History 332: Civil Rights and Black Freedom (RI)  
UNCG, Spring 2010

This class is especially topical given the 50th anniversary of the Greensboro student sit-ins on February 1, 2010. But the black freedom movement -- or “long civil rights movement” as it has been called -- was more than simply a heroic battle against southern segregation and disfranchisement. The series of dramatic, publicized confrontations in the South that led to national policy breakthroughs between 1954 and 1968 – the civil rights and voting rights acts of Congress, presidential orders, supreme court cases -- are certainly crucial to understanding the movement.

But the movement had deep historical and local roots that lie way back in the era of “Jim Crow.” And it continued long after the big marches stopped. This was a mass movement of ordinary people, with lots of internal conflict and contending ideologies, but also with impressive local and national coalitions that crossed racial and class lines. So in addition to the grand dramas that usually get attention in “civil rights” courses or commemorations, we will examine issues and people that did not make headlines, but certainly made history; grass-roots organizers, women, labor union activists and working class “foot soldiers,” northern civil rights activists, and local black nationalists. We will examine coalition builders, and consider especially people who insisted that class and gender equality must also be goals in the struggle for human rights. We will consider how the civil rights revolution contributed strategies and inspiration for other rights struggles: the war on poverty, the antiwar movement, the women’s movement, and liberation movements among other people of color.

We will also examine some of the movement’s bitter failures around issues that continue to divide the nation -- wealth inequality, segregated landscapes of housing and education -- as well as the extraordinary breakthroughs that reshaped a multi-racial society. Through examining primary sources, we will come to understand the mass media’s powerful role in communicating (and in some ways obscuring) the movement’s far-reaching dreams. The course will draw on scholarship, but also examine primary sources: biographies, memoirs, oral histories, letters, speeches, interviews and news coverage. As a Research Intensive course, this class will ask you to improve your mastery of several major tools of historical research.

Learning goals:

The purpose of this class is to examine key episodes of the black freedom movement will inform your appreciation of key questions and controversies at the time and among historians today. In each case, different forms of primary source material will be up for debate and consideration. These themes reoccur throughout, but are especially up front during these episodes.

**Continuity and Discontinuity in History (The 1960 Sit-In Movement).** Does history move in a continuous flow or are there dramatic disjunctures (waterfalls if you will) that shift social action to a whole other level? (The Greensboro VOICES oral history project). A stress on continuity identifies traditions and institutions that lay the groundwork for long-term resistance to white supremacy. A theoretical emphasis on discontinuity or novelty sees dramatic innovations and breakthroughs in tactics, race relations, and definitions of “the problem.” It highlights crucial historical periods when new "phases" of the movement take shape.
Civil Rights and Economic Opportunity (The 1963 "Negro Revolt" and March on Washington). Did civil rights leaders and national political leaders appreciate, or fail to appreciate, the deep linkages in American society between racial oppression and class inequality? How did they conceive of the relationship between race and class and the actions necessary to uproot these intertwined structures of unequal power? (Speeches, correspondence, presidential Oval Office recordings, newspapers).

National Power and Local Empowerment, from the Top-Down and Bottom-Up (the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the Democratic National Convention, August 1964). Was the federal government and Democratic Party a reliable ally for those seeking to transform politics at the local level? Where does power reside? (Oral histories, presidential recordings, memoirs).

Civil Rights Versus Black Power, or Civil Rights And Black Power (the Black Power debate 1966-1969). Was black power a dramatic departure from earlier nonviolent civil rights organizing, or did they find a lot of common ground, emerge from common grievances, and confront common dilemmas of empowerment? Or were certain strategies indeed incompatible, as many people at the time maintained? (Media, memoirs, congressional testimony, etc.)

Other important themes this course will pursue include:

The equal importance and interdependence of northern and southern movements.

Women's enormous but underappreciated contributions to social change, and how they defined issues and organized people when gender equality became more integral to human rights and black freedom.

