

Spring 2017 (Section 005)

MW 3:00-4:20 PM

# HST 110

"What We Want, What We Believe"  
#BlackLivesMatter Activism in  
Historical Perspective

Instructor: Dr. Jesse Draper  
E-Mail: dr.jesse.draper@gmail.com  
Phone: (517) 884-5967  
Office: Old Horticulture 141H  
Office Hours: MW 4:30-5:30

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## Course Description

The purpose of this course is to analyze a contemporary issue and try to place it in broader historical perspective. You will learn how to read, analyze and interpret historic texts. You will develop skills in research, writing and the development of informed coherent arguments from the evidence, which the historical records provide. While these skills will be essential for those who study history, they are applicable also to nearly any other field of study. In addition these skills will aid you in becoming an informed citizen. You will be able to more accurately assess information presented to you by the media and government. In short, this class will prepare you to think about, and interpret, a large social movement like #BlackLivesMatter with a broader understanding of the foundations upon which it is built.

Race relations in the United States have a long and troubled history. In reality, America is a world power in large part because of that troubled past. Our rapid economic growth over the 19th and 20th centuries was built on the backs of first, slave labor, followed by the cheap labor of primarily colored peoples (African Americans, Latinos/Xicanos, Native Americans, Asians) who for most of the 20th century had to work for whatever they could get. Segregated housing, education and employment sanctioned by law and white social **hegemony** led to the development of two societies and a permanent, colored urban underclass. The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s led to more equitable laws and hiring practices in many respects, but the enforcement of Civil Rights legislation was anything but consistent. Furthermore, state and local legislation (such as voting restrictions, redistricting, privatized education, etc.) often worked to undermine the incredible achievements of Civil Rights activists. That says nothing of how the instruments of state and private power have continued to violently confront citizens of color in different contexts all over the country.

We will look at racial conflicts between black and white Americans from just after World War I to the present. We will study the evolution of black activism in response to the, often, unfulfilled promises of integration and Civil Rights legislation. We will look at the current #BlackLivesMatter movement and try to understand why this activism is still necessary in

the age of a black President. We will question assumptions about whether or not we are living in a post-racial society as some have described it. This time period and the rich sources of historic evidence left by those who lived then will be the vehicle we use to understand activists' responses to American society.

The reading is spread out over the course of the semester and vital to getting the most out of this course. This course will involve research and writing in the form of essay questions and two papers. Throughout this class you will be asked to provide evidence that you have done the reading and you will be expected to speak in an informed manner on the material being discussed. We will also discuss strategies that will help you approach the reading more efficiently and intelligently.

Note taking will be important, both for the reading and for lecture. I will also demonstrate in class how you can use technology to collaborate on effective group note taking.

***Attendance is mandatory. Participation is not optional. All reading assignments are to be completed before coming to class.***

## **Required Materials**

William M. Tuttle, Jr.

*Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*

Publisher: University of Illinois Press; Paperback (1996)

Peniel E. Joseph.

*Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour.*

Publisher: Henry Holt and Co. (2006)

David Howard-Pitney.

*Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and the Civil Rights Struggle of the 1950s and 1960s: A Brief History with Documents.*

Publisher: Bedford/St. Martins (2004)

Kwame Ture (formerly Stokely Carmichael).

*Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America (with new afterwards by the authors).*

Publisher: Vintage Books; Vintage edition (1992)

<http://visualizingtheredsummer.com/>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/01/my-president-was-black/508793/>

You will also need:

- Access to your university Google Docs account for group notes.
- One package of 50-100 3x5 notecards.

## Other Resources

### Twitter Searches

- <https://twitter.com/hashtag/BlackLivesMatter?src=hash>
- <https://twitter.com/hashtag/BlackGirlsMatter?src=hash>

### Selection of Twitter Handles to Follow

[@VanJones68](#)

[@ShaunKing](#)

[@tanehisicoates](#)

[@AAIHS](#)

[@DrIbram](#)

[@KeishaBlain](#)

[@BlackToLive](#)

[@angelajdavis](#)

[@drashleyfarmer](#)

### Websites

- <http://blacklivesmatter.com>
- <https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/>
- <http://www.aaihs.org/black-perspectives>
- <http://www.blackpast.org/>
- <http://visualizingtheredspring.com/>
- <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/chicago-race-riot-of-1919>
- <http://malcolmxfiles.blogspot.com/2006/08/malcolm-x-collected-speeches-1960-1965.html>
- <http://solomon.bltc.alexanderstreet.com.proxy1.cl.msu.edu> (requires MSU login)

### Suggestions for Further Reading

- To be posted on D2L course site.

