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 20th 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 supporting 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 for three hours in a sitting 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’s work. On two occasions, on the eve of Fall Break and the Thanksgiving holiday, I ask that we meet on Tuesday nights in place of Wednesday. 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. Most nights, we will watch and discuss a film as part of class. There will also be rotating responsibilities to summarize.
supplementary 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. Each week, I will send out a set of questions to consider while you are engaging the core reading. Therefore, I expect you to pay attention to your emails for this class.

Beyond class participation, your grade will depend on two 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 sets of 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
Roberts and Klibanoff, THE RACE BEAT
Marable, MALCOLM X: A LIFE OF REINVENTION
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
Gerhart, BLACK POWER 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. 7:

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)

9/7 Introduction to the course
   The nature of leadership within the movements: King and Mandela
   **Hand out essay assignment, due 9/26

9/14 Institutional racism
   Read: Fredrickson, WHITE SUPREMACY, chapters I – IV
   Supplementary readings:
      Film: LAST GRAVE AT DIMBAZA

9/21 Institutional racism
   Read: WHITE SUPREMACY, chapters V - VI
   Supplementary readings:
      Marable, HOW CAPITALISM UNDERDEVELOPED BLACK AMERICA
      Woodruff, “A War Within a War,” in AMERICAN CONGO: THE AFRICAN
      AMERICAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN THE DELTA
      Wolpe, “Capitalism and Cheap Labor Power in South Africa”
      Bonner, Delius, and Posel, “The Shaping of Apartheid: Contradiction, Continuity,
      and Popular Struggle,” in APARtheid’S GENESIS
      in HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICA
      Film: NOTHING BUT A MAN

9/26 Essay assignment #1 due today, Noon

9/28 Freedom Movements
   Read: Roberts and Klibanoff, THE RACE BEAT
   Film: EYES ON THE PRIZE, I: AWAKENINGS
   **Hand out essay assignment #2, due 10/24 Noon

10/5 Freedom Movements
   Read: Gerhart, BLACK POWER IN SOUTH AFRICA
   Supplementary readings:
      Legassick, “Armed Struggle and Democracy: The Case of South Africa”
      Film: MAPANTSULA

10/12 Black Power
   Read: Marable, MALCOLM X: A LIFE OF REINVENTION
   Supplementary readings:
      Woodard, “Groundwork,” in A NATION WITHIN A NATION: AMIRI BARAKA
      AND BLACK POWER POLITICS
      Hill, “Not Selma,” in THE DEACONS FOR DEFENSE: ARMED RESISTANCE
      AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT
      Film: NEGROES WITH GUNS
10/19  Black Power
Read: Biko, I WRITE WHAT I LIKE
Supplementary readings:
Film: HAVE YOU SEEN DRUM RECENTLY?

10/25  (NOTE: This is a Tuesday evening.) The Movement at the Grassroots
Read: Mayekiso, TOWNSHIP POLITICS
Film: BOPHA!

11/2  The Movement at the Grassroots
Read: Payne, I’VE GOT THE LIGHT OF FREEDOM
Film: FREEDOM ON MY MIND

11/9  Women in the Movement
Read: Robnett, HOW LONG? HOW LONG?
Supplementary readings:
  Kuuma, “‘You’ve Struck a Rock’: Comparing Gender, Social Movements, and
  Transformation in the United States and South Africa”
Film: FUNDI: THE STORY OF ELLA BAKER
**Hand out essay assignment #3, due 12/13, Noon

11/16  Women in the Movement
Read: Walker, WOMEN AND RESISTANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA
Supplementary readings:
  Hassim, “The Limits of Popular Democracy: Women’s Organisations, Feminism,
  and the UDF”
  Fatima Meer, PRISON DIARY (excerpts)
  Emma Mashinini, STRIKES HAVE FOLLOWED ME ALL MY LIFE (excerpts)
  Suttner, “Women in the ANC-led Underground Organisation Against Apartheid”
  Hiralal, “‘We Shall Resist’: The Role of Indian Women in the Passive Resistance
  Campaign, 1946-1948”
Film: YOU HAVE STRUCK A ROCK

11/22  (NOTE: This is a Tuesday evening.) Young People in the Movements
Read: Johnson, “'The Soldiers of Luthuli’: Youth in the Politics of Resistance in South
Africa”
  Pohlandt-McCormick, “'I Saw a Nightmare…': Violence and the Construction of
  Memory, Soweto, Junr 16, 1976”
  Proudfoot, DIARY OF A SIT-IN (excerpts)
  Crosby, A LITTLE TASTE OF FREEDOM (excerpts)
Film: SARAFINA
11/30  Labor in the Movements
Sitas, “The Sweat Was Black: Working for Dunlop”
Kerson, “The Emergence of Powerful Black Unions”
Maree, “Trade Unions and the State: The Question of Legality”
Hinshaw, “The Politics of Steel in the US and South Africa”
Huntley and Montgomery, BLACK WORKERS’ STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY IN BIRMINGHAM (excerpts)
Korstad, “It Wasn’t Just Wages We Wanted, But Freedom,” in CIVIL RIGHTS UNIONISM
Kelley, “‘We Are Not What We Seem’: Rethinking Black Working Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South”
White, “Nixon Was the One: Edgar Daniel Nixon, the Montgomery Improvement Association and the Bus Boycott”
POLAROID AND SOUTH AFRICA
Film: AT THE RIVER I STAND

12/7  The Role(s) of Culture in the Movements
Read: EAR TO THE GROUND
Sitas, “Traditions of Poetry in Natal”
Mason, “‘Mannenberg’: Notes on the Making of an Icon and Anthem”
“The Free Southern Theater on the Free Southern Theater”
DAY OF ABSENCE
Film: AMANDLA!

12/13  **Essay assignment #3 due today, Noon

12/14 (an extra class) Lessons and Legacies of Freedom Movements
Film: TSOTSI