day). Students are expected to bring assigned readings to class.
- c. Participants in this seminar should come to each session with prepared with 4-5 questions and provocations to share. When coming up with your thoughts, try to connect the day's readings to the themes of other texts we have explored, and to the overarching themes which have emerged for you in the course as a whole. Not everyone is comfortable speaking in front of a large group; if you are not, please feel free to email me your questions and comments instead.

2. **Group Presentations (15%)**

- a. Students are expected to conduct joint-presentations on the readings of a specific date (I will pass around a sign-up sheet on the first day of class). Group size will depend on the number of students enrolled.
- b. Groups should offer an overview of the central arguments and themes from the day's readings (around 12-15 minutes), as well as a set of questions and provocations to guide class discussion.
- c. Importantly, I ask that each group offer a comparison of the texts at hand to readings from at least one other session.

3. **Midterm Exam (20%)** The midterm is an open-note, open-book take-home exam on the readings of the course's first half. I will hand out the questions on ____, and the exam is due ____.

4. **Quizzes (15%)** There will be three short quizzes (worth 5% each) on the readings assigned for the day of the quiz. Quizzes will not be announced in advance. I will let students drop their lowest quiz grade.

5. **Archival Project (30%)** The final paper project will ask students to consider a theme, question, or concept from class to explore further through archival research. Students have a choice of two archives, one local, one digital:

- The [Ida B. Wells papers](#) here at the University of Chicago: a collection of her manuscripts, correspondence, diary entries, legal and professional documents, and biographical materials.
- One of the several digital #BlackLives Matter archives, including [Archives for Black Lives](#) and [Internet Archive](#).

Students will present their work in our final session. My hope is that, through our research, we might put these archives into conversation. Each presenter will be asked to relate their experiences of the archive, their practices of navigating its collection(s), and, of course, what they learned. Discussion will center on what might be gained in exploring Wells' works and activism in the context of the contemporary Movement for Black Lives; and the ways this movement shapes our reading of Wells and the long history of civil rights struggle.

In addition, students will be asked to complete a 7 page paper, double spaced, due a week after their presentation; a brief, one page project proposal is due _____. This paper will offer a reading of a key theme, concept, or question from our course in conversation with at least five archival sources from the Wells or #BLM archives. The paper should both summarize the contents of the student's findings as well as interpret those contents through the lens of the course's guiding themes. The latter will, likely, entail some comparison with another reading from the semester.

This project will be graded based on (a) the clarity of the paper's structure and central claims; (b) the quality of analysis and engagement with historical records; and (c) the substantive connections made between their research and the themes of our course.

Assistance and Access

If you require any additional assistance with the class's coursework and exams, please do not hesitate to contact me, or contact UVa Student Health service, SDAC@Virginia.edu.

Schedule:

1. Troubling Foundations I

Selections from M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (2008)

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (excerpts)

Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* 1-4, 9-11, third full para of 12-end of first full para of 14.

In class: clip of James Baldwin's Cambridge Union Address

2. Troubling Foundations II

David Walker, *Appeal*, Preamble, Article 1, and Conclusion (focus, in the conclusion, on the parts dealing with Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*).

Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"

3. The Property of Subjecthood

Frederick Douglass, selections from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*: Preface, ch. 1, 2, 5-6, 7 (pp. 65-8 only), ch. 10 (pp. 91-105, 107-8, 132-3 only)

In class: Robert Hayden's "Frederick Douglass"

4. Democracy and Resistance, Post-Reconstruction

Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (1892): "Our Raison D'Être" and "Woman versus the Indian"

Ida B. Wells, [*Southern Horrors*](#) (1892)

In class: Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman" as read by Alice Walker

5. The Souls of Black Folk

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," "Of the Sons of Master and Man," "Of the Coming of John"

In class: read together from "Of the Sorrow Songs"

6. Black Nationalisms, Old and New I

Marcus Garvey, "The Negro's Greatest Enemy" (1923) "I Am A Negro" (1923), "Declaration of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World" (1920), "Leadership" (1921), "The Hidden Spirit of America" (1922), "Whether We Will Accept Civilization as It Is or Put It Under a Rigid Examination to Make It as It Ought to Be as Far as Our Race Is Concerned" (1922), "Who and What Is A Negro?" (1923), "Appeal to the Conscience of the Black Race to See Itself" (1923), "Message of Marcus Garvey to Membership of UNIA from Atlanta Prison" (1925), "Statement of Conviction" (1925)

7. Black Labor, White Capital I

Robin D. G. Kelley, "The Negro Question': Red Dreams of Black Liberation" (2002)
[W.E.B. Du Bois. "Marxism and the Negro Problem"](#) (1933)

8. Black Labor, White Capital II

Cornel West, "Marxist Theory and the Specificity of Afro-American Oppression" (1988)
Robin D.G. Kelley (1990), "In Egyptland: The Share Croppers' Union"

9. Where Do We Go from Here? I

Martin Luther King, Jr., "[Letter from Birmingham Jail](#)" (1963)
King, *Why We Can't Wait* (1964, selections)

In class: Rev. Barber's speech on the anniversary of King's assassination

10. Where Do We Go from Here? II

Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (2003), Introduction, ch. 9 and 10

Midterm exam distributed

11. Black Nationalisms, Old and New II

Malcolm X, "[Message to the Grassroots](#)"; "[The Ballot or the Bullet](#)"
Stokely Carmichael, "[Black Power](#)"
[The Black Panthers Ten-Point Program](#)

In class: clips from The Black Power Mixtape

12. "Evidence of Things Not Seen"

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, [part 1](#) (1963); "[Notes of a Native Son](#)" (1955)

13. Legacies of Combahee I

[Combahee River Collective statement](#) (1974)
Audre Lorde, "[Age, Race, Class, and Sex](#)" (1984)

Archives Project proposal due

14. Legacies of Combahee II

Kimberle Crenshaw, "[Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics](#)" (1989)

bell hooks, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory" (1984)

15. Democracy and Repair

Angela Davis, *Abolition Democracy* (selections)

Ta-Nehisi Coates, "[The Case for Reparations](#)" (2014)

16. Left, Right, and the "Postracial Horizon" I

Ta-Nehisi Coates, "[There Is No Post-Racial America](#)" (2015)

Michael Dawson, "Katrina and the Nadir of Black Politics" (2011)

In class: clips from Spike Lee's When the Levees Broke

17. Left, Right, and the "Postracial Horizon" II

Alicia Garza, "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement"

[Movement for Black Lives Platform and Demands](#)

In class: clips from Ava DuVernay's 13th

18. Project Presentations