Revolutionary Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr

Professor Peniel Joseph

Fall 2022

Course Description

This course examines the lives and legacies of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. These pillars of the Civil Rights Movement are often portrayed as opposites. While it is true that their rhetoric and methods differed, they are less dissimilar than the popular narrative of their lives allows. By looking simultaneously at both men as they battle White supremacy and the oppression of African Americans, we will highlight their similarities and their influence on one another and the Civil Rights Movement.

Course Readings


Course Requirements

- Contribute to nine discussion boards
- Complete five short papers (1–2 pages)
- Participate in at least three Q&As
- Complete a 15-page paper or project of appropriate rigor

Learning Objectives

1. Assess how Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.’s political ideas and thoughts about racial justice evolved over time.
2. Examine how the political and ideological views of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. diverge and converge.
3. Investigate the overall impacts of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. on the Civil Rights Movement and the social justice movements of the 1960s.

Class Schedule
**Week 1:** September 22: The Civil Rights Movement’s Heroic Period

**Readings**

- Peniel E. Joseph, “The Black Power Movement, Democracy, and America in the King Years,” *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 4 (October 2009): 1001–1016. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 1 Module.)

**Assignments**

- Discussion Board One

**Week 2:** September 29: The Radical Dignity of Malcolm X

**Readings**

- Joseph, Chapter 1, “The Radical Dignity of Malcolm X”
- Marable and Felber, skim pp. 1–133

**Assignments**

- Discussion Board Two
- Short Paper One due October 5
  - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

**Week 3:** October 6: The Radical Citizenship of Martin Luther King Jr.

**Readings**

- Joseph, Chapter 2, “The Radical Citizenship of Martin Luther King Jr.”
- King and West, pp. 1–71

**Assignments**

- Discussion Board Three
- Final Paper/Project Question due October 12
  - In roughly 1–2 pages, outline the question your final paper or project will attempt to answer. This should include a description of the paper or project you are proposing, some background information and historical context on
your topic, a brief description of your research plan, and a justification for why your particular paper or project is worth pursuing.

**Week 4: October 13: The World Stage**

**Readings**

- Joseph, Chapter 3, “The World Stage”
- Marable and Felber, pp. 134–176

**Assignments**

- Discussion Board Four
- Short Paper Two due October 19
  - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

**Week 5: October 20: A World on Fire**

**Readings**

- Joseph, Chapter 4, “A World on Fire”
- Marable and Felber, pp. 184–206
- King and West, pp. 155–156
- Martin Luther King Jr., “Fumbling on the New Frontier,” *The Nation*, March 3, 1962, accessed on National Humanities Center. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Five module.](#))

**Assignments**

- Discussion Board Five
- Revised Question and Proposed Bibliography due October 26
  1. Revise your initial proposal to incorporate your section professor’s feedback
  2. Create an annotated bibliography containing at least five sources. Each of these sources should be followed by a short paragraph describing the source and what it will contribute to your final paper/project.

**Week 6: October 27: Birmingham’s Radicals**
Readings

- Joseph, Chapter 5, “Birmingham’s Radicals”
- Marable and Felber, pp. 262–273
- King and West, pp. 123–144

Assignments

- Discussion Board Six
- Short Paper Three due November 2
  - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

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**Week 7:** November 3: Black Freedom Dream and American Democratic Promise

Readings

- Joseph, Chapter Six, “Now is the Time to Make Real the Promise of Democracy”
- Marable and Felber, pp. 238–247, 274–277

Assignments

- Discussion Board Seven
- Short Paper Four due November 9
  - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

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**Week 8:** November 10: “What Is a Dream to You Is Nightmare to Us”

Readings

- Joseph, Chapter 7, “What Is a Dream to You Is Nightmare to Us”
- Marable and Felber, pp. 311–326, 327–350
- Martin Luther King Jr., “I Have a Dream,” speech, August 28, 1963. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 8 Module.)

Assignments

- Paper/Project Preview due November 16
  - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first five pages of your final paper.
• Project: Submissions of the project preview will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.

**Week 9:** November 17: “Seeking Freedom Like Dr. King, But Faster”

**Readings**

- Joseph, Chapter 8, “Seeking Freedom Like Dr. King, But Faster”
- Marable and Felber, pp. 379–406

**Assignments**

- Discussion Board Eight
- Short Paper Five due November 23
  - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

**Week 10:** November 24: The Radical King

**Readings**

- Joseph, Chapter 9, “The Radical King”
- Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), Chapter 2, “Black Power.” (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 10 Module.)

