UO Department of History

HISTORY 410, Course Syllabus For Spring 2015

Course Title: HISTORY 410: Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X and Africa in Global Context

Department: UO Department of History

Class Day/Time: Tuesday & Thursday, 2:00 p.m.-3:20 p.m.

Professor: Dr. A.B. Assensoh

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 4:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. (Also, by appointment), UO School of Law, Room 300

[1] RATIONALE FOR HISTORY 410, A COMBINATION OF SEMINAR & LECTURE FORMAT:

The purpose of the HISTORY 410 course is to explore and also to analyze, with historical precision, the respective lives as well as times, thoughts, and impact of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the late former Nation of Islam (NOI) Minister Malcolm X and, to a lesser extent, Africa in a global context. There will be a detailed overview of the Life and Times of Dr. King and Malcolm X (who was also known by his Muslim name as El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz), as they were pivotal figures in the historical as well as political transformation of America between the 1950s and the 1960s. It will be shown through the class discussions and the readings that the impact of their lives is, indeed, being felt even today.

Considered to be pioneers of the modern version of the U.S. civil rights movement (1955-1960s), the two black leaders and activists did have viable connections with the continent of Africa. Therefore, the class will explore a brief history of the continent and their respective pilgrimage-like trips to several African countries in 1957 (Dr. King) and 1964 (Malcolm X). In doing so, the class will also learn briefly about the similarities between the U.S. civil rights’ struggle for the emancipation of Black Americans (once known as Negroes, but now referred to as African-Americans) and the decolonization struggles of African countries, both of which brought about several meaningful changes for African Americans between the mid-1950s and the 1960s as well as independence (or political freedom) for African countries between 1950s and the 1990s.

The enrolled students of History 410 -- with the guidance of the course’s professor -- will read, discuss, debate and subsequently analyze a variety of historical, political and religious documents as well as scholarly texts, relevant newspaper or journal articles and selected number of autobiographical or biographical publications. The assigned readings will amply capture the lives Dr. King and Minister Malcolm X in ways that allow the class to re-examine as well as make sense of the materials being prescribed for utilization in the course.
The course -- with a seminar-cum-lecture format -- will invite active student participation, with occasional topical/thematic lectures by the professor and some invited local or campus guest lecturers. It will also provide an opportunity for an exploration of the larger domestic and global contexts, in which civil rights/liberation movements and their activities, with a focus on racial and ethnic liberation, were actively taking place between the mid-1950s and the 1960s in the United States and, to an extent, around the same period on the African continent, which Dr. King and Minister Malcolm X, on different occasions, visited and referred to as the Motherland.

Each class period is planned in such a way that the enrolled students will be able to practice styles of writing that will range from critical-cum-comparative analyses to persuasive short essays. From time to time, the class will as well view relevant segments of documentaries and mainstream movies (or DVDs) to provide an illumination as well as discussions (or written analyses) of various concepts, ideologies, religiousities, and circumstances, which relate to the respective lives and times of Dr. King and Minister Malcolm X, respectively. This is particularly so because both men were considered either pivotal or crucial catalysts of the second phase of the U.S. civil rights movement and the radical Black Muslim ferment of the 1950s and the 1960s, a movement whose first phase took place in the mid-1800s, when leaders of several freed slaves of the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation chose to return to Africa.

As it will become obvious to the students through the readings, Dr. king and Minister Malcolm X -- as popular as they were within their racial group as well as their respective religious movements -- indeed did meet face-to-face only once and very briefly after a March 26, 1964 U.S. Capitol event before each of them was assassinated: Minister Malcolm X was shot to death on February 21, 1965, while Dr. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, and both men died at 39 years old. It will be explained with examples for the deeper understanding of the History 410 students that -- at the respective funerals of Dr. King and Minister Malcolm X -- the two men selected to give their eulogies did not deliberately place much emphasis on the short lives both of them lived. Instead, to a large extent, the focus was on how fruitful their overall activities as well as their lives were for their causes and followers!

[II] REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS (On Reserve):

Carson, Clayborne (Editor). *Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 1998. (Bookstore)

Cone, James H. *Martin, Malcolm & America: A Dream of A Nightmare?* Orbis Books, 1998. (Selected chapters are available on Blackboard)


Additional selected readings (i.e. relevant clippings and short illuminating essays) will be posted on blackboard ahead of each class time.
[III] SUPPLEMENTARY READERS (FOR REVIEW ESSAYS, REFERENCE PURPOSES & BOOK REVIEWS):


Assenoh, A.B. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and America’s Quest for Racial Integration, 1987; 1988. (Blackboard)


Carson, Clayborne. The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. 1984.


Please, note that some books for planned book reviews or critiques are listed on this course syllabus below, in the section dealing with the discussion of the reviews, but they are not necessarily added to the supplementary reading list.

