

Black Political Thought (Spring 2021)

This is a draft syllabus and is subject to change

Instructor: Dr. Haskins

Class: MWF 2:15pm-3:25pm (Harbor House Boardroom)

Email: alex.haskins@wheaton.edu

Student Hours: MWF 1-2pm, TH 1-3pm (Microsoft Bookings)

Department Mission Statement:

The mission of the Department of Politics and International Relations is to equip students with knowledge about politics and government, with methods for analyzing political actors and institutions, and with the ability to apply biblical and theological perspectives to public life.

“Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there’s a God, that there’s a Saviour too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
‘Their colour is a diabolic die.’
Remember, Christians, Negros, black as Cain,
May be refin’d, and join th’ angelic train.”

- Phillis Wheatley, “*On Being Brought from Africa to America*” (1773)

“In every human Breast, God has implanted a Principle which we call Love of Freedom; it is impatient of Oppression, and pants for Deliverance.”

- Phillis Wheatley, “[*February 11 Letter*] to Samson Occom” (1774)

i. Course Overview and Learning Outcomes

What is “freedom”? What is “justice”? What role do politics, history, law, economics, literature, music, ethics, and faith play in securing freedom and justice? How do interrelated social identities such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality reflect important elements in calls for freedom and justice? In this course, we will seriously consider—from a distinctly Christian perspective—how key authors like Douglass, Jacobs, Wells, Washington, DuBois, and Crenshaw (among others) have answered these questions and the degree to which we might find these arguments persuasive (or not) as they bear both on Christian faith and practice as well as on the world. Through dialogue and writing, students will *develop their ability to compare and critically (though charitably) assess* disparate articulations of the relationship between domination, freedom, and justice in the history of black political thought, from the 18th century to the present. In so doing, students will *cultivate a nuanced view of Black diasporic thought*—both within and outside of the global church—as well as *formulate their own political and philosophical opinions* on the varied, and often contradicting, visions for how politics might secure conditions of freedom and justice in the modern world.

In terms of thematic cores, this course aims to improve students’ ability to:

- **Interpret** significant primary philosophical texts subtly and critically, with sensitivity to their logical structure and role in a tradition of thought (PI)
- **Communicate** cogent arguments in defense of philosophical positions, including examining and responding to potential objections (PI)
- **Assess** the merits of varied answers to perennial philosophical questions, recognizing their implications for Christian faith and practice (PI)
- **Critique** the sources and consequences of patterns of injustice and inequality in regards to marginalized groups in the United States (DUS)

- **Engage** critically and respectfully with the experiences and perspectives of marginalized racial, ethnic, class, and gender groups in the United States, as well as one's own experiences as a cultural being (DUS)
- **Articulate** a Christian theological understanding of human diversity and unity (DUS)

ii. Required Texts

Physical copies of the following readings will be available for purchase in the campus bookstore. Prior exposure to African, Afro-Caribbean, or African-American history is not required. If you have concerns obtaining these texts for whatever reason, please contact me. Historical context provided in these (and other) writings should be used to illuminate substantive arguments, not replace them.

- Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, ed. Painter (Penguin, 2000)
- DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Blight and Gooding-Williams (Bedford, 1997)
- Sowell, *Knowledge and Decisions* (Basic Books, 1996)

Optional: Rogers and Turner, [*African American Political Thought: A Collected History*](#) (Chicago, 2020)

iii. Assignments, Grading, and Policies

Participation

25 %

Regular class attendance, active discussion posting, and active in-class participation facilitate the successful comparison and assessment of the concepts, schools of thought, institutions, and figures encountered in this course. Thus, attendance, discussion posts, and participation in class are mandatory. Absences due to personal emergencies, illness, or other legitimate causes will be excused with advanced notice and proper documentation, where applicable. Good participation reflects quantity *and* quality of in- and out-of-class comments. Students are expected to come to class with texts readily available, having done the reading and having prepared for respectful and substantive discussion. Laptops are allowed only for course-related activities; other observed activities will result in a grade reduction. I am available for any student wishing to discuss methods for engaging more effectively in class discussion. To complete the discussion posts, students must assess the merits and weaknesses of competing articulations of the sources and consequences of patterns of injustice and inequality in a thinker's works. Students do this by (1) selecting a quote that best exemplifies that thinker's conception of justice and/or freedom (50-75 words) for the upcoming class period and (2) defending this choice against competing alternatives (less than 150 words). Discussion posts will be due the midnight before the relevant class session via Schoology and will form part of the basis for in-class discussion.

