

Purdue University
African American Studies and Research Center
Spring Semester 2015
AAS 37300: History of Injustice in the United States
BRNG B242
T-TH: 12:00-1:15 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Ronald J. Stephens
Office: 6176 Steven Beering Hall of Liberal Arts & Education
Hours: Tuesdays 3:30-5 p.m. & by appointments
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Course objectives

History of Injustice in the United States is a survey course that explores interactions between the U.S. judicial and criminal justice systems, federal, state, and local governments, and members of African American communities. The course explores key documents and diverse patterns of unpunished acts of terror, violence, racial discrimination, and economic injustice involving African American life experiences during the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. The course engages a series of critical readings, focused class discussions, individual writing assignments, the viewing of documentary films, team debates, and written examinations. Course objectives are:

1. To encourage learning about the legal origins of the present system of injustice
2. To provide a basic understanding of key provisions of the US Constitution that are important in regards to fighting against injustice
3. To explore case studies about systems of injustice in the U.S. regarding African Americans, and to analyze the impact of specific court rulings concerning their struggle against injustice
4. To enhance learning by allowing students to examine examples of injustice in the US, and by requiring them to document their impressions, opinions, and reactions to them and other topics.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students should be able to critically think, read, and write about their impressions of injustice in our nation's history. Students should be able:

1. To critically read, think, and write about patterns of injustice in 19th, 20th and 21st centuries of United States history from an interdisciplinary perspective. Measured by successful completion of discussion questions and midterm examination
2. To understand and to define meanings of civil/human rights. This includes topics of human rights abuses and violations as they relate to victims and perpetrators of the abuse/violation. Measured by the successful completion of discussion questions, team presentations, and who won the debates

3. To describe, interpret, and evaluate patterns of injustice (particularly patterns of racial discrimination, intimidation, and/or terror), and the different spheres in which these kinds of abuses have unfolded and evolved in U.S. history. Measured by the successful completion of midterm and final examinations

4. To demonstrate an understanding of critical thinking, reading and writing skills about topics of slavery and the law and the historical and legal origins of lynching in the United States. Measured by the successful completion of discussion questions, who won the debates, and participation

5. To describe the injustices of certain social institutions and how they have affected the lives of African Americans. Measured by the successful completion of team debates, team presentations and the final examination

Assignments

Team Presentations	15%
Team Debates (5 page detailed outlines)	15%
Who Won the Debate (1-2 pages each)	20%
Discussion Questions (3-4 pages each)	20%
Midterm Examination	10%
Final Examination	10%
Participation	10%

Required Texts

1. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave, Written by Himself.* Edited with an Introduction by David W. Blight. The Bedford Series in History and Culture. Bedford/St. Martin. Boston, 1993. ISBN: 0-312-07531-6 (Paperback)

2. *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900.* Edited with an Introduction by Jacqueline Jones-Royster. The Bedford Series in History and Culture. Bedford/St. Martin's. Boston, 1997. ISBN: 0-312-11695-0 (Paperback)

3. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness.* Michelle Alexander with a new foreword by Cornel West. New York: The New Press, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-59558-643-8 (Paperback).

4. *Negroes with Guns.* By Robert F. Williams. Foreword by Gloria House. Introduction by Timothy B. Tyson. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998. ISBN 0-8143-2714-1 (Paperback).

Required Electronic Readings:

Jon Hanson and Kathleen Hanson. "The Blame Frame: Justifying (Racial) Injustice in America." *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, (2006), 41, 415-480.

From what to the Slave is the Fourth of July? An Address Delivered in Rochester, New York on July 5, 1852, Speech by Frederick Douglass, pp. 379-401.

The State of Mississippi vs. J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant, Trial transcript of Willie Reed, 210-234

William Bradford Huie, Interview with J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant, *Look Magazine*, January 24, 1956, 46-49.

Martin Luther King, Jr., "A Time to Break Silence" *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts From the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990*, a.k.a. "Beyond Vietnam" www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkatimetobreaksilence.htm

Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," April 16, 1963

Martin Luther King, Jr. "I Have a Dream" Speech, August 28, 1963
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkhaveadream.htm>

Angela Davis: An Autobiography, pp.vii-73

"Imprisonment and Reform" (40-59) and "The Prison Industrial Complex" (84-104) in *Are Prisons Obsolete?*

George Ziegelmüller and Charles Dause. *Argumentation: Inquiry and Advocacy*, 195-226

Dominic Infante. *Arguing Constructively*, 69-81.