# Grades

## Participation

- Group Notes (200 points)
- Discussion Cards (100 points)
- Attendance - Mandatory (-10 points per unexcused absence)

## Quizzes / Exams

- Midterm Exam (200 points)
- Quizzes (as necessary)

## Papers

- Formal Book Review (200 points)
- Final Essay/Final Project (300 points)

## Extra Credit

- Ta-Nehisi Coates Talk Response (50 points)
- Twitter Storify Project (25 points)
- StoryMap (50 points)
- Timeline (50 points)

Grades will be on a 0.0 to 4.0 scale. In class presentations will be recorded with a check mark as completed. Papers with a clear, direct and explicit thesis supported by evidence and argued critically will receive the higher grades. Papers with an unfocused thesis which are not supported by historic evidence, uncritically argued or filled with unproven assertions will receive the lower grades.

## **Grade Scale**

92 to 100 - 4.0

86 to 91 - 3.5

80 to 85 - 3.0

74 to 79 - 2.5

68 to 73 - 2.0

62 to 67 - 1.5

57 to 61 - 1.0

0 to 56 - 0.0

## **Course Schedule (*Subject to Change*)**

### **Week 1 - Introduction: What is #BlackLivesMatter Activism?**

January 9 Introduction; Syllabus

January 11 *Race Riot* (The Red Summer and the Red Scare; Essay on Sources)

Additional Readings: Week 1 PDFs/Links (Posted to D2L)

### **Week 2 - Different Kinds of History and their Development; why start in 1920s?**

January 16 **Martin Luther King Jr. Day: No Class**

January 18 *Race Riot* (Race Riot at Chicago; Going into Canaan)

Additional Readings: Week 2 PDFs/Links

### **Week 3 - Violence at work and at home**

January 23 *Race Riot* (Labor Conflict and Racial Violence)

January 25 *Race Riot* (Contested Neighborhoods and Bombings)

Additional Readings: Week 3 PDFs/Links

### **Week 4 - Responses to State-Sanctioned Violence**

January 30 *Race Riot* (The "New Negro," The Police, and Militant Self-Defense)

February 1 *Race Riot* (Racial Violence in Chicago and the Nation)

Additional Readings: Week 4 PDFs/Links

### **Week 5 - Martin and Malcolm - The Civil Rights Movement**

February 6 *Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X* (Part One)

February 8 *Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X* (Part Two, Sections 1-2)

Additional Readings: Week 5 PDFs/Links

### **Week 6 - Different Visions of the African American Struggle in America**

February 13 *Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X* (Part Two, Section 3-4)

February 15 *Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X* (Part Two, Section 5-6)

Additional Readings: Week 6 PDFs/Links

### **Week 7 - Documentary - *The 13th*; To Shape a New World**

February 20 Film: *13th*

February 22 **Midterm Review**

Additional Readings: Week 7 PDFs/Links

### **Week 8 - At Home in the World; Waging War Amid Shadows**

February 27 *Waiting 'till the Midnight Hour* (Introduction; Ch.1)

March 1 **Midterm Exam**

## Week 9 - SPRING BREAK (March 6-10)

### **Week 10 - Liberators, Political Kingdoms, "Black" is a Country**

March 13     *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour* (Ch. 2-3)

March 15     *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour* (Ch. 4-5)

Additional Readings: Week 10 PDFs/Links

### **Week 11 - Black Power, Storm Warnings, The Trial of Huey Newton**

March 20     *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour* (Ch. 6-7)

March 22     *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour* (Ch.8-9)

Additional Readings: Week 11 PDFs/Links

### **Week 12 - Documentary - *The Black Power Mixtape***

March 27     Film: *The Black Power Mixtape*

March 29     *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour* (Ch.10-11; Epilogue)

Additional Readings: Week 12 PDFs/Links

### **Week 13 - White Power/Black Power**

April 3       *Black Power* (From the authors; Preface)

April 5       *Black Power* (Ch. 1-2)

Additional Readings: Week 13 PDFs/Links

**Extra Credit: Ta-Nehisi Coates: World View Lecture, 6:30PM, Wharton Center**

### **Week 14 - Problems with the Movement**

April 10      *Black Power* (Ch. 3-4)

April 12      *Black Power* (Ch. 5-6)

Additional Readings: Week 14 PDFs/Links

### **Week 15 - Documentary - *Hip-Hop Evolution***

April 17      Film: *Hip-Hop Evolution*

April 19      *Black Power* (Ch. 7-8)

Additional Readings: Week 15 PDFs/Links

### **Week 16 - #BlackLivesMatter**

April 24      *Black Power* (All 3 Afterwards)

April 26      Conclusions - #BlackLivesMatter in historical context

**Wednesday May 3 - Final Paper/Digital Project Due**