Class Attendance/Participation: 15%

Schoology Discussion Posts: 10%

Short Essays

40 %

The short essay assignments serve as a written means for students to demonstrate their ability to cultivate a nuanced view of Black diasporic thought and the diverse set of historical, structural, and cultural forces that have shaped it. The short essays are also intended to help students develop their writing skills for the longer argumentative essay. There will be two short essays this term, due in weeks 5 and 10. These essays will involve reflection and analysis based on the Slave Bible from the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C. and various images from the post-Civil War era. These short essays require students to reflect on both groups of materials along with the texts covered in class. A prompt will be sent out the week before it is due. Assignments should be roughly 1000 words (doubled-spaced, 12pt font, normal margins) and should answer the prompt. See below for the plagiarism policy and the late policy.

Essay 1: 15%

Essay 2: 25%

Long Essay**35 %**

The long essay is intended to give students an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to critically, yet charitably, assess course readings. This will involve substantial analysis of textual evidence for one's argument as well as engagement with contending evidence from multiple texts in the course. More specifically, students are required to select one thinker-pair (from ones I will give) and argue which person's views from the pair best provides a solution to racial injustice while approximating a biblical view of racial diversity & unity. Essays should be roughly 2000 words (double-spaced, 12pt font, normal margins) and should answer the prompt. The long essay will be due in week 14. It must be original work from the student; plagiarism is not tolerated under any circumstance and will result in failure on the assignment and possibly failure in the course or further College sanctions. If students are unclear on what constitutes plagiarism, they should consult the Student Handbook and Community Covenant. A one-page prospectus with a thesis paragraph and potential supporting evidence (with citations) will be due with your final essay. Before the final essay is due, students will bring their prospectuses to class and review each other's developing arguments. I will provide essay prompts a week in advance of the prospectus class. Also, I will provide a sheet for the prospectus review. Students must answer all parts of the prospectus review sheet and send their responses to their partner. Final drafts of papers must be uploaded to Schoology the day they are due with the prospectus review comments included at the end of the paper. Students who submit a post-assessment survey before our last class may elect to have a 24-hour extension. I will not read drafts of papers, but I am willing to discuss essay ideas. Late assignments will be reduced by one-third a letter grade (e.g. from a B+ to a B) for every day past the due date and will no longer be accepted after three days.

Grading Range

_____	A: 100-94	A-: 93-90
B+:	89-87	B: 86-84
B-:	83-80	C+: 79-77
C:	76-74	C-: 73-70
D+:	69-67	D: 66-64
F:	63-0	

iv. General Policies**Confidentiality and Mandatory Reporting**

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as a faculty member. I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred on Wheaton College's campus with the College. Confidential resources available to students include Confidential Advisors, the Counseling Center, Student Health Services, and the Chaplain's Office. More information on these resources and College Policies is available at www.wheaton.edu/sexualassaultresponse.

COVID-Safe Classrooms

In accordance with the Wheaton College Face Covering Policy and *COVID Safe, Thunder Strong Commitment* signed by each student and faculty member, CDC-approved face coverings and social distancing are required while attending class. Failure to comply with wearing a face covering, wearing the required wristband, or social distancing will result in dismissal from the class session and an unexcused absence. Multiple violations can lead to dismissal from the class.

Inclusive Language

As per the faculty rules, I expect students to use gender inclusive language for human beings.

Learning and Accessibility Services

Wheaton College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students with documented learning differences, physical or mental health conditions that qualify for accommodations under the ADA. Any student needing academic adjustments is requested to contact the Learning and Accessibility

Services Office as early in the semester as possible. To contact LAS, please email las@wheaton.edu or call 630.752.5615. If you already have an accommodation letter, I am available to discuss how to implement the accommodation.

Writing Center

Writing Center: The Writing Center is a free resource that equips undergraduate and graduate students across the disciplines to develop effective writing skills and processes. This academic year, the Writing Center is offering [online appointments only](#). Learn more about online consultations for [undergraduates](#) and [graduate students](#), and [make an appointment](#).

v. Tips for Success

In my experience, students who follow these tips tend to do well. I encourage you to heed them.

