

**Political Science 303  
African-Americans Studies 398**

African-American Studies Independent Study with Lyles  
Supervised Readings and Research in Political Science with Lyles  
Spring 2005  
Professor Lyles  
Version April 14, 2005

Office hours: by appointment  
1211 UH  
LYLES@UIC.EDU

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Political Science 303 and African-American Studies 398 are upper level “independent study” courses that allow students to develop their own course syllabi under the direction of the instructor. Accordingly, the requirements for AAST 398 and PolS 303 vary depending on the professor offering the course. My requirements for admission to course are as follows:

**Admission Requirements**

Before registering for AAST 398 or PolS 303 with Professor Lyles, students must

1. Earn the grade of “A” in a regular semester course taught by Professor Lyles in either Political Science or African-American Studies. This course must be at the 200 level or above.
2. Students must submit a written petition to enroll in the course. The petition must be approved by me (Lyles) before your enroll in the course.

**Petition Guidelines:**

During the prior semester (during the semester *before* the semester in which the student wishes to enroll), students seeking to enroll in 398/303 must submit (via email) a detailed “research proposal” carefully outlining exactly what you plan to do to fulfill the requirements for the course. At a minimum, this plan must outline a specific research topic, preliminary research statement, preliminary thesis statement, preliminary research methodology to be used, and a written justification for the research effort.

In three separate paragraphs, students must provide the following:

- (1) Scope. Clearly and thoroughly indicate the research question to be addressed; e.g., topical focus, hypotheses, etc. "What are you going to do?"
- (2) Legitimation. Justify your topic selection and explain why it represents important research today. "Why would you want to pursue this research?"
3. Methodology/Design. Explain in detail how you plan to go about researching your question; e.g., data collection, sources, proposed methodology, etc. "How will you approach this analysis?"

Your petition to enroll in either AASt 398 or PolS 303 must be received via email (LYLES@UIC.EDU) no later than one week prior to end of the preceding semester. Petitions received after the deadline will not be considered. Note: I receive between 10-15 requests for independent study each semester; however, I will select a maximum of 5 students per year. My selection criteria include performance in prior course work and the strength of the petition. For example, your petition to take “independent study” for the Fall 2005 semester is due by the last week of the Spring semester 2005. Your petition to take “independent study” for the Spring semester 2006 is due by the last week of the Fall semester 2005.

Students accepted for “independent study” will be notified via email at the start of the first week of class.

### Course Requirements

1. Students **MUST** complete all assignments in one semester. **THERE ARE NO “INCOMPLETES” AWARDED FOR 303 OR 398.**
2. As indicated below, students are expected to meet occasionally (usually on Tuesdays or Thursdays at 8:00 a.m.) If you cannot meet at this time, do not enroll in 303/398 with me. These meetings may last from 1 to 2 hours.
3. Assignments: Typically, students are required to submit **(1)** a formal research paper (20-40 pages in length, **(2)** four book reviews and **(3)** individual critiques of each other’s research.

### Course Schedule

- Week One. There is no “official” meeting during week one.
- Week Two. All students enrolled in 303/398 will meet as a group and exchange research proposals. Bring at least 5 copies of your proposal. We will meet Thursday at 2:00 p.m. in 1211 UH.
- Week Three. Students are required to provide written comments/suggestions on each of their colleagues’ research proposals. You must email your comments on each proposal to each student, and to me, by Friday of the third week.
- Week Four. Your *first* book review is due. Select a published monograph (book) on the topic you are researching. You must submit your book review via email attachment before Friday of this week. You must use the following guidelines to construct your book review:

Prepare an analytical book review on a book you have found related to your research project. Your book review must be typed, double-spaced, stapled, and paginated.

**At a minimum, you must do the following:** (1) provide an overall general summary, including a chapter-by-chapter review and analysis, of the entire book; (2) address each of the following seven questions with regard to the entire book:

1. Clear Statement of Purpose.

Identify the author's major concern: whether critical review of existing literature; analytic treatment of a body of concepts; development of a major theory; empirical investigation of a topic or other.

