

Macalester College

History 235-01/American Studies 310-01

Peter Rachleff

Old Main 318

Office hours: M 9:00 am – noon; T 10:00 am – noon; and by appointment

Fall 2009

W 7-10 PM

Old Main 002

X 6371

[rachleff@macalester.edu](mailto:rachleff@macalester.edu)

COMPARATIVE FREEDOM MOVEMENTS:  
THE U.S. CIVIL RIGHTS AND SOUTH AFRICAN ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENTS

This course explores two of the most important movements to challenge institutional racism in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While we will use a comparative framework, we will also be attentive to the transnational dimensions of both movements and their connections with each other. Our approach, of course, will be primarily *historical* – attentive to change over time and aware of the *contexts* within which the movements evolved. Our investigations will be focused around specific *elements* of the movements: the nature of institutional racism, structures, ideologies, and identities in both societies; the leadership produced by both movements; the functioning of both movements at a grassroots level; the demographics of both movements and the roles played by particular *cohorts* – women, workers, young people – in each movement; internal tensions, conflicts, and *diversity* of ideologies and strategies within each movement; the uses of *culture* – music, theater, poetry, visual art, etc. – within each movement; and the ultimate *consequences* of each movement, both in impacting social, political, and economic structures and in transforming its participants. While our primary interest will be in deepening our understanding of these movements, we will also be interested in what their study has to offer us in thinking about the making and sustaining of movements in our own lives.

This is an advanced level course which assumes that you are highly motivated to engage this material and are willing to take considerable responsibility for your own learning. This is especially important because we will meet only once a week and because this will be a large class, both inducements to letting work slide. If you take this course, I assume this means you are committed to *not* letting slide your reading, your writing, your thinking, and your preparation for and participation in class discussions. While I do not assume that you have prior knowledge of either U.S. or South African history (and, therefore, I invite and welcome questions in and out of class about *more* context), I do assume that you have some experience with the study of *racial formations*, racism, and anti-racism. Lastly, I assume that you have some experience weighing historical arguments, interpreting primary documents, and writing analytical papers that present an argument/hypothesis and support it with historical evidence.

This course is intended to provide a substantial learning experience, and you should take it only if you are prepared to make a substantial commitment to it. The reading load is heavy, although I am not averse to your developing your *skimming* skills. Meeting once a week frees us up to engage in complex discussions and to leverage multiple learning strategies, but it also means that missing a single class means missing an entire week. We will need to work together to devise a suitable strategy to address the challenges posed by two class sessions, October 28 and November 25, which are scheduled on the eve of breaks. I do expect that significant learning will take place in class, and it is therefore important that you be *present*, be ready to *participate* (by doing the reading), and be *attentive* to your classmates' contributions. There will also be rotating responsibilities to summarize readings, raise questions, and lead discussions.

Your performance in class will have a significant impact on your grade. We will also rely on email for additional readings, conversations between class sessions, questions to consider while reading, and news of out of class learning opportunities. Therefore, I expect you to pay attention to your emails for this class.

Beyond class participation, your grade will depend on three 3-5 page papers during the course and a 4-6 page final due at the end. The in-course papers will ask you to pull together readings and films and offer your own arguments. The final paper will ask you to integrate the course for yourself. None will require outside readings. You will also be expected to lead, as part of a small group of students, the discussion of one or more readings, including providing a summary and posing discussion questions.

At times, we will be dealing with difficult material and it is imperative that we maintain a classroom environment in which we speak thoughtfully, listen respectfully, and treat each other as colleagues. I am determined to maintain our classroom as a space in which we all feel safe. We may not always feel comfortable, however, and I am confident that some of our best learning takes place at times and in spaces in which we feel *uncomfortable*.

The following books will be available at the college bookstore, on reserve at the library, or via electronic format:

Fredrickson, WHITE SUPREMACY  
Fredrickson, BLACK LIBERATION  
Malcolm X with Alex Hailey, THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MALCOLM X  
Steve Biko, I WRITE WHAT I LIKE  
Payne, I'VE GOT THE LIGHT OF FREEDOM  
Mayekiso, TOWNSHIP POLITICS  
Robnett, HOW LONG? HOW LONG?  
Walker, WOMEN AND RESISTANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Other readings and materials will be made available electronically or will be handed out in class. I have also asked you, over the summer, to read and prepare for our first class, Sept. 9:

Garrow, BEARING THE CROSS  
or  
Carson, ed., THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.  
  
