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# Civil Rights in America: Since 1954

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*I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.*

*Angela Y. Davis*

## **POL 41—Civil Rights in America: Since 1954 (3 Credits)**

Open Educational Resource

### **Course Description and Objectives:**

This course about the history and the political ideas of important social movements in America in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout the semester students will read several secondary source historical narratives and study primary source materials from each movement. Student will read key writings and speeches by both well-known social movement figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Cesar Chavez and lesser known activists and groups such as Fred Hampton, the Young Lords, the Combahee River Collective group, among others. is to get students to understand the ideas and history key social movements the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Studying the history of these movements along with the political thinking that was central to them will encourage students to analyze and evaluate the political strategy, the political philosophy, and the goals (those achieved and those yet unrealized) of each of these movements. Such critical engagement with the history and the political ideas of social movements in the past century might offer insights about those in the present.

### **Course Learning Objectives:**

This course meets General Education Goals required of BCC graduates in areas of reasoning, analysis, information literacy, and communication. To demonstrate these proficiencies students will be asked to meet the learning outcomes outlined below:

- Gather, interpret, and evaluate information from a number of sources including primary sources, such as the writings, speeches, and interviews of social movement activists and secondary source historical narratives and interpretations of 20<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary social movements.
- Produce well-reasoned discussion board posts and/or exam essays to explain and analyze the achievements and limitations of the Civil Rights (African-Americans), Women’s Liberation, and the Latino/a-Hispanic Rights, gay/lesbian movements.
- Through quizzes, exams and/or essays identify, analyze and evaluate the influence of the Civil Rights Movement (African-Americans), Women’s Liberation Movement, and the Latino/a-Hispanic Rights, gay/lesbian movements on contemporary political, economic, and social institutions.

### **Required Materials:**

This is an Open Educational Resource (OER) course. All of the required readings are available and fully accessible online. See, “Course Outline” section below for URL for each reading.

Each student is required to obtain a Blackboard Account and to maintain access throughout the semester. All assignments will be posted on Blackboard and must be completed on Blackboard.

### Procedure to Access Blackboard:

1. Go to: CUNY Portal [https://cunyportal.cuny.edu/cpr/authenticate/portal\\_login.jsp](https://cunyportal.cuny.edu/cpr/authenticate/portal_login.jsp)
2. Type in your username and password
3. Left side box (Applications/Resources) click on Blackboard
4. Right side box (My Courses) click on the appropriate course

### Course Grades and Evaluation:

Grades will be assessed based on weekly quizzes, discussion board participation, and exams. Each of these assessments will be conducted on Blackboard.

#### Blackboard Quizzes: 30%

Each week the instructor will post a short quiz based on the readings assigned. The quiz is intended to measure students' comprehension of the ideas and concepts addressed in the assigned readings. The quizzes will be in the format of short answer and multiple-choice questions.

Please note, each week's quiz will be open only for one week. Please be sure to keep up with the readings and the quizzes. There are no make ups allowed for missed quizzes.

#### Blackboard Discussion Board Participation: 30%

For each week's readings the instructor will post a discussion board prompt on Blackboard. The prompt is intended to encourage students to analyze, interpret, and apply the ideas discussed in the readings. Each student is required to offer a substantive reply to the prompt and, in addition, to comment on another student's contribution to the discussion. In other words, each student must participate at least two times per week to receive credit for discussion board participation.

Please note, each week's discussion will be open for one week. Please be sure to keep up with the readings and the discussion board prompt and comments. There are no make ups allowed for missed participation on the discussion board.

#### Exams: 40%

There will be two exams throughout the semester: a mid-term and final exam. Each exam is worth 20% of your grade. The purpose of the exams is for students to critically think about the connections among the readings and to demonstrate their ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the ideas and arguments presented. The exam assessments will be in the form of essay questions. The exams will be posted on Blackboard and students are required to complete each exam within the given time.

Please note, each exam will be open and available on Blackboard for ten (10) days. Please be sure to be aware of exam announcements and deadlines. There are no make ups allowed for missed exams.

## **COURSE OUTLINE:**

### **Week 1: Civil Rights Movements**

1. “Civil Rights in America: Racial Voting Rights,” National Parks Service, pp. 1-71, [https://www.nps.gov/nhl/learn/themes/CivilRights\\_VotingRights.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/nhl/learn/themes/CivilRights_VotingRights.pdf)
2. Loic Wacquant, “From Slavery to Mass Incarceration: Rethinking the ‘Race Question’ in the US,” *New Left Review* 13 (Jan-Feb. 2002), <https://www.princeton.edu/~ereading/wacquant,%20slavery%20to%20incarceration.pdf>
3. “Strange Fruit,” Billie Holiday and Abel Meeropol, *History is a Weapon* <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/fruitholiday.html>
4. “The Murder of Emmett Till,” Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-rights-history-project/articles-and-essays/murder-of-emmett-till/>

#### *Recommended material:*

1. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2012), Introduction and chapter 1 “The Rebirth of Caste.”