**Assignments**

- Rough Draft due November 30
  - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first ten pages (at minimum) of your final paper.
  - Project: Submissions of the project rough draft will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.

**Week 11:** December 1: The Revolutionary King

**Readings:**

- Joseph, Chapter 10 ("Revolutionary King") and Epilogue
- King and West, pp. 201–218, 265–276
Assignments:

- Discussion Board Nine

Week 12: December 8: The Sword and the Shield: Reimagining Malcolm and Martin in the Age of Black Lives Matter

Readings

- None

Assignments

- Final Paper/Project due December 14
Assignment Descriptions

Short Papers

Throughout each term students will complete five short papers. Each of these assignments should be 1–2 pages in length, in 12 pt. font, and double-spaced. Students have the option of responding to a prompt created by their section professor or to one of their own design. Prompts should reflect the themes discussed in course readings.

Discussion Board Posts

Students will respond to nine virtual discussion board posts for each course. Discussion boards are led by your section professor, who will provide an analytical prompt related to course material and instructions for participation. These prompts will give you the opportunity to interact with your fellow students and share your interpretation of course themes.

Question-and-Answer Sessions

Throughout the semester the lead scholar of each course will lead five Q&As. Students MUST attend at least three of these sessions for each course they are taking. In order to receive credit for attending each Q&A, you must complete a 1-2 paragraph evaluation within 24 hours of participation. Note: If you cannot attend three of the five Q&A sessions, you may receive credit by viewing archived Q&As and completing a 1–2 page review of topics covered for each missed Q&A.

Final Paper/Project

For the final assignment of each term, you will choose to complete either a 15-page research paper or a research project. The research paper can be a traditional position paper that uses original research to prove a thesis statement or a historiography paper that critically examines how American historians have interpreted the same event differently and why shifts in historical debates may have occurred. Research projects are a public-education tool designed for the general population, teachers, and/or students of varying ages. Sample projects include (but are not limited to) vodcasts, documentary editing and transcription, podcasts, websites, annotated readers, walking tours, or museum exhibits. Lesson plans will not be accepted. A 5-page paper narrative must accompany the project. Your section professor must approve research projects.

Both final assignment options require you to ask an open-ended historical question (something that does not have an easy yes or no answer) that you do not yet know the answer to. You will then use the research process (pulling from a variety of resources, mostly primary source documents) to explore that question and create a thesis-driven answer. Regardless of whether you choose to pursue a paper or project, all finals are broken down into smaller assignments, or scaffolded, throughout the semester. This method breaks up a large grade into smaller constituent grades and allows students time to incorporate instructor feedback into their assignment.
**Scaffolded Assignments**

- **Final Paper/Project Proposal (2%)**: 
  
  In roughly 1–2 pages, you should outline the main question, topic, or purpose of your final paper or project. This should include a description of the paper or project you are proposing, some background information on and historical context for your topic (answer the questions who, what, where, and when), a brief description of your research plan (this does not need to be very specific, but should outline how many weeks you plan to research, if you need to schedule research trips or if your sources are published or available digitally, and when you plan to begin writing), and a justification for why your particular project or paper is worth pursuing (What is the significance of this topic? What does it add to our historical knowledge? Are you filling a gap that other historians have overlooked such as considering race, ethnicity, or gender?)

- **Revised Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (3.5%)**: 

  This assignment will give you the opportunity to incorporate the feedback you received on the first draft of your proposal. In addition to incorporating your section professor’s comments, you will also submit a proposed bibliography listing five sources you plan to use in your research for your final product. Each of these sources should be followed by a brief summary (3–5 sentences) of the source and what it will contribute to your research process.

- **Paper or Project Preview (5%)**: 

  This will give you the opportunity to show the progress you have made on your final project or paper and get some early-stage feedback from your section leader. For a final paper, this should be roughly the first five pages of what will ultimately be your final submission. For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final submission to turn in.

- **Rough Draft (10.5%)**: 

  For a final paper, this should be, at minimum, the first ten pages of what will ultimately be your final submission. For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final submission to turn in.

- **Final Product (21%)**: 

  **Final Paper**: Final papers should be at least fifteen pages in length. These can take the form of research papers or historiographical essays.

  **Final Project**: Much like the final paper option, a final project is meant to prove that you have mastered the content covered by this course. We encourage you to be creative in your approach to this project, though it should be equivalent in rigor and workload to a final paper.