[IV] COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

In-Class and Homework Writing Assignments: All students in the seminar are expected to complete 15-20-minute in-class writing assignments. Some of the assignments are posted on the syllabus, while others may arise as a result of subsequent or particular class readings. The in-class writing assignments, which are to be graded between 5 and 10 points (depending on the depth and importance and as part of the 70 points), are considered to be individual assignments unless the instructor asks for group or peer collaborative work. From time to time, there may also be in-class quiz(izes) on either assigned reading materials or on particular in-class documentaries, basically to ensure that students are digesting what they are reading as well as either being attentive or keeping up with the readings. All assignments are due at the beginning of class, and 2 points will be deducted for each day that the assignment is late.

[IV] 30-Point Book Critiques: There are scores of books and articles written about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. To ensure that all students have equal opportunity to learn as much as possible about what has been published recently as well as in the past, students will work in groups of two or three to present an oral critique on selected book(s) as well as hand to the Professor on the day of oral report a written critical evaluation in the form of a book review of about 3-4 typed, single-spaced pages. The oral critique is to be presented in a creative format other than merely reading a report. Also, each individual member of an assigned group is expected to present a written critique, which includes a summary of the book as well as a critique of the explicit and implicit arguments
provided. Classmates will be asked to provide instant but brief assessment of each group’s presentation, which will be handed to the professor to assist him to evaluate the overall presentation on 30 points.

[VI] 100-Point Midterm Examination: The course’s mid-term examination will be a fact-finding format, to be focused largely on a format of objective, multiple-choice, true/false and fill-in-the-blank questions. Specifically, the examination is geared toward testing a student’s knowledge of some of the key issues that will be explored in the class, coupled with providing a more objective evaluation of what students know about the course information. There will be no final examination for this class but, instead, a project that is elucidated or explained below.

[VII] 80-Point Final Researched Paper/Project: Each student will have an opportunity to use a combination of original and secondary-source documents as well as scholarly texts to explore a research topic that compares and contrasts aspects of the lives, philosophies as well as the impact of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. The researched paper -- which is expected to be between 10 and 12 pages (double-spaced), excluding foot/end notes as well as a bibliography – is to be graded on a total of 80 possible points. A portion of some class periods will be utilized to assist students in preparing their research papers; for example, if everything goes well with the readings and class discussions as expected, students may be given a day off as “Research Day”, for which they will be told ahead of time; on that day, they are expected to visit the campus Libraries to research (and submit in writing) their tentative topics and also a rough draft of an abstract as well as the crucial bibliographic materials.

[VIII] Suggested Research Topics: Utilizing information from the class readings as well as external or independent student sources, each student is expected to come up with tentative topics as well as abstracts for approval. Below are suggested thematic formats to guide students, who may follow one of them. If a student does not like any of the suggested research themes, he/she may suggest another research theme or topic for approval before the start of the student’s research.

(i) Delineate, Analyze, Compare and Contrast the major intellectual, cultural, theological/religious, and political influences on King and Malcolm X; (ii) compare and contrast Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s understanding and use of violence as well as nonviolence in their respective civil rights and religious movements; (iii) Explore the ways, in which Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke out against U.S. domestic and foreign policy; (iv) Delineate and Analyze King and Malcolm’s evolving views on racism and black power in the United States and abroad; (v) Compare and Contrast how the government utilized its resources with the FBI and any other security agency (i.e. COINTELPRO) against King and Malcolm X; (vi) Compare and Contrast the Assassinations of Malcolm X and King; (vii) Compare and contrast the impact of their lives on American youth and others; (viii) Delineate, contrast and compare the respective legacies of King and Malcolm X for different segments of the American population.

[IX] THE DISTRIBUTION OF POINTS FOR THE 2014 WINTER SEMESTER:

Writing Assignments 70
Book/Oral Critique 30
Examination (Midterm) 100
Final Researched Paper Project 80
Class Attendance and Participation 20

Total Points: 300 Points

GRADE SCALE FOR THE SPRING 2014 COURSE:
A- to A = 270-300 points
B- to B+= 240-269 points
C- to C+= 210-239 points
D- to D+= 180-209 points
F (Failure) = below 209 points

[X] DETAILED COURSE SYLLABUS WITH DATES PROVIDED:

Week 1: (Tuesday, March 31, 2015: 2:00 p.m. -3:30 p.m.)
Introduction: Overview of the Course, Logistics and Exploring Pre-Conceived Notions about King and Malcolm X

In-Class Writing Assignment: Upon distribution of copies, read the page of quotes by King and Malcolm X. Hypothesize about the identity of the author of each quote based on what you think that you already know about each of the two men. Then, select one of the quotes and explain what you think the author meant and, above all, whether or not you agree.

(Thursday, April 2, 2015: 2:00-3:30 p.m.)