Evolving mass media of electronic and print journalism, how journalism opened up political opportunities but also may have channeled local organizing in less productive directions. Many activists at the time criticized strategies of mass "mobilization" for dramatic but short-lived protests and crises, rather than political "organization" of local talent for the long haul.

Students will learn how to identify, evaluate, measure of the strengths and weaknesses of a variety of historical sources, and put them in context of larger narratives, debates, and analyses:

1) Monographs, books that develop a sustained analysis on the basis of extensive research. (Many of my assigned short readings come from monograph chapters. This form of scholarship takes the longest and is often the most deeply considered and polished).  
2) Scholarly Articles: shorter research reports collected in professional journals, such as the Journal of American History or bound volumes, called "collections" and edited by scholars.  
3) Memoirs: book length assessments of movement lessons written by participants at an historical remove from the events covered.  
4) Oral Histories and Interviews: collaborations, really, between movement participants and interviewers, either at the time (interviews) or at a substantial historical remove (oral histories), conducted either by journalists, other movement participants, kin, students, or scholars.  
5) Speeches, Conversation Transcripts: these you will find either printed for publication at the time, transcribed from actual meetings or private phone conversations (usually courtesy of the White House or the FBI).  
6) Correspondence, Notes, Meeting Minutes, and other organizational materials. These are often found in archives, on microfilm, or increasingly in digital form on the Internet.  
7) Pamphlets, Promotional or Fund-Raising Materials.  
8) News coverage, print, radio, television, black and white, dissident and mainstream organizations. Example: The New York Amsterdam News was Harlem's preeminent black newspaper. New America
was the newspaper of the Socialist party. The *New York Times* reflected northern liberal opinion. The *Memphis Commercial Appeal* was very conservative and even segregationist.

9) Documentary film and photography.

**Requirements**

**Attendance, Preparation, and Participation: 10%**

Because this constitutes a group process of learning, each of you should prepare thoroughly and show up consistently to class. We will be examining themes and concepts that, if you don't understand them early on, might give you trouble later. We will consider strategies of social change, organizations, key individuals, and dynamics of power that will require solid knowledge of certain chronologies and core concepts.

Please sign the attendance sheet each day. I require you to bring all assigned readings for each day. (In-class graded exercises will often require that you examine assigned materials). After each class, I will make notes of the people who asked good questions or offered informed comments based on the readings, film clips, or research materials. I will observe your participation in subgroups. I can usually tell which quieter members of the class are thinking hard and learning (ask me how I do this).

**Weekly "Reflection" Exercises, In-Class Writing or Homework: 40%**

( Normally these take the form of 300-500 word essays) By THURSDAY of each week preceding classes, check "Assignments" on Blackboard for guidelines, and explanations on how each assignment will be evaluated.

These might be short papers that I will ask you to hand in to me on a specific day. I might ask for a Blackboard Discussion Board posting that will benefit the class. Or I will give you an in-class writing exercise that asks you to think through questions posed by that week's readings. (In some cases you might encounter short answer quizzes, but always they will be designed to evaluate how you think and not simply what you can memorize).

**EVALUATION AND POINT SCORING:** I will average your best TEN (and then perhaps add some points for other worthy efforts not counted). Rubric: U= Unsatisfactory (0 points); S- = Adequate (7.5 points); S = Satisfactory (8.5 points) S+ = Excellent (9.5 points); S++ = Stellar (10 points). Notice: failure to complete at least 10 of these assignments in a minimally satisfactory way for any reason will result in a 10 point loss for each missed assignment.

**TWO Short “Debate Research Papers”: 20%**

**Choose: Due either 2/17 or 3/2 AND due either 3/22 or 4/2 – See also Blackboard for guidelines**

(800-1000 words; 4-5 pages double spaced, Times New Roman Font, 11 or 12 point, no more than 1 inch margins, footnoted).

