

# ENGL 12A: ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE: LITERATURE OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

## Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Summer 2025
Units:	4
Hours:	4 lecture per week (48 total per quarter)
Degree & Credit Status:	Degree-Applicable Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Area 3: Arts & Humanities
Transferable:	CSU/UC
Grade Type:	Letter Grade (Request for Pass/No Pass)
Repeatability:	Not Repeatable

## Description

An exploration and close examination of varied forms of literature related to, and inspired by, the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, founded in 1966 in Oakland, California, by Elbert Howard, Huey P. Newton, and Bobby Seale. Exploration and examination will span the organization's inception to present-day, including mission statement, biographies, novels, interviews, documentaries, government and court documents relative to allegations of criminal violations, as well as Constitutional references, and online dialogue. Exploration and examination also includes subsequent resulting literature related to past and current social concerns, such as racial discourse, Black Lives Matter, 1st and 2nd Amendment rights, as well as film productions and documentaries, and evaluation of the Black Panther Party's continuing and present-day impact on society and popular culture.

## Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Examine, understand, and analyze the Black Panther Party's (BPP) foundational literature as established by its founding members, for historical perspectives.
2. Apply critical and theoretical criteria to evaluate perspectives, theories, and beliefs espoused by the BPP found in the literature, understanding how the literature related then and now, to discourse on the intersections of race, economic status, and gender.
3. Identify and explore various forms of BPP literature (by the BPP, and by others), and the impact of BPP literature on society in general, and on pop culture, from the party's inception to present-day.
4. Compare BPP literature to other forms of protest literature for intersectionality of common themes, and/or consistency of issues from the party's beginning to present-day.
5. Examine and understand the significance of the global response to and solidarity with the BPP, demonstrated by other social justice groups that align(ed) their goals with those of the BPP.
6. Examine the emotional toll that is often experienced by groups and the communities they serve while fighting for social justice and against systems of oppression, and methods used to encourage and maintain mental health.

7. Examine the infiltration of the BPP by government agencies, members of law enforcement, and by police informants, and the resulting literary artifacts.
8. Evaluate the BPP as a Maoist organization and the influence on literature about the BPP.
9. Understand and evaluate the BPP members' attempts to invoke open-carry laws to exercise their Second Amendment rights, and the resulting records, media representation, and literary publications about related events.

## Course Content

1. Examine, understand, and analyze the Black Panther Party's (BPP) foundational literature as established by its founding members, for historical perspectives
  - a. Understand the initial goals of Elbert Howard, Bobby Seale, and Huey P. Newton, founders of the Black Panther Party
  - b. Examine and understand the BPP's 10-Point Plan and related subsequent literature, making connections to then-current social issues identified by the group at its inception
  - c. Understand the demands of the BPP when it was started; identify the primary goals of the party (as well as its other goals), and the motivations for these goals
  - d. Read and understand literary sources to understand the relevance of the demands made by the BPP at the time, and how the party and its demands were received by society in general
  - e. Examine the social issues and concerns at the time of the founding of the BPP, and the relationship between these and the demands of the BPP
  - f. Examine the ways in which the BPP was viewed at the time by its target membership (the underserved; local low-income communities of color), as well as by the government it held responsible for creating the living conditions that the BPP believed helped to maintain a system of inequality and oppression of poor people of color, specifically, Black Americans
2. Apply critical and theoretical criteria to evaluate perspectives, theories, and beliefs espoused by the BPP found in the literature, understanding how the literature related then and now, to discourse on the intersections of race, economic status, and gender
  - a. Examine theoretical criteria to apply it to the literature of the BPP; look for connections to Critical Race Theory (CRT)
  - b. Examine narrative devices present in BPP literature, and how these may or may not relate to beliefs held by BPP leaders
  - c. Study historical contexts relative to the BPP's claims of systemic oppression of people of color, and subsequent government and law enforcement response
  - d. Examine and understand gender implications relative to BPP organization and leadership, including the BPP's solidarity with the Gay Liberation Movement of the 1970s. Examination of homophobia and gender bias in society (and within the BPP) at the time of the BPP's inception, including complications caused by patriarchal dominant themes
  - e. Psychological theories such as PTSD, and the role these play in BPP affiliation and the resulting literature
  - f. Ethnic and racial theories and how these relate to current discourse on race in America
  - g. Examine and analyze postcolonial studies that inform the BPP's goals and methods, as well as the literature written about the BPP from inception to present-day