### **Week 2:**

1. “School Segregation and Integration,” Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-rights-history-project/articles-and-essays/school-segregation-and-integration/>
2. “Transcript of Brown v. Board of Education,” National Parks Service Historic Archive, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=87&page=transcript>
3. “Two Reactions to the Brown v. Board of Education US Supreme Court Decision,” Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/supreme-court-decision.html>

### **Week 3:**

1. “The Montgomery Bus Boycott” Announcement, Women’s Political Council, *History is a Weapon* <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/wpcmontgomery.html>
2. “Southern Negro Leaders Conference, Working Paper,” Library of Congress [http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/civil-rights-era.html#video5\\_4](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/civil-rights-era.html#video5_4)
3. “An Appeal for Human Rights,” Greensboro Sit-ins, *History is a Weapon* <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/anappealforhumanrights.html>
4. “They Can’t Turn Back,” James Baldwin (about the Greensboro sit-in movement), *History is a Weapon* <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/baldwincantturnback.html>
5. “Sit-ins in Nashville, Tennessee,” (1960) Library of Congress (video clip) <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/nashville-sit-ins.html>

### **Week 4:**

1. “Martin Luther King Jr., on Non-Violence,” (video clip) Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/mlk-on-nonviolence.html>
2. “Birmingham, Alabama, Protests,” (video clip) Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/birmingham-protests.html>

3. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," MLK, *History is a Weapon*  
<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/kingjail.html>

*Recommended material:*

1. George Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1965).

**Week 5:**

1. "The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom," John F. Kennedy Library and Museum,  
<https://civilrights.jfklibrary.org/Media-Assets/The-March-on-Washington-for-Jobs-and-Freedom.aspx#Planning-the-March>
2. "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, List of Demands,"  
<http://www.crmvet.org/docs/moworg2.pdf>
3. "The Revolution is at Hand," John L. Lewis, *History is a Weapon*  
<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/lewis.html>
4. "President Kennedy's Civil Rights Address," (video clip) Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/kennedys-civil-rights-address.html>
5. "Divergent View of President Kennedy's Civil Rights Address," (Malcolm X) Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/birmingham-protests.html>
6. "Message to the Grassroots," Malcolm X, *History is a Weapon*  
<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/malcgrass.html>

**Week 6:**

1. "President Lyndon B. Johnson's Remarks Upon Signing the Civil Rights Act in 1964," (video clip) Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/johnsons-speech-on-civil-rights-act.html>
2. "1964 Civil Rights Act," Library of Congress  
[http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/epilogue.html#video10\\_4](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/epilogue.html#video10_4)
3. "Heart of Atlanta Motel v. United States," Testing the Civil Rights Act, Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/johnsons-speech-on-civil-rights-act.html>
4. "The Ballot or the Bullet." Malcolm X, *History is a Weapon*  
<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/malcolm.html>
5. "To Fulfill These Rights Speech at Howard University," Lyndon Baines Johnson,  
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27021>
6. "1965 Voting Rights Act," <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=100>

*Recommended material:*

1. Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, "The Civil Rights Movement," in *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

**Week 7:**

1. “White Backlash in the North,” (video clip) Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/white-backlash-in-the-north.html>
2. “Malcolm X on Afro-American History” Malcolm X, *History is a Weapon*,  
<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/malconafamhist.html>
3. “Beyond Vietnam,” MLK  
[http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/kingweb/publications/speeches/Beyond\\_Vietnam.pdf](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/kingweb/publications/speeches/Beyond_Vietnam.pdf)
4. “Haywood Burns on the Limitations of Civil Rights Law,” (video clip, 1972) Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/haywood-burns.html>

*Recommended material:*

1. Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010).
2. Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy and Society* (Chicago: Haymarket, 1983).

**Mid-term Exam**

**Week 8:**

1. “The Basis of Black Power: A SNCC Position Paper,” *History is a Weapon*  
<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/blackpower.html>
2. “Black Panther Party Platform, Program and Rules,” *History is a Weapon*  
<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/bpp.html>
3. “Power Anywhere Where There’s People,” Fred Hampton, *History is a Weapon*  
<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/fhamptonspeech.html>
4. “Kathleen Cleaver Oral History Interview,” (video clip, begin at 1:05) Library of Congress  
[https://www.loc.gov/item/afc2010039\\_crhp0051/](https://www.loc.gov/item/afc2010039_crhp0051/)

*Recommended material:*

1. Philip S. Foner, *Black Panthers Speak* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014).
2. Goran Olsson, *The Black Power MixTape, 1967-1975* (documentary)