During weeks when we have a clear-cut debate between contrasting positions, I will require half the class to research a question from several angles and write formal papers that describe and evaluate specific positions in the debate. Class will be animated by well-developed and well discussed viewpoints among the students. The "research" materials will be: 1) extra readings in the form of .pdf files I post for that debate under “Course Documents” on Blackboard; 2) references from the common assigned readings, and 3) pieces of information you have discovered yourselves from a variety of sources. These sources will be varied and will require careful SELECTION (which is probably the hardest research “skill” to teach). **Regarding extra sources:** I can’t lead you there, just show you maps. Creative research becomes evident when new discoveries support one interpretation or the other.

**SIGN UP SHEETS WILL CIRCULATE SOON -- CHOOSE:**

February 17: Montgomery Bus Boycott, OR
March 2: “Negro Revolt” of 1963

AND CHOOSE:
March 22: Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party Challenge to the National Democratic Party, OR
April 12: Black Power

Final Research Project: “Turning Points in a Civil Rights or Black Power Life”: 40%
DUE WEDNESDAY MAY 12 AT 3:00 PM – PAPER COPY TO ME AND ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION TO SAFE ASSIGN ON BLACKBOARD (TO BE EXPLAINED)
(1200-1500 words 6-8 pages, with citations in footnotes in line with a style guide available on Blackboard under “Course Documents”). You may expand upon but must substantially revise one of your shorter pieces. Or you may choose to explore in greater depth someone encountered anywhere in the readings. Or you may profile someone active during the movement in Greensboro who you might encounter in any this semester’s events. If you have written on someone for another class, please pick someone new. Focus on a person's practical experiences and contributions to a particular campaign or debate. Draw upon only those elements of the larger context of the movement that help us explain their contributions, and finally, evaluate what they (or scholars) made of their experiences. What larger insights did their decisions and “social learning” produce?

Again: You'll need to focus on a part of their life that was especially consequential. What ideas that they put forward? What choices did they make? What impact did they have on the movement? What lessons did they learn as they reflected on their experience and strategic choices? Sources for this should be scholarly books, articles, and reliable online websites constructed by civil rights scholars or identifiable civil rights veterans [no Wikipedia absolutely, since the authors are anonymous and the knowledge is derivative].

Grading Scale: A+: 98-100; A: 93-97; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72; D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 60-62; F: 59 and lower; N/C: 0 (as in No Credit in cases of failure to hand in any work or take the quizzes and final).

Conferences: I am here to help with questions, to guide you in developing your ideas and writing strategies, and to give you careful honest evaluation of your work. Do not hesitate to visit my office hours or schedule an appointment. When appropriate, I will refer you to the Writing Center, an invaluable resource for sharpening your language tools.

Rev. Jackson Preaches: "If you are never willing to risk saying something dumb, you'll never learn to say anything smart.” -- Rev. Jackson

UNCG’s Academic Integrity Policy (http://saf.dept.uncg.edu/studiscp/Honor.html). Know the definition of plagiarism and the rules of quoting, citing, and paraphrasing sources. Memorize the library's definition and then take the research tour: http://library.uncg.edu/depts/ref/tutorial/integrate/plagdef.asp

Course policy on sustainability:
Campus-wide policies are being adopted that require students, staff and faculty to act in ecologically conscious ways while at UNCG. Recycle plastic bottles or bring water in reusable bottles; turn off lights and projectors; recycle office paper, newspapers, and cardboard; print papers on two-sided paper; use scratch paper for quizzes. There are no points for this, just the grade the biosphere gives us at the end of the third millennium! Here are links to sustainability information at UNCG, including a recycling guide.
http://sustain.uncg.edu/; http://www.uncg.edu/student.groups/uncgreen/index.htm
Course policy on use of electronic devices in class and general etiquette:
Turn cell phones off unless you are a caretaker or emergency responder. No text messaging will be permitted. Laptops should be used for activities exclusively related to class. The energy of the class, visibly declines when people are distracted. Give the class your full attention. Audible private conversations really can distract your classmates and your professors.