3. Identify and explore BPP literature (by the BPP, and by others), and the impact of BPP literature on society in general, and on pop culture, from the party's inception to present-day
  - a. Examine the impact of the BPP on society in general through the review of associated literature written at the founding of the BPP, through present-day
  - b. Examine the extent of the BPP's influence on pop culture, from 1966, and what it has looked like in the years since the founding of the party. Examine the breadth of influence on pop culture experienced by the BPP, as well as any societal obstacles (by opposing forces, such as the U.S. government) that were possibly created or caused because of the BPP's influence on pop culture
  - c. Examine the progression of development within the BPP, increasing impact and influence (directly or collaterally) of prominent party figures, Angela Davis, Bobby Seale, and Huey Newton
  - d. Identify and evaluate events that took these three party figures from obscurity to pop culture icon status as a result of ties to the BPP
4. Compare BPP literature to other forms of protest literature for intersectionality of common themes, and/or consistency of issues from the party's beginning to present-day
  - a. Understand how literature associated with the BPP compared or compares to other literature of protest that addresses the concerns of poor people of color in America; determine the existence of common themes and consistency of issues from the time of the BPP's inception to present-day. Examine how these themes and related issues have evolved to fit evolving issues
  - b. Evaluate how the messaging of other, subsequent forms of protest literature compares to the messaging of the BPP. Identify if and where the messaging of the BPP can be seen in other protest literature that addresses issues related to poor people of color; determine if the messaging of the BPP has remained relevant, consistent, and appropriate for present-day concerns
5. Examine and understand the significance of the global response to and solidarity with the BPP, demonstrated by other social justice groups that align(ed) their goals with those of the BPP
  - a. Identify ways the BPP inspired other U.S. social justice groups, as well as groups in other countries, and how these groups and how solidarity was formed between the BPP and other groups, such as The Brown Berets, The Israeli Black Panthers, The Young Lords
  - b. Examine issues that facilitated international and national solidarity amongst disenfranchised groups that are often excluded from U.S. history books
  - c. Examine the parallels between national and global support of and alignment with the BPP, and contemporary national and global support of and alignment with the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) and other present-day social justice groups or organizations
6. Examine the emotional toll that can be experienced by groups and the communities they serve while fighting for social justice and against systems of oppression, and methods used to encourage and maintain mental health
  - a. Identify how, based on lessons learned from the BPP's experiences, as well as observations of subsequent organized efforts for social justice, contemporary groups like BLM and other groups have integrated meditation and other mindfulness practices into their organizations' structures
  - b. Examine how the integration of meditation as a practice in the fight for social justice can help to minimize the emotional effects of battle fatigue associated with the continuous fight to end white supremacy
- c. Understand and evaluate the meaning and implications of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on members of social justice groups, as well as on members of the communities they serve
7. Examine the infiltration of the BPP by state and government agencies, members of law enforcement, and by police informants, and the resulting literary artifacts
  - a. Examine and evaluate police and court records, and transcripts of legal proceedings
  - b. Examine literature produced about this infiltration
  - c. Examine and evaluate media representations of the BPP, including documentaries and docudramas
8. Evaluate the BPP as a Maoist organization and the influence on literature about the BPP
  - a. Evaluate the extent to which the BPP promoted Maoist views, and viewed itself as a Maoist organization
  - b. Evaluate the effects of this on the organization's structure, practices, beliefs, goals, and the resulting literature produced by the BPP and by others outside of the BPP
  - c. Understand the general societal perception of the BPP based on it being viewed as a Maoist organization
9. Understand and evaluate the BPP members' attempts to invoke open-carry laws to exercise their Second Amendment rights, and resulting events
  - a. Examine police and court records and court transcripts of cases involving BPP members and open-carry. Examine and evaluate media representation of these events
  - b. Examine and evaluate the literature produced about these events, by BPP members and non-members
  - c. Evaluate publications that examine and/or discuss disparities between application of open-carry laws for BPP members, and application of open-carry laws for other groups or organizations (NRA, et al.)