Documentaries

These visuals will be on reserve in the Library with a (2) two hour loan limit. Clips from other documentaries* will be shown in class.

- Frederick Douglass. *When the Lion Wrote History: An American Hero Whose Vision Transcended Race, Gender and Time*. Program @ 1994.
- *A Passion for Justice: The Story of Ida B. Wells-Barnett*
- *The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till*. A Till Freedom Come Production @ 2005.
- *Negroes with Guns: Rob Williams and Black Power*. A Presentation of Independent Television Service (ITVS), 2005. www.newsreel.org
- Robert Cohen. *Let It Burn*,* April 22, 1968.

Course Policies:

These policies will be enforced with no exceptions. First, attendance will be taken the first five minutes of class since you are responsible for being on time for all classes. Every two class meetings missed you risk losing 25 points for each occurrence. For every 4 times or more you are tardy you risk losing 40 points.

Second, no assignments will be graded if submitted after the due date, unless there is a valid documented reason (sudden car accident, hospitalization, your death (all dated), or the death of an immediate family member). However, all assignments must be completed to pass the course with at least a C. All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Third, all assignments must be typed in 10 or 12 point font, stapled, with standard 1 margins, double-spaced with standard spacing between paragraphs and headers. The quality of your written work (i.e., grammar, punctuation, coherent arguments, spelling, and appearance) as well as argument and evidence will affect your grade for the assignment. Fourth, proofread all written work before turning them in and keep a copy for your files. Fifth, any complaints about grades should occur within 3 working days after a graded has been returned. These requests for grade re-evaluation should be submitted in writing. Sixth, incompletes will not be approved unless for some valid documented reason as indicated above. Seventh, academic misconduct, including cheating, plagiarizing, and deliberately interfering with the work of others, will not be tolerated in this course. This may result in an F and possible disciplinary action at the college or University level. Eighth, texting, listening to music, surfing the internet, doing work for another class, sleeping in class, or any other type of disturbances, including packing up early, are strictly prohibited.

In adhering to Purdue University's regulations, class attendance regarding the observance of religious holidays will be enforced. Finally, if you are a student with a disability that requires special accommodation(s), make contact with me immediately to confirm your disability status.

GRADING CRITERIA: Assignments will be graded on these criteria:

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| Organization | Does the thesis statement function as it should? Does the paper have a clear plan? Is it unified? Is all material presented relevant to the thesis statement? |
| Development | Does the paper use specific examples, illustrations, facts, and evidence to support the thesis statement? Are they relevant? Are they sufficient? |
| Mechanics | Is the paper free of gross spelling errors? Is punctuation used appropriately? Is the paper free of errors of agreement (subject/verb, pronoun/antecedent)? Is the paper free of major sentence errors (fragments, comma splices, run-ons)? |
| Content | Is the paper interesting? Are the ideas fresh and original? |
| Diction | Is the vocabulary that of a college student? |
| Style | Is the writing efficient (not wordy)? Does the sentence length vary? Do the sentences and paragraphs begin differently? Has the writer achieved a natural voice? |

The C Paper The C paper is adequate. The paper may be grammatically correct, but lacking in content or development or the paper may have above average content and development, but some grammatical errors. C papers generally present more plot than analysis; may not sufficiently prove the thesis or controlling idea; and/or may have some factual, interpretive, or conceptual errors. The paper may have shallow analysis, which is more descriptive than analytical. The paper may be repetitive or some ideas may be undeveloped or unsupported. The essay may make limited use of textual evidence. The paragraphs may be weakly unified, underdeveloped, or unfocused. The arrangement of paragraphs may seem awkward.

The B Paper The B paper is not only competent in all the major areas, but excels in several. As opposed to the C paper, the B paper contains certain achievements that make it more than adequate. Usually these are in the areas of content and language. Although lapses may appear in the paper, they are usually trivial and sparse. Still, mere absence of error does not assure the paper a B grade. This paper should illustrate an understanding of the text(s) and take ideas beyond the obvious. The thesis is supported by textual evidence; however, the ideas may not be pursued with enough depth and detail. At times the paper may describe rather than analyze. The essay is in coherently arranged paragraphs.

The A Paper The A paper is a superior piece of work that is a pleasure to read. It need not be flawless, but it is outstanding for a college writer. Usually the A paper excels the B paper in content, diction, and style. The writer of an A paper generally treats the subject in an original and insightful manner. The essay goes beyond the obvious ideas in the text(s) and is controlled by a clear, precise thesis. The paper uses textual evidence (specifics/quotations) effectively. The arrangement of paragraphs and transitions seem particularly apt.