Required Reading:


I chose my book for the scope it offers, its attention to “civil rights lives,” and the “research intensive” back stories I can show and tell. It is recommended for advanced undergraduates and above, so it is rather information-packed and may be challenging at times. But it is also a good example of where historical scholarship is now.

Course Reader available only at Copy King, 611 W. Lee St., Greensboro, ph. 333-9900 (CALL THEM FIRST). This is an excellent low cost alternative to published collections. Purchasing this convenient reader ensures you will always bring pertinent texts to class.

Expect to read 60-80 pp. per week. (Some weeks will be heavier, some lighter, especially toward the end). Other than the research papers and a couple of exercises, all readings will come from these two sources.

**Schedule of Meetings**

1/20: Introductions

Assignment: Study this syllabus. Think of it as a contract between you, me, and the class. I suspect most of your questions will be answered by reading this over.

1/25: The View from the Nation


1/27: The View from the Trenches


What were the major achievements of the civil rights era, and how did local movements and national leaders interact to produce change? Were national institutions, in Payne’s terms, facilitators of social change or obstacles around which activists had to maneuver?

Read carefully, Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights*, Intro.

1/28: Optional attendance: “WC at the Lunch Counter: UNCG’s Involvement in the Sit-In Demonstration of 1960,” Multicultural Resource Center, EUC, 4:00 PM
2/1: Optional Activity: to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the student sit-ins, UNCG students will march from Guilford Hall (north end of College Avenue) to the Woolworth Building on Elm St., better known as The International Civil Rights Museum, at 11:30 AM. Class will meet normally at 2 PM.

2/1: Sitting In: Greensboro Makes History (This week’s reflection exercise delves into a key website of oral histories and shares your results with the class on Blackboard Discussion Board)


Assignment: On the Blackboard Discussion Board: Find a meaningful quote from the Greensboro VOICES Project, in a way that demonstrates you understood the main concepts outlined by Davidson and Lytle. Instructions under “Assignments” on Blackboard.

2/3: The Media and the Movement

Jackson, From Civil Rights to Human Rights, 110-116.


2/8: World War II and the Mobilization of Black Discontent

Thomas Sugrue, Sweet Land of Liberty on northern desegregation 142-162. (20)


2/10: Making King

Jackson, From Civil Rights to Human Rights, ch. 1, 25-50.

Assignment: Spend 20 minutes familiarizing yourself with this website and SKIMMING the referenced documents for interesting content:

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford University: Clayborne Carson, Senior Editor, The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.


2/17: The Montgomery Bus Boycott: Community Mobilization and Charismatic Leadership


RESEARCH PAPER OPTION 1.A.: Supplemental materials are available on Blackboard and through online newspapers (use these and don’t simply rely upon assigned readings).

Question for Research and Discussion: to what degree was this movement decisively shaped by ordinary people, and to what degree was its course shaped by the distinctive leadership of Martin
Luther King Jr.? Do different sources speak to different dimensions of this leadership-followership dilemma?

2/19: Testing Strategies of Social Change in the 1950s: Nonviolence, Self-Defense, Citizenship Education

Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights*, 75-110.
Compare Robert Williams, Septima Clark and MLK on nonviolent strategies for social change. Which strategies for social change seemed most fruitful in the violent and repressive context of the late 1950s white “massive resistance” movement? (see Blackboard for optional extra readings on King, Williams, Clark, and self-defense. All of these are candidates for final papers).

2/22: Battling on Kennedy’s New Frontier

Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights*, ch. 5, Dreams of the Masses, 123-154. (30)

2/24: Civil Rights in the North in the Late 1950s and Early 1960s


3/1: The Black Revolt of 1963: Birmingham and Greensboro

Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights*, 155-165 (10).


3/2: The Contested Meanings of the 1963 March on Washington

Gloria Richardson, “Cambridge, Maryland, ‘City of Progress’ for Rich” New America August, 31, 1963; see also the insert: John Lewis, “Rise Up to Change this System.”

