

## Descriptif d'enseignement / *Course descriptions*

Etudiants internationaux uniquement / Only international students  
Semestre 2

### Titre du cours - *Course title*

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**"The Digestion of 'I have a Dream' : constructing a consensual memory of Martin Luther King in America"**

**Type de cours :** Cours magistral

**Langue du cours/Language of instruction :** English

### Enseignant(s) – *Professor(s)*

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### Résumé du cours – Objectifs - *Course description – Targets*

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With Gandhi, Martin Luther King is today a global icon. Indeed, not only in the United States but in the world at large only die-hard far-right militants would think of taking a critical view of the author of "I Have A Dream". With hindsight, a careful historical appraisal of his writings and his actions does suggest, however, that King was far from being the consensual figure he is mostly eulogized as today. The construction of a consensual memory has primarily helped Americans to feel good about themselves and about the history of "race" there, which Studs Terkel aptly calls "the American Obsession". Remembering King in a certain way has been instrumental in the perpetuation of "The American Dream" over decades.

### Evaluation - *Assessment*

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Assignments will deal with commentaries on documents tackling the above questions.

### Plan – Séances - *Course outline*

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What follows is a thematic and broadly chronological list of issues discussed in this course :

- 1/ A southern anomaly to save the American Dream ? the memory of King as a primarily Southern figure.
- 2/ Northerners' embarrassment and irritation : King's northern and western sojourns as forgotten facts ?
- 3/ M.L.K. in L.A : heeding King's warnings about the L.A. police just before the urban riots at Watts (L.A.).
- 4/ Constructing Manichean memories : Good guys, bad guys : Toning down M.L.K's radicalism, exaggerating Malcolm X's.
- 5/ A close-up on M.L.K's failures in Chicago, Richard J. Daley's turf.
- 6/ M.L.K's anti-capitalist dimension.
- 7/ The development and crystallization of celebrations of King's heritage.
- 8/ Martin Luther King's Day since 2000 : on the third Monday of January. Debates and controversies.
- 9/ King and Obama.

## Bibliographie - Bibliography :

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- Lassiter, Matthew & Crespino, Joseph, *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Laurent, Sylvie, *Martin Luther King : Une Biographie*, Paris : Seuil, 2015.
- Lukas, J. Anthony, *Common Ground : A Turbulent in the Life of Three American Families*, New York : Alfred Knopf, 1985.
- Marable, Manning, *Malcolm X : A Life of Reinvention*, New York : Viking Press, 2011.
- Sugrue, Thomas J., *Sweet Land of Liberty : The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*, New York : Random House, 2010.
- Terkel, Studs, *Race : How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel About the American Obsession*, New York : The New Press, 1992.
- Von Hoffman, Nicholas, *Radical : A Portrait of Saul Alinsky*, New York : Nation Books, 2010.

Some scholarly articles will be available and discussed together in class.

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