- *Finish the reading at least 24 hours before it is due.* For example, finish Wednesday's class reading by Tuesday morning. This will require time management, but it allows more time for reflection.
- *Take notes as you read, in the text.* This will allow you to track your reactions to the readings and think (ahead of class) about intriguing or puzzling passages.
- *Come to office hours.* I do not bite. I am invested in you succeeding in this course.
- *Talk with your peers about the readings outside of class.* It helps you process and vocalize your views on the text(s) in preparation for class discussion.
- *Map out the "A-L-E" (Argument-Logic-Evidence) of the text before, during, and after class.* Your reproduction of the "A-L-E" of class texts helps enrich both our class discussion and your written assignments.
- [For any writing assignment] *Outline your argument—section by section, paragraph by paragraph.* If you cannot justify why a section or paragraph should be included in the writing assignment, do not include it.

vi. Reading Schedule

Assignments listed under each day are *due for that day*.

^{TR} Potentially Triggering Material

[Pages of Reading]

I. A Framing: The Bible, Race, and Slavery

Week One

M (1/18): **NO CLASS (MLK DAY)**

W (1/20): Introduction

“[Steal Away](#)” [Fisk Jubilee Singers] (orig. pre-1862); *1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11* [~21]

Young, “My Lord’s Coming Again” (thesis) pp. 26-28

Work, *American Negro Songs* (1940/1998) pp. 14-27, 123

N.J. Historical Commission, *A Guide to the Underground Railroad in New Jersey* (only U.S. map on p. 2)

Complete Pre-Assessment Surveys

F (1/22): “[Go Down Moses](#)” [Fisk Jubilee Singers] (orig. 1862); *Exodus 6-8* [~45]

DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk* (1903) ch. XIV

Work, *American Negro Songs* (1940/1998) p. 165

Lawrence-McIntyre, “The Double Meanings of the Spirituals”

Curtis, “The Lyric of the African-American Spiritual”

Week Two

M (1/25): Walker, [Walker’s Appeal, in Four Articles](#) (1829) [~54]

Stewart, [African Masonic Hall Address](#) (1833)

W (1/27): Wayland, *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution* (1844) letters IV, VI [~26]

F (1/29): Fuller, *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution* (1845) letters II-V [~48]

II. Origins: Revolutionary and Antebellum Narratives

Week Three

M (2/1): Equiano, *Interesting Narrative* (1789)^{TR} vol I. chs I, V, & VI [~45]

W (2/3): Equiano, *Interesting Narrative* (1789) vol II. chs VII & X [~30]

F (2/5): Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments* (1791) pp.9-18, 28-45, 59-71 [~41]

Week Four

M (2/8): Williams, *A Narrative of Events* “A Narrative of Events...” (1837)^{TR} [~25]

W (2/10): Williams, *A Narrative of Events* “Minutes of Proceedings...” (1837), pp. 47-93^{TR} [~39]

SHORT ESSAY 1 PROMPTS OUT

F (2/12): Sojourner Truth, “[Ain't I a Woman?](#)” (1851) [~12]

-----, “[Keeping the Thing Going](#)” (1867)

Levy, “[The Truths Behind the Myth of Harriet Tubman](#)” (2008)

[FILM VIEWING: HARRIET (2019, PG-13 director: Kasi Lemmons)]

Week Five

M (2/15): Delaney, *Condition, Elevation, Emigration & Destiny* (1852) chs. II-VII, IX, XVII-XVIII [~39]

W (2/17): Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) “Extracts from Speeches, etc.” pp. 326-364 [~39]
****SHORT ESSAY 1 (ON BIBLE & SLAVERY) DUE IN CLASS****

F (2/19): Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) chs. III, XIV, XVII-XVIII, XXIII^{TR} [~54]

Week Six

M (2/22): Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) chs. 1, 4-8, 13, 19^{TR} [~39]

W (2/24): Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) chs. 26-28, 32-33, 35, 40, 41^{TR} [~42]

F (2/26): Crummell, “The Progress of Civilization along the West Coast of Africa” (1861) [~19]

III. Later Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Black Thought

Week Seven

M (3/1): Wells, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings* (1892/1895) pp. 45-101^{TR} [~56]

