

Advanced English: How African American Women Affect Policy: From Truman to the 2024 Election

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Academic year 2026-2027 - Language Department - Fall semester.

This course is meant for students of the advanced C1 level. Theme-based language classes aim at developing written and oral skills through the study of a specific topic.

Course Objectives

This is a 12-week course that focuses on non-fiction narratives that black American women published about their lives – from 1945 forward. Each woman's personal story is bolstered by research from renowned experts on sociology and economic development.

The main objectives of this course are:

- Introducing students to women, largely unheralded, whose actions shaped their country
- Discussing who can participate in the "Land of Opportunity," the nickname for the U.S.
- Evaluating U.S. society's adherence to laws on voting rights, civil rights, fair housing, in short, the anti-discrimination protections.

Background

African American women in the post-World War II years influenced policy, practice, and law. Both notable and lesser-known women wrote about the conditions they confronted over the last 80 years. Their published works put a light on their individual motivations to engineer a better situation for themselves. The resulting social revolution spread beyond their country's borders. It breathes life into current issues, such as women's bodily autonomy, workplace harassment, unhoused living, fair elections, and police brutality. The course material begins with policies developed and urged during the term of President Truman and concludes with policies pushed by the highest ranking African American woman in U.S. history, Kamala Harris as vice president of the United States under Joe Biden.

We will concentrate on selected readings from books by female authors: *Don't Let Them Bury My Story: The Oldest Living Survivor of the Tulsa Race Massacre In Her Own Words* - (Fletcher); *Alone Atop the Hill* - (Dunnigan); *My Life, My Love, My Legacy* - (King); *The Whiteness of Wealth* - (Brown); *Becoming* - (Obama); *Civil Rights Baby* - (Wiggins); and *The Truths We Hold: An American Journey* - (Harris). Video footage and media coverage will complement the readings and offer a practice of comprehension skills.

Course Description

Students will do assigned readings outside of class. The readings will present the evolution of thought, custom, practice, and law within U.S. society. Studying speeches delivered by the women will complement the readings. In-class discussions of the material will be student-led. Succeeding in the course will come from interactions and exchanges, especially speaking, listening, and reacting with thoughtful critical thinking.

Students must use basics of public speaking in doing their final oral presentations. They must include newly learned specialty vocabulary from the political and governmental sectors (such as zero-sum game, economic boycott, health equity, and government shutdown) to enrich their storytelling.

Organization

Activities will cover five language skills:

- Speaking: in-class discussions incorporating industry and specialty vocabulary
- Writing: essays
- Reading: selected readings from books from female authors
- Listening: video reports
- Interacting/Exchanging.