RESEARCH PAPER OPTION 1.B.: See the questions on Blackboard. Who was making linkages between civil rights (desegregation, freedom goals) and economic opportunity (jobs, wages, affordable housing)? Why was the public image of the March so much less than what movement activists hoped for?

Spring Break
Has anyone caught your attention that you would like to research for the final paper

3/15: Crisis of Victory: 1964
Jackson, From Civil Rights to Human Rights, ch. 7., 188-208 (20)

3/17: Malcolm and Martin: Convergence?
Jackson, From Civil Rights to Human Rights, 208-217. (10)
“Statement by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On Accepting the N.Y.C. Medallion,” 12/17/64, Cleveland Robinson Papers, NYU Tamiment Library. (This is the speech Malcolm praised King for delivering).

3/22: The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the Atlantic City “Compromise”
Wesley C. Hogan, Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC’s Dream for a New America (Chapel Hill, 2007), 155-196.

RESEARCH PAPER OPTION 2.A.: Drawing upon assigned and extra readings, analyze the fateful “compromise” at Atlantic City from at least two vantage points. (Presidential recording transcripts can be found on Blackboard)

3/24: Selma, the Voting Rights Act, and Alabama Political Power
Jackson, From Civil Rights to Human Rights, 218-237 (20)

3/29: Black Power and the War on Poverty in the Rural South
Jackson, From Civil Rights to Human Rights, 260-270.

3/31: Urban Crisis: Causes and Consequences


I would like you by now to pretty much know who you're going to write about. Schedule conferences with me or with the Graduate Assistant to think this through.

4/5: Martin Luther King and the Poverty Debate

Jackson, From Civil Rights to Human Rights, ch. 9.

4/7: Testing Ground for Nonviolence: The Chicago Freedom Movement

Jackson, From Civil Rights to Human Rights, 276-292


4/12: Urban Black Power

Jackson, From Civil Rights to Human Rights, 293-307. (14)


RESEARCH PAPER OPTION 2.B.: Drawing widely on assigned and researched sources, answer: were the civil rights and black power movements more alike than they were different? Were they diverging in destructive ways, running in parallel, or intertwined as threads in a common movement?

4/14: Internationalism: Vietnam and South Africa

Jackson, From Civil Rights to Human Rights, ch. 11, 308-328.

Skim King’s famous 4 April 1967 Riverside Address: Google or CTRL+click [PDF]

Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project Speeches: "Beyond Vietnam"

4/16 FRIDAY: Final paper proposal due: 1-2 pp. on the Blackboard Discussion Board: Identify your individual and the chronological timeframe for your paper. List and describe in one or two sentences each of the primary and secondary sources, in bibliographic style. Identify the main issues, strategic choices, and points of view of your individual. Your bibliography must contain at least 2 scholarly sources, and at least 2 primary sources. If I am not satisfied with the depth of your preparation, I will ask you to select someone from the many people I identify on a "Lives in the Struggle" research guide posted under "Course Documents" on Blackboard.
4/19: Women, Integration, and Black Power
Optional Film: Connie Curry, Intolerable Burden (on Mae Bertha Carter).

4/21: The Welfare Rights Movement
Annelise Orleck, "If It Wasn't for You I Have Shoes for My Children': The Political Education of Las Vegas Welfare Mothers," in The Politics of Motherhood: Activist Voices from the Left to Right, ed. Jeter Alexis, et. al. (Hanover, NH, 1997), pp. 102-18; and "I Got to Dreamin": An Interview with Ruby Duncan," 119-26.

4/26: King, Radicalism, and the Poor People's March on Washington
Jackson, From Civil Rights to Human Rights, ch. 12, 329-359. (30)

4/28: Environmental Racism: The Struggle Continues

5/3: Last Class. Legacies of Coalition and Consciousness
Jackson, From Civil Rights to Human Rights, Epilogue, 359-370.

Final research paper due May 12 Wednesday at 3:00 PM:
Print me out a hard copy, AND submit an electronic copy to SAFE ASSIGN on Blackboard. This feature scans all paper for patterns of possible plagiarism from Internet sources.