W (3/3): Wells, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings* (1892/1895) pp. 101-151^{TR} [~51]

F (3/5): Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (1892) “Womanhood A Vital Element” [~40]

Week Eight

M (3/8): Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (1892) “Woman vs. The Indian” [~48]

W (3/10): **NO CLASS**

F (3/12): Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (1892) “Higher Education”, “Status of Woman in America” [~56]

SHORT ESSAY 2 PROMPTS OUTWeek Nine

M (3/15): Turner, [African Letters](#) (1893), letters 10-14 [~25]
 -----, “The American Negro and His Fatherland” (1895)

W (3/17): Washington, *Up from Slavery* (1901) chs. I-V [~41]

F (3/19): Washington, *Up from Slavery* (1901) chs. VI-XII [~51]

Week Ten

M (3/22): Washington, *Up from Slavery* (1901) chs. XIII-XVII [~64]

W (3/24): Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* (1903) Forethought, chs. I, III, VI, XII [~47]
 “Wells-Barnett to Du Bois” (1903)

F (3/26): Du Bois, *Darkwater* (1920) chs. 6-7 [~35]

****SHORT ESSAY 2 (ON POST-CIVIL WAR IMAGES ^{TR}) DUE IN CLASS****

IV. Twentieth-Century and Contemporary Black ThoughtWeek Eleven

M (3/29): Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* (1935) ch. IV, *Dusk of Dawn* (1940) ch. VIII [~50]

W (3/31): Jones, [We Seek Full Equality for Women](#) (1949), [An End to the Neglect](#) (1949) [~23]

F (4/2): **NO CLASS (GOOD FRIDAY)**

Week Twelve

M (4/5): Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), chs. 1, 4 [~28]

W (4/7): Baker, “[Memo on Voter Registration S.C. Meeting](#)” (1959) [~26]

-----, “[SCLC as a Crusade](#)” (1959)

-----, “[Bigger than a Hamburger](#)” (1960)

Hamer, “[DNC Credentials Committee Testimony](#)” (1964) ^{TR}

-----, “I’m Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired” (1964) ^{TR}

-----, “Nobody’s Free Until Everybody’s Free” (1971)

F (4/9): King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (1963) [~56]

Malcolm X, “Ballet or the Bullet” (1964)

Jackson, “[Address to the National Baptist Convention](#)” (1964)

Rustin, [Interview on Robert Penn Warren’s “Who Speaks for the Negro?”, pt. 3](#) (1964)

Optional: [Debate between Malcolm X and Bayard Rustin](#) (1962) [~34 mins]

Week Thirteen

M (4/12): Davis “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves” (1972) ^{TR} [~29]
 Walker, “In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens” (1972)

W (4/14): Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (1979/1980) [“The Master’s Tools” & “Age, Race, Class, Sex”]
 hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman* (1981) [“Introduction”] [~26]

LONG ESSAY PROMPTS OUT

F (4/16): Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins” (1991) ^{TR} [~59]

Week Fourteen

M (4/19): Sowell, *Knowledge and Decisions* (1980) ch. 5 [~40]
 Plaut, "Review of *The Economics and Politics of Race* by Thomas Sowell"

W (4/21): Loury, "How to Mend Affirmative Action" (1997) [~15]
 Gonzales, "Anatomist of Racial Inequality" (2019)

LONG ESSAY PROSPECTUS PEER-REVIEW SESSION

F (4/23): Steele, *Content of Our Character* (1998) ch. 8 [~34]
 McWhorter, "'Microaggression' is the New Racism on Campus" (2014)
 -----, "The Virtue Signalers Won't Change the World" (2018)

LONG ESSAY+PROSPECTUS SHEET DUEWeek Fifteen

M (4/26): Robinson, *Black Marxism*, ch. 7 (1983) [~34]
 West, *Cornel West Reader*, chs. 13, 34 (2000)

W (4/28): Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (2010) ch. 5 [~49]
 Fryer, "Reconciling Results on Racial Differences in Police Shootings" (2018)
 Optional: [C-SPAN \(Washington Journal Series\) Interview w/ Alexander](#) (2010) [~47 mins]

F (4/30): Coates, "[The Case for Reparations](#)" (2014) [~47]
 West, "[Ta-nehisi Coates is the neoliberal face of the black freedom struggle](#)" (2017)

Complete Post-Assessment Surveys