and  
  
Mandela, A LONG WALK TOWARD FREEDOM  
Or  
Lodge, NELSON MANDELA: A CRITICAL LIFE

WEEKLY SYLLABUS  
CAUTION: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

- 9/9 Introduction to the course  
The nature of leadership within the movements: King and Mandela  
In addition to the readings I suggested over the summer, I am also emailing you:  
Baldwin, "Soaring on the Wings of Pride: Martin Luther King and the 'New' South Africa," SAFUNDI, no.15 (July 2004) (e)  
MAGAZINE OF HISTORY, special issue on Martin Luther King, Jr. (e)
- 9/16 Institutional racism: Viewed comparatively  
Read: WHITE SUPREMACY (all)  
Film (in class) LAST GRAVE AT DIMBAZA
- 9/23 Institutional racism: Viewed comparatively  
Read: Marable, HOW CAPITALISM UNDERDEVELOPED BLACK AMERICA (e)  
Woodruff, "A War Within a War," in AMERICAN CONGO: THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN THE DELTA (e)  
Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labor Power in South Africa" (e)  
Bonner, Delius, and Posel, "The Shaping of Apartheid: Contradiction, Continuity, and Popular Struggle," in APARTHEID'S GENESIS (e)  
Thompson, "The Apartheid Era, 1945-1978" and "Apartheid in Crisis, 1978-1989," in HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICA (e)  
\*\*We will begin class this evening by attending Professor John Edgar Tidwell's talk, "Sterling Brown and the Slave Narratives," at 7PM in the Chapel.
- 9/25 Friday – noon – papers due: Key points of comparison in institutional racism (3-5 pages)
- 9/30 Freedom Movements: Viewed comparatively  
Read: BLACK LIBERATION, Introduction, chapters 1-6  
Film (in class): NOTHING BUT A MAN
- 10/7 Freedom Movements: The Turn to Black Power  
Read: BLACK LIBERATION, chapter 7  
Gibson, "Black Consciousness 1977-1987: The Dialectics of Liberation in South Africa" (e)  
Woodard, "Groundwork," in A NATION WITHIN A NATION: AMIRI BARAKA AND BLACK POWER POLITICS (e)  
Hill, "Not Selma," in THE DEACONS FOR DEFENSE: ARMED RESISTANCE AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT (e)  
Film (in class): NEGROES WITH GUNS
- 10/14 Freedom Movements: Black Power and Black Consciousness  
Read: Biko, I WRITE WHAT I LIKE (all)  
Malcolm X, THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MALCOLM X (all)  
Film (in class): MAPANTSULA

- 10/19 Monday – noon – papers due: Integration/nationalism; Black Power; Black Consciousness; Key points of comparison (3-5 pages)
- 10/21 Women in the Movement: US  
Read: HOW LONG? HOW LONG? (all)  
Film (in class): FUNDI: THE STORY OF ELLA BAKER
- 10/28 Women in the Movement: South Africa  
Read: WOMEN AND RESISTANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA (all)  
Film (in class): YOU HAVE STRUCK A ROCK
- 10/29 – 11/1 Fall Break
- 11/4 The Movement at the Grassroots: US  
Read: I'VE GOT THE LIGHT OF FREEDOM (all)  
Film (in class): FREEDOM ON MY MIND
- 11/11 The Movement at the Grassroots: South Africa  
Read: TOWNSHIP POLITICS (all)  
Lelyveld, "War," in MOVE YOUR SHADOW (e)  
Film (in class): BOPHA!
- 11/18 Young People in the Movements: Viewed comparatively  
Read: Johnson, "'The Soldiers of Luthuli': Youth in the Politics of Resistance in South Africa" (e)  
Ransby, "Mentoring a New Generation of Activists," in ELLA BAKER AND THE BLACK FREEDOM MOVEMENT (e)  
Films (at Media Services, to be viewed *before* class): THE GUGULETHU SEVEN  
4 LITTLE GIRLS  
Film (in class): SARAFINA
- 11/23 Monday – noon – papers due: women and youth; empowerment and transformation within the freedom movements (3-5 pages)
- 11/25 Labor in the Movements: Viewed comparatively  
Read: Van Niekerk, "The Trade Union Movement in the Politics of Resistance in South Africa" (e)  
Sitas, "The Sweat Was Black: Working for Dunlop" (e)  
Kerson, "The Emergence of Powerful Black Unions" (e)  
Maree, "Trade Unions and the State: The Question of Legality" (e)  
Hinshaw, "The Politics of Steel in the US and South Africa" (e)  
Huntley and Montgomery, BLACK WORKERS' STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY IN BIRMINGHAM (e)  
Korstad, "It Wasn't Just Wages We Wanted, But Freedom," in CIVIL RIGHTS UNIONISM (e)  
Film (in class) AT THE RIVER I STAND

- 12/2 The Role(s) of Culture in the Movement(s)  
Read: EAR TO THE GROUND (e)  
Von Kotze, ORGANISE AND ACT: THE NATAL WORKERS' THEATRE  
MOVEMENT, 1983-1987 (e)  
Sitas, "Traditions of Poetry in Natal" (e)  
"The Free Southern Theater on the Free Southern Theater" (e)  
DAY OF ABSENCE (e)  
Film (on reserve at Media Services): AMANDLA!  
Film (in class): COMPELLING FREEDOM
- 12/9 Lessons and Legacies of Freedom Movements  
Final papers due in class(4 – 6 pages)  
Film (in class): TSOTSI