

HIST 9XXX
The Civil Rights Movement – ONLINE (3 credits)



Louis Delsarte mural at the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site

History, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, our aspirations.

-James Baldwin, "White Man's Guilt," *Ebony*, 1965

The history of civil liberties in the United States is not a straight-line trajectory toward ever-greater freedom. It is a complex story in which victories can prove temporary and regression can follow progress.

-Eric Foner, "None Dare Call It Treason," *Nation*, 2003

Course Description

The civil rights revolution of the mid-twentieth century is an important feature of U.S. social and political history. Indeed, some historians have argued that it is the most important period in U.S. history after the American Revolution and the Civil War. Popular accounts, including those in most history textbooks, tell a simplified story of a nation finally responding to racial problems when Rosa Parks sat down and Dr. King stood up. This course expands, enriches, and complicates this narrative by examining the modern Civil Rights Movement in the larger historical context of the African-American freedom struggle, from its roots in Reconstruction, through the period of legalized racial discrimination and its eventual dismantling, to the ongoing persistence of racial inequality and the defense of white privilege.

To understand these developments, we will draw on historical scholarship, documentary films, and first-hand accounts. All history makes its impact through the lives of people. This is especially evident in the African American freedom struggle, which is a history that has largely been told through the

stories of “ordinary” people, mostly black, some white, who brought about massive social change. Our goal will be to understand the many levels at which this struggle took on shape and meaning, from large organizations to the lives of individuals, and the many rights—always much more than the vote—that hung in the balance.

Upon completion of this course you will know or be able to do the following.

- Become familiar with the distinctive features of African American history and its relationship to the general narrative of American history.
- Acquire a detailed knowledge of the modern Civil Rights Movement—the efforts of Black Americans and their allies in the mid-20th century to reform U.S. civil and social institutions.
- Understand processes of social and political change in the United States, and that civil liberties are neither self-enforcing nor self-correcting.

Required Technology & Texts

TECHNOLOGY: This course requires a high-speed internet connection and a computer device capable of word processing and streaming media. The course is administrated through Blackboard university email. Hence, you must have and use Fitchburg State Blackboard and email accounts. In order to access course documents, you must be able to view PDF files.

TEXTS: There are no required textbook purchases for this course. Journal articles, book chapters, and other required readings are available through Blackboard. Films are available on Kanopy, a library database. You will need to use your Falcon ID and password to access the database.

Instructional Design

METHOD: The method of instruction in this course emphasizes active, independent learning. You are expected to read for knowledge and write with the goal of exploring ideas, including those of your classmates.

FORMAT: This course is an ONLINE course. All work will be completed on-line using Blackboard and specified digital sites and resources. The course is not self-paced. You are responsible for knowing all deadlines and submitting assignments on time to keep up with the class.

INSTRUCTOR ROLE: My role as instructor of the course takes three forms: I grade all assigned work; I use the announcement function to comment on classwork; and I use email to provide individualized feedback. The best way to reach me is by email. If I am unable to respond immediately, I will endeavor to do so before the end of that day.

Expected Academic and Professional Behavior

CIVILITY: Everyone, including myself, is expected to show respect for others. In a course of this nature, that includes abiding by the rules of written English in all communication (including emails), and thoughtfully and respectfully engaging others in discussion following the rules of “[netiquette](#).”

PROFESSIONALISM: Everyone, including myself, is expected to behave in a professional manner. This means being punctual, meeting deadlines, being prepared, completing work diligently, using a polite, respectful tone for all communication, resolving issues in a mature and responsible manner, and behaving ethically.

LATE WORK: All coursework must be completed on time. You may request an extension if the circumstances truly warrant it. However, you must make this request ahead of time.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Academic integrity is an important subset of professional behavior. As I'm sure you're already aware, it is unethical to cheat, or to use the words or ideas of another person without proper acknowledgement. Use appropriate citations to indicate the source of any wording of ideas not your own, including that found on the Internet, or created by another student. There will be serious consequences for your grade in this course, and possibly for your academic standing at the university, if you are found guilty of cheating or plagiarism. Additional information about academic integrity can be found in the Academic Policies section of the Student Handbook.

Support Services

TECHNICAL SUPPORT: For assistance with Blackboard, FSU email, and other technical support contact the University's [technology help](#).

EXTENDED CAMPUS CENTER: Extended Campus students are encouraged to take advantage of the university's [online student resources](#), including an online "[Student Resource Center](#)."

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY: The library provides a full range of library services to students enrolled in distance learning and extended campus programs. Information on how to access these services is available on the library DL&EC [libguide](#).

ACADEMIC SUPPORT: Students who wish to deepen their understanding of course concepts, extend their skills, and improve performance in this course are encouraged to take advantage of the University's [Academic Support](#) services, which include an on-line tutoring service.

SPECIAL NEEDS: If you have a documented disability that may require accommodation, please communicate with me as soon as possible. Additionally, you will need to contact [Disability Services](#).

Assignments

There is no midterm or final examination in this course. Instead, course assignments consist of those outlined below. Detailed instructions and evaluation criteria are provided on Blackboard in separate handouts for each type of assignment. All assignments are graded on a 10-point scale translated into a percentage. The overall grade for each category of assignment is a straight average. You can keep track of your grades on Blackboard under "My Grades."

- *Reading Quizzes* There is an untimed multiple-choice quiz administered through Blackboard on each assigned reading.
- *Discussion Assignments* Discussion assignments are designed to extend your learning about specific problems relating to course material, and to allow you to learn from each other.
- *Final Assignment* There are two options for the final assignment. The first option, designed for in-service teachers, involves creating a unit of instruction on a course topic supported by historiographical and primary source research. The second option requires completing a 10-15 page historiographical review essay or research paper on a course topic.

ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES/TIMES: Provided as a separate document under “Course Information.”

GRADE DETERMINATION: Overall course grades will be assigned according to the Fitchburg State grading scale. In calculating final grades, scores in each assignment category will be averaged and weighted as indicated. If you have any concerns about the evaluation of your work, please speak with me directly and refer to the grade appeal policy in the university catalog.

	<i>Percent of Grade</i>
Reading Quizzes	40%
Discussions	40%
Final Assignment	20%

final grades will be assigned according to the university graduate grade scale

A	4.0	95% - 100%	B-	2.7	80% - 82%
A-	3.7	92% - 94%	C+/B-	2.5	77% - 79%
B+/A-	3.5	89% - 91%	C+	2.3	74% - 76%
B+	3.3	86% - 88%	C	2.0	71% - 73%
B	3.0	83% - 85%	F	0.0	0% - 59%

TOPICS

The First Reconstruction and the Era of Jim Crow

1. African American Alternatives in the New South
2. Legal Action or Direct Action?

A Second Reconstruction: The Modern Civil Rights Movement

3. Segregation or Integration?
4. Assessing the Success of Legal Action: *Brown*
5. Federal Legislation
6. Nonviolent Civil Disobedience
7. Black Power
8. The Power of Music

Assessing the Movement

9. Legal Action vs. Direct Action Revisited
10. The Role of Leadership vs Grassroots Activism
11. Time for a Third Reconstruction?