My comments generally focus on organization, content, and format since these areas usually need the most improvement. If my comments do not help you improve or you are still unsure why you received a grade, please make arrangements to speak with me in private for further clarification.

Please realize that although I commend your effort, effort alone will not ensure an A.

To successfully pass this course, student will need to regularly attend classes, read required readings before class, take notes during important lectures and video viewing, pass the midterm and final examinations, and incorporate MLA format and guidelines in all writing assignments. Students will also need to conduct themselves in a professional manner, and actively participate in course activities and designated campus events

JANUARY

T/13 Course Introductions

Read: King, Letter from Birmingham Jail & I Have a Dream

TH/15 King: Civil Rights, Integration, and Economic Injustice

Read: King, *Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence & Mountaintop*

Participation: Marc Lamont Hill, MLK Keynote, 7 p.m. Loeb Playhouse, Stewart Center

T/20 MLK Observance Day Discussion

Read: Infante. *Arguing Constructively*, 69-81

TH/22 Argumentation and Debate

Read: Ziegelmüller and Dause. *Argumentation: Inquiry and Advocacy*, 195-226

T/27 Chattel Slavery and Resistance

Read: Douglass, *Narrative*

Film Viewing: When the Lion Wrote History (Library)

TH/29 Slavery, Resistance, and Frederick Douglass Discussion Questions

Read: Douglass, From what to the Slave is the Fourth of July?

FEBRUARY

T/3 Lynching and Resistance

Read: *Southern Horrors and Other Writings*

Film Viewing: A Passion for Justice: The Story of Ida B. Wells-Barnett

TH/5 Crusading Against Lynching: Ida B. Wells Discussion Questions

Read: *Southern Horrors and Other Writings*

T/10 The Blame Frame: Blaming the Victim with Justifications

Read: Hanson and Hanson. "The Blame Frame: Justifying (Racial) Injustice in America." *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, pp. 415-440

Participation: Soledad O'Brien, 6p.m. Elliott Hall of Music

TH/12 The Blame Frame Discussion

Read: Hanson and Hanson. "The Blame Frame: Justifying (Racial) Injustice in America." *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, pp. 440-480

T/17 Crusading for Justice: Robert F. Williams and Armed Self-Defense

Read: Williams, *Negroes with Guns*

Film Viewing: *Negroes with Guns*

Film Clip: *Let It Burn*

TH/19 Robert F. Williams Propaganda and Discussion Questions

Read: Williams, *Negroes with Guns*

T/24 Angela Davis Speaks

Read: Davis, *Angela Davis Speaks*, pp.vii-73

Participation: Angela Davis, February 25, 2015, Loeb Playhouse, 7p.m.

TH/26 Angela Davis Discussion Questions

Read: Davis, "Imprisonment and Reform" (40-59) &

"The Prison Industrial Complex" (84-104) in *Are Prisons Obsolete?*

MARCH

T/3 Innocence, Jim Crow Segregation, and Murder

Read: *The State of Mississippi vs. J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant*, Trial transcript of Willie Reed testimony, 210-234 & William Bradford Huie, Interview with J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant, *Look Magazine*, January 24, 1956, 46-49.

Film Viewing: The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till. A Till

TH/5 Emmett Till Discussion Questions

T/10 New Jim Crow team presentations and discussions

Read: Alexander, *New Jim Crow*, 1-136

Participation: Teams 1-3

TH/12 New Jim Crow team presentations and discussions

Read: Alexander, *New Jim Crow*, 137-248

Participation: Teams 4-6

SPRING BREAK (March 16-21)

T/24 Debate team conferences (scheduled by appointment) &
Preparing/delivering contemporary case studies presentations

Take Home Midterm Examination Due

TH/26 Trayvon Martin/Oscar Brown

T/31 Tamir Rice/Sean Bell

APRIL

TH/2 Ramarley Graham/Akai Gurley

T/7 Michael Brown/Eric Garner

TH/9 Debate

T/14 Debate

Who Won the Debate*

TH/16 Debate

Who Won the Debate*

T/21 Debate

Who Won the Debate*

TH/23 Debate

Who Won the Debate*

T/28 Wrapping Up the Debate Observations

Who Won the Debate*

TH/30 Final Examination Review/Course Evaluations

MAY

T/5 Final Examination