Week 2: (Tuesday & Thursday: April 7 & 9, 2015, 2:00 p.m.-3:20 p.m.)
The Civil Rights Movement: Understanding the Context in which King and Malcolm Lived and Led

“The World War II Era and the Seeds of A Revolution”, pp. 486-510 (Blackboard)

“The Freedom Movement”, pp. 514-540 (Blackboard)


Assensoh, A.B., Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and America’s Quest for Racial Integration, pp. 17-33 (Blackboard)

Clayborne Carson. “The Unfinished Dialogue of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X.” (Blackboard)

Week 3: (Tuesday & Thursday: April 14 & 16, 2015, 2:00 p.m.-3:20 p.m.)
Who Was Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.?

Clayborne Carson, The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr. (Bookstore)

Africa (Fourth Edition), Chapter 5, “Religions in Africa” by Hanson.

Book Review: I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr. by Michael Eric Dyson

Homework Assignment: Use Stanford Professor Clayborne Carson’s edited book to prepare a timeline of the important aspects of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s life from 1950-1965. Subsequently, considering King’s entire life, list five major events that you believe shaped his role in the African American freedom struggle, which is the second phase of the Civil Rights Movement of America.

Week 4: (Tuesday & Thursday: April 21 & 23, 2015, 2:00 p.m.-3:20 p.m.)

Who Was Malcolm X?

Alex Haley, The Autobiography of Malcolm X

Book Review: A Life of Reinvention: Malcolm X by Manning Marable

Book Review: An Original Man by Elijah Muhammad

In-class Writing Assignment: Use Haley’s book to prepare a timeline of the important aspects of Malcolm X’s life from 1954-1965. Then, considering his entire life, list five major events that you believe shaped Malcolm’s role in the African-American freedom struggle, which is known as the second phase of America’s Civil Rights’ Movement.

Week 5: (Tuesday & Thursday: April 28 & 30, 2015, 2:00 p.m.-3:20 p.m.)

The Similarities and Differences Between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Two Roads to Freedom” by James Cone, pp. 244-271. (Blackboard)

“Malcolm’s Letter to King” (Blackboard)

King’s Statement on Black Power (Chapter 29 of Carson’s edited autobiography)

King’s statement following Malcolm X’s death in 1965 (Blackboard)

Africa (Fourth Edition), Chapter 12 by Sawyer MacLean and Holmes.

In-Class Writing Assignment: What most surprised you about the communication between Malcolm X and King? Why was it surprising? List three ways in which you see the ideas of Dr. King and Malcolm X converging? If not, explain why?

Book Review: Race Matters by Cornell West
1-page written outline and abstract for research project(s) due this week.

Week 6: (Tuesday & Thursday: May 5 & 7, 2015, 2:00 p.m.-3:20 p.m.)

*A brief lecture to put Malcolm X, King and Africa in perspective to prepare the class for Midterm Examination. A study sheet, to be based on facts studied since Week I, will be distributed as a guide for the examination.

*Review for Mid-term Exam.

* Mid-Term Examination (on the second class day of the week, Thursday, May 7, 2015)

Week 7: (Tuesday & Thursday: May 12 & 14, 2015, 2:00 p.m.-3:20 p.m.)

Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Gender


Africa (Fourth Edition) Chapter 13 by Muhula and Ndegwa.


Week 8: (Tuesday & Thursday: May 19 & 21, 2015, 2:00 p.m.-3:20 p.m.)

Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X and Their Relationship With International Leaders and Movements

“International Connections, 1964-1965”, by Assensoh and Alex-Assensoh, pp. 69-88 (Blackboard)

“Not Just An American Problem But A World Problem” by Malcolm X, pp. 1-16 (Blackboard)

Africa (Fourth Edition), Chapter 14 by Manuh.

Book Review: Everybody Was Kungfu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity by Vijay Prashad

Week 9: (Tuesday & Thursday: May 26 & 28, 2015, 2:00 p.m.-3:20 p.m.)

Life After Death: The Immoral Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Malcolm X and the FBI Files”, by Clayborn Carson, pp. 15-53 (Blackboard)

“Making Their Mark”, by James Cone, pp. 288-314 (Blackboard)
“The Voting Rights Act and the Two Reconstructions”, by J. Morgan Kousser, pp. 12-68 (Blackboard)

Bearing The Cross, by David Garrow (Selected Chapters on Blackboard)

And The Walls Came Tumbling Down by Ralph Abernathy (Selected Chapters on Blackboard)

“Chapter IV: An Overall Assessment of King as a Peacemaker and Nonviolent Leader”, by A.B. Assensoh, pp 61-77 (Blackboard)"

Week 10: (Tuesday & Thursday: June 2 & 4, 2015, 2:00-3:20 p.m.)

Original Research Presentations on Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Very brief, 5-minute, individual research presentations by each student during the last two days of the class; volunteers are to be solicited. The presentation will be based on the topic and abstract only. Course Evaluations will take place on the last Tuesday or Thursday of the class.

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[XI] POINTS EARNED THROUGHOUT THE SPRING 2015 TERM:

Please, record below all points you earn on graded papers or assignments so that at the end of the Term, you can compare such totaled points to the Grade Grill’s total of 300 points to see your tentative final letter grade.