2. Organization.

Indicate to what extent the structure of the book in terms of chapter organization and sequence, the type of data illustrations, and argument, is consistent with the major concern.

3. Conceptual Clarity.

Identify the most important concepts used. Note how adequately they are defined; the empirical referents of these concepts if any, the degree to which they embody without further refinement, traditional or common sense concepts; the degree to which the concepts are used consistently throughout the work; the degree to which explicit notice is taken of shifts of meaning (if there are shifts). What are the major hypotheses?

4. Empirical Rigor, Accuracy.

If the work is an empirical work, discuss the extent of initial formalization of the problem (the degree to which it is stated in general theoretical terms), the character of the major concepts and how they are used to identify the data which are to be used; the character of the data collection, whether it is exhaustive, a probability sample, or simply a set of illustrations. Discuss the extent to which the data are capable of providing proof or disproof of the major hypotheses.

5. Contribution of the Work to a Body of Knowledge.

Discuss the conclusions. Do these add in some fashion to the general body of knowledge in this area? Do they relate firmly to the initial statement of the problem and the intermediate proof? Do they suggest new possibilities for theoretical or empirical work not contemplated in the initial statement of the problem or concern which opened the work?

6. Are Bias(es) Explicitly Stated? Were Measures Taken to Guard Against Such Biases?

To what extent are the author's own values reflected in the work? How does he/she handle them? To what extent are her/his choice of concepts, data collection and analysis influenced by her/his normative bias? What could the author have done to protect against such bias?

7. Intellectual Achievement.

What is your general evaluation of the work as an intellectual achievement? What are its uses to a serious scholar?

In developing your book review essay in accordance with the foregoing questions, you **must** cite appropriate passages (including page numbers) to support **every** argument and/or summary statements you make.

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| Week Five  | Independent work on your research project.   |
| Week Six   | Your second book review is due. Select a published monograph (book) on the topic you are researching. You must submit your review via email attachment before Friday of this week. |
| Week Seven | Independent work on your research project.   |
| Week Eight | Your third book review is due. Select a published monograph (book) on the topic you are researching. You must submit your review via email attachment before Friday of this week.  |

- Week Nine Independent work on your research project.
- Week Ten Your fourth and final book review is due. Select a published monograph (book) on the topic you are researching. You must submit your review via email attachment before Friday of this week.
- Weeks Eleven through Fourteen: Independent work on your research project.
- Week Fifteen All students enrolled in 303/398 will meet as a group and exchange research paper drafts. A draft of your final research paper is due today. NO exceptions. Please bring 5 copies of your draft. One copy for each member of the group. We will meet Thursday at 2:00 p.m. in 1211 UH. This meeting will last at least 2 hours.
- Week Sixteen All students must submit 1-2 page critiques of each other's research paper drafts. You critiques must be submitted via email by Thursday.
- Final Exam Week. Your final research paper is due by **Wednesday** of finals week. Remember, there are no exceptions to this due date for any reason, and, there are no "INCOMPLETE" grades awarded for 303/398. Papers must be stapled, paginated, and delivered to my mailbox in UH (1211) by 5 pm. The maximum length is 50 pages. The paper must be organized as follows. Each section must be labeled clearly.
1. Title page
  2. Executive summary. No longer than one page. Be sure to summarize here "what you did, why you did it, and how you did it."
  3. Introduction and literature review. Introduce the topic, state your thesis, and explain what other's have said about the topic.
  4. The main body of the paper (your research and summary)
  5. Conclusion.
  6. Future research considerations. If you had more time and/or resources, how would you expand your research? Explain why you did not accomplished this now for 303/398.
  7. An annotated bibliography. This must be annotated; i.e., each entry should include a two-three sentence summary of the work listed. See the Chicago Manual of Style for format.
  8. Grade, tell me what grade you think you deserve for your 303/398 and why?

### **Grading Scale.**

I will assign the following weights when calculating your final grade for 303/398.

Four book reviews (10 points each)	40%
Final Research Paper	50%
Attendance and participation at required meetings, including critiques (Week 16)	10%