

PSC293: The Political Thought of Frederick Douglass

Prof. Abraham Singer

This course will be an in-depth study of Frederick Douglass's political philosophy. Often thought of as a political activist, orator, or statesman, we will read Douglass's work as that of a political theorist who offers novel insights into the nature of freedom, power, equality, race, and citizenship. We will begin by familiarizing ourselves with two traditions of political thought that Douglass worked within: republicanism and prophetic social critique. We will then spend the majority of the semester carefully reading most of Douglass's work -his autobiographies, his speeches, and writings- in historical context, in order to understand his theory of politics and society. Depending on time, we may also consider the impact of Douglass's thought on 20th century figures like Du Bois and Malcolm X.

This course will be run as a seminar; the reading load will be heavy and the seminar format will require a lot of student participation. The corollary is that we can bend this course in various ways as is fitting our collective learning objectives. Please share ideas but how we can structure the course, or ways we can integrate it with your courses of study.

Assessment

- Participation.....15%
- 3 short reflection pieces.....30% (10 each)
- Library Transcription.....10%
- Essay Proposal.....5%
- Essay Outline.....5%
- Final Essay.....35%

Reading and Course Schedule – We will need to schedule a time to go to the library and perhaps go to the movies!

<p>January 19</p>	<p>Introduction In-Class Reading: Aristotle on Slavery Hegel, "The Master-Slave Dialectic"</p>
<p>January 26</p>	<p>Prophecy, Liberalism, and Republicanism Cornel West, "The Prophetic Tradition in Afro-America" Judith Shklar, "The Liberalism of Fear" Quentin Skinner, "A Third Concept of Liberty" Recommended: Isiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Libert" Additional Reading on Prophetic tradition: Michael Walzer, "The Prophet as Social Critic"</p>

	George Shulman, <i>American Prophecy</i> Additional Reading on Republicanism: Philip Petit, <i>Republicanism</i> , Chs 1-3
February 2	<i>The Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave</i>
February 9	"To my old master," "Prejudice Against Color," <i>The Heroic Slave</i>
February 16	<i>My Bondage, My Freedom</i> , Chs. 1-16
February 23	<i>My Bondage, My Freedom</i> , 17-25
March 2	"What to the Slave is the 4 th of July?" "The Word 'White'" "The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Understood" "Is it Right and Wise to Kill a Kidnapper?" "Our Plan for making Kansas a Free state" "The Doom of the Black Power"
March 9	"The Dred Scott Decision" "The Significance of Emancipation in the West Indies" "Captain John Brown not Insane" "To the Rochester Democrat and American" "The Trials and Triumphs of Self-Made Men" "The Chicago Nominations"
March 16	SPRING BREAK
March 23	"The Inaugural Address" "A Trip to Haiti" "The Fall of Sumter" "Fremont and his Proclamation" "The Day of Jubilee Comes" "The President and his Speeches" "The Proclamation and a Negro Army" "Men of Color, to Arms!" "Valedictory" "The Mission of the War"
March 30	"Pictures and Progress" "Our Martyred President" "Women's Suffrage Movement" "Give us the Freedom Intended for us" "On the Dedication of the Freedmen's Monument: An Oration for Abraham Lincoln" "On John Brown"
April 6	"The Color Line" "The Future of the Colored Race" "I Denounce the So-Called Emancipation as a Stupendous Fraud" "Toussaint L'ouverture" "Lessons of the Hour"
April 13	Angela Davis, "From The Prison of Slavery to the Slavery of Prison." Christopher Lebron, selections from <i>The Making of Black Lives Matter</i>
April 20	Neil Roberts, <i>Freedom as Marronage</i>
April 27	Roberts Continued.