## Lab Content

Not applicable.

## Special Facilities and/or Equipment

When delivered via in-person classroom, no special facilities or equipment; when delivered via online course, access to computer and email is needed.

## Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

Critical papers  
 Class presentations and reports  
 Journals and portfolios  
 Midterm examination  
 Class discussion in large-group and small-group formats  
 Social justice/service learning project  
 Production of students' own creative work class project  
 Final exam

## Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

Readings of multidisciplinary texts from fields, including history, social and political sciences, literature, cultural studies  
 Viewing and analyzing various media regarding contemporary issues  
 Viewing/observing/hearing cultural artifacts, including art, performance, film, theater, music  
 Writing analytical responses to course materials  
 Engagement in social justice/service learning  
 Guest speakers  
 Field observation and field trips (where applicable and possible)  
 Collaborative learning and large/small group exercises  
 Discussion of course topics and videos in relation to relevant topics, and real life examples drawn from students' experiences and observations

## Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Magoon, Kekla. Revolution in Our Time: The Black Panther Party's Promise to the People. 2021.

Walker, David F.. The Black Panther Party: A Graphic Novel History. 2021.

Meyer, Matt, and dequi sadiqi (Eds.). Look for Me in the Whirlwind: From the Panther 21 to the 21st Century Revolutions. 2017.

Dyson, Omari L.. The Black Panther Party and Transformative Pedagogy. 2013.

Spencer, Robyn C.. The Revolution Has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland. 2016.

Bloom, Joshua, and Waldo E. Martin Jr.. Black Against Empire: The History of the Politics of the Black Panther Party. 2016.

Chauncey, Henry "Sam". May Day at Yale: Recollections: The Trial of Bobby Seale and the Black Panthers. 2016.

Joseph, Jamal. Panther Baby: A Life of Rebellion and Reinvention. 2012.

Forbes, Flores. Will You Die With Me?: My Life and the Black Panther Party. 2007.

Jones, Charles E. (Ed.). The Black Panther Party (reconsidered). 2005.

Hilliard, David, and Lewis Cole. This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party. 2001.

Seale, Bobby. Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton. 1996.

Newton, Huey P.. War Against the Panthers: A Study of Repression in America. 1996.

Brown, Elaine. A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story. 1993.

Newton, Huey P.. Essays from the Minister of Defense. 1960s.

Cleaver, Eldridge. Soul on Ice. 1968.

Because the Black Panther Party has been (and continues to be) written about extensively since its very inception in 1966, to thoroughly and adequately examine the various forms of literature inspired by this organization requires consultation of resources beyond the previous five years.

Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Party People. 2014. Theatrical production.

PBS. "Eyes on the Prize: William O'Neal Interview." 1990. Television.

Judas and the Black Messiah. Directed by Shaka King. 2021. Film.

Seale, Bobby, and Huey P. Newton, founders. The Black Panther. 1967 (founded). Newspaper.

Roby, Bryan. The Israeli Black Panthers and Other Mizrahi Protest Movements in Israel. 2021. Zoom presentation.

Lama Rod Owens. Undoing Patriarchy and Embodying Sacred Masculinity. 2020. Video presentation.

Ricketts, Rachel. Stepping Into Spiritual Activism. 2016-21. Online course series.

## Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Reading multidisciplinary texts from fields including history, social and political sciences, literature, cultural studies
2. Viewing and analysis, including information literacy and media regarding the Black Panther Party
3. Viewing or attending lecture series or presentations, and responding in writing
4. Analytical essays on various forms of Black Panther literature
5. Journal entries
6. Class projects and group projects
7. Reflective essays about personal reaction to material covered
8. Field trips: Black Panther Tour in Oakland; highlights some aspects of the literature, and landmark locations used by the BPP in the early days of the movement

## Discipline(s)

English