

Political Science 337
(Fall 2016)

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The catalogue description of “American Political Theory” reads as follows: “Origins and development of American political thought.” Aversive to a focus on those who are usually referred to as “the founders,” the approach I take is developed in my *Deforming American Political Thought*. The course, which is shaped by that book, departs from the American political theory canon and emphasizes genres and voices that are ordinarily excluded. There will be a take home, essay-type midterm exam, based on the course readings, films, and discussions covered at that point, and a final exam in the form of a final paper assignment (template to be provided early in the semester). You will also be required to turn in a 200 word response to the reading for each session– saying something about its political significance and raising a question about some aspect of it. These bi-weekly assignments will provide the most important indicator of your “presence” to the course (see below).

Here are my boilerplate remarks on my grading policy:

My grading practices are also aversive to the mainstream, which in this case applies to the university’s complicity with meritocracy. The grades will be allocated on the basis of your presence to the course rather than on some model of the quality of your performance (which tends to depend, at least in part, on the cultural capital you have acquired). “Presence,” as I interpret it, is based on your attendance, your making a sincere effort in the written assignments/exams, and your display of engagement in class (by entering conversations and/or paying attention, e.g., looking at me when I’m talking rather than at your text messages). You begin with an A in the course, which will be attenuated only through deliberate acts of non-presence.

Books for the course (tentative):

Michael J. Shapiro, *Deforming American Political Thought: Challenging the Jeffersonian Legacy* (Routledge paperback)

Walter Mosley, *Devil in a Blue Dress* Washington Square Press paperback

Robert Vitalis, *White World Order: Black Power Politics* (ebook is available)

Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (ebook is available)

Reading/viewing/discussion schedule: (TBA)