**Week 9: Latino Rights Movement**

1. Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America* (documentary)
2. “Civil Rights in America: Racial Voting Rights,” National Parks Service, pp. 102-110,  
[https://www.nps.gov/nhl/learn/themes/CivilRights\\_VotingRights.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/nhl/learn/themes/CivilRights_VotingRights.pdf)
3. “Puerto Rico en mi Corazon,” Jeffrey Ogbar, *Centro Journal*,  
<https://marxists.architexturez.net/history/erol/nem-1/corazon.pdf>
4. “13 Point Program”, Young Lords Party,  
[http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML\\_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/Young\\_Lords\\_platform.html](http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/Young_Lords_platform.html)
5. “A Bicentennial Without a Puerto Rican Colony,” Piri Thomas, *History is a Weapon*  
<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/pirithomasbicent.html>

*Recommended material:*

1. Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire: The History of Latinos in America* (New York: Penguin, 2011).

### **Week 10:**

1. “Robert F. Kennedy Statement on Cesar Chavez,” March 10, 1968, National Archives <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/robert-f-kennedy-statement-on-cesar-chavez-march-10-1968>
2. “Address to the Commonwealth Club of California,” Cesar Chavez, *History is a Weapon* <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/chavezcommonwealth.html>
3. “Opening UP Borderland Studies: A Review of U.S-Mexico Border Militarization Discourse,” Jose Palafox, *History is a Weapon* <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/palafox.html>
4. “Be Down with the Brown,” Elizabeth Martinez, *History is a Weapon* <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/martinezdownbrown.html>

### **Week 11: Women’s Liberation Movement**

1. “Women, Work and the Mainstreaming of Feminism,” Hester Eisenstein, *Feminism Seduced* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 39-71.
2. “Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo,” Casey Hayden and Mary King, *History is a Weapon* <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/sexcaste.html>
3. “Griswold v. Connecticut,” C-Span, <http://landmarkcases.c-span.org/Case/21/Griswold-v-Connecticut>
4. “Abortion on Demand: A Woman’s Right, Caroline Lund and Cindy Jaquith, *History is a Weapon* <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/abortionondemandluncijaquith.html>
5. Excerpt, “Justice Blackmun’s Majority Opinion in Roe v. Wade,” <http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/410/113.html>

#### *Recommended material:*

1. Betty Friedan, “The Problem That Has No Name,” *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963) <https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/ows/seminars/tcentury/FeminineMystique.pdf>
2. Hester Eisenstein, “Fault Lines of Race and Class,” *Feminism Seduced* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 73-106.
3. Dorothy Sue Cobble, “The Unfinished Agenda,” *The Other Women’s Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 206-228.

### **Week 12:**

1. “Socialist Feminism: A Strategy for the Women’s Movement,” *History is a Weapon* <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/chisocfem.html>
2. “Who Will Revere the Black Woman,” Abbey Lincoln, *History is a Weapon* <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/lincolnreverebblackwoman.html>
3. “The Combahee River Collective Statement,” Combahee River Collective, *History is a Weapon* <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/combrivercoll.html>

4. "A Conversation with Betty Friedan," (2005) Library of Congress  
[https://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature\\_wdesc.php?rec=3675](https://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=3675)

### **Week 13: LGBTQ Rights Movement**

1. "Chronologies of LGBTQ History," OutHistory.org  
[http://www.outhistory.org/items/browse?search=&advanced\[0\]\[element\\_id\]=97&advanced\[0\]\[type\]=contains&advanced\[0\]\[terms\]=Timeline&type=17&submit\\_search=Search](http://www.outhistory.org/items/browse?search=&advanced[0][element_id]=97&advanced[0][type]=contains&advanced[0][terms]=Timeline&type=17&submit_search=Search)
2. "The Queer Nation Manifesto," *History is a Weapon*  
<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/queernation.html>
3. "The Woman Identified Woman," Radicalesbians, *History is a Weapon*  
<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/radicalesbianswoman.html>
4. "The Hope Speech", Harvey Milk, *History is a Weapon*  
<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/milkhopespeech.html>
5. Urvashi Vaid, Lisa Duggan, Tamara Metz and Amber Hollibaugh, "What's Next for the LGBT Movement?," *Nation* (June 27, 2013), <https://www.thenation.com/article/whats-next-lgbt-movement/>

### **Week 14:**

Contemporary Struggles:

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2012), chapter 6 "The Fire This Time."

Peter Kolozi and James Freeman, "Martin Luther King, Jr. and America's Fourth Revolution: The Poor People's Campaign at Fifty," *American Studies Journal* (January 2018), <http://www.asjournal.org/64-2018/martin-luther-king-jr-americas-fourth-revolution-poor-peoples-campaign-fifty/>

"The Movement for Black Lives Matter Platform," <https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/>

"The Souls of Poor Folk," Poor People's Campaign <https://poorpeoplescampaign.org/index.php/audit/>

### **Week 15:**

**Final Exam**