

History 305
Civil Rights in Memphis
302 Clough Hall
Fall 2011
TR 2.00 – 3.15
CRN 12145

Prof. Charles McKinney
O: 213 Buckman Hall
E: mckinneyc@rhodes.edu
P: 843.3575
Office Hours: MW 10.00 – 11.50 and by appointment

Course Description:

This seminar will examine the origin, growth and development of the civil rights movement in Memphis. Using, music, documentaries, oral histories and secondary sources, students will consider the various political, social, cultural and economic dynamics that led to the creation of a movement in the Bluff City. Additionally, the course will focus on various organizations and individuals, and will seek to analyze the strategies they implemented in the pursuit of greater freedom. Students will also assess reactions to the movement in Memphis, and the complex legacy citizens of the city continue to contend with.

Attendance and Deadlines:

Attendance at all class meetings is required. Because we hold in-class discussions/workshops, what unfolds in class cannot be recreated; you cannot “make up” lost class time. More than two unexcused absences will lower your average by a full letter grade. The only acceptable reasons for absence are documented illness, family emergency and college-sanctioned travel. Please inform your mom, dad, travel agent, or whoever is in charge of making your travel plans that you are expected to be in class on all of the days we are scheduled to meet. Late papers will be dropped by a full letter grade, and will *not be accepted two days after the due date without an excuse from the Dean*. History 305 is a seminar. This means that everyone is expected to take part in the daily life of the course. My assessment of your performance in this course will depend not only on the work you produce individually; it will also depend on how well you facilitate the learning of your colleagues.

Books:

Gordon, *It Came From Memphis* (Memphis)
Green, *Battling the Plantation Mentality* (Battling)
Pohlmann, *Opportunity Lost* (Lost)

Unless otherwise indicated, all other required readings will be available in my online public folder, located in the History Department folder on the server.

Assignments:

Your grade in this course will be determined as follows:

- **Primary Source Paper: 20%**
Primary sources are firsthand evidence from the time period you are studying, such as letters, diaries, oral histories, photographs, advertisements, court records, laws, magazines, political cartoons, speeches, songs, or paintings. Firsthand sources provide the best evidence an historian can interpret. The purpose of this assignment is to

research and contextualize some primary sources that address some aspect of the Civil Rights Movement in Memphis. For this 5 page paper, you will select at least two primary sources. *One of these sources must be an oral interview*. This paper will be an interpretation of the set of documents you select. Aim for original insights about the nature of the Civil Rights movement in Memphis, grounded in evidence from these sources. Also, illustrate how the documents you select support your assertions. *You will need to clear with me the sources you select for these papers.*

- **Class Participation: 30%**

This class will function as a seminar, which means that each student is responsible for doing all the reading and coming to class prepared to engage critically with that reading. The successful functioning of this class depends on the willingness of each student to participate in the ongoing conversation. Listening is not enough; each student is expected to make a reasonable contribution to the discussion so that others may benefit from their insight.

Students will also craft two, one-page oral interview analysis papers. These papers will be considered as a portion of your overall class participation grade.

Discussion: I define “participation” as active engagement with the ideas, readings, and conversations that are an integral part of this course. Class attendance is necessary for class participation, since you cannot participate if you are not here. However, you do not earn your participation grade simply by showing up to class. Rather, you must actually participate by joining in the class discussion, posing questions, sharing ideas, and interpreting the readings with your classmates in a thoughtful and reflective way.

I reserve the right to call on any member of the class so that they might contribute to our discussion. I recommend bringing questions that you have about reading assignments or about the previous class meeting if what we discussed is not entirely clear to you. I also recommend bringing a list of comments that you wish to make during class discussion so that you will be ready to contribute. *If you are someone who has difficulty speaking in class for whatever reason, please speak to me about alternative ways of participating.*

- **Research Brief: 25%**

Students will submit a 10-12 page research brief that uses both secondary and primary source materials to explore key issues raised (or not raised) throughout the course. Frequently, the most difficult part of assignments like these is to find a viable topic. This challenge can be surmounted by doing a thorough survey of all of the readings, sources and other materials that we use for class. *It is in your best interests to start thinking about and working on the paper early in the semester.* I will be happy to assist you in your efforts to identify workable topics, primary source materials and any other things you may need for this paper. ***A one page proposal stating your thesis, outlining your research topic and containing a 10 item bibliography is due on October 13. This proposal will count towards your midterm evaluation.*** Start early! The paper is due **November 17.**

- **Oral Presentation: 25%**

Each student will prepare and deliver an oral presentation of their research brief.

Honor Code:

All work turned in for this course is to be completed in accordance with the Rhodes College Honor Code. To demonstrate your commitment to the Code, each student must write “pledged” and sign his/her name on every assignment. If you have questions about plagiarism you should talk to me directly.

Learning Differences:

I am strongly committed to accommodating students with disabilities, and ask your cooperation in making sure that I’m aware of any such accommodation you might need. For more information, please contact Student Disability Services to alert them of any needs you may have.

Other Classroom Policies:

- Please turn off and *put away* all cell phones and any other electronic devices you have for the duration of the class. If I catch you texting during class, I reserve the right to remove you from the classroom
- Students must complete ALL of the required components of the course in order to pass
- Students who fail History 300 will not be eligible for other upper level history classes
- **I reserve the right to modify the syllabus**

Daily Assignments:

Read assignments before class and be prepared to discuss the key ideas within. In addition, begin the practice of “arguing” with the author: did s/he make a good argument? Is there sufficient evidence to support the argument? Is the essay or chapter confusing, disorganized, etc.? When reading primary source materials, ask yourself: who was the speaker or scribe? What was their agenda? How might their priorities have shaped what they wrote or said? How does it square with other forms of evidence?

Class Assignments:

R 25	Introduction to course; library orientation
T 30	Overview – The Early Period of Black Struggle in Memphis Read: Goings, “The Duty of the Hour” (Folder)
September	
R 1	Ida Wells and the Roots of Civil Rights. Special Guest Star Prof. Rychetta Watkins Read: Watkins, “The Southern Roots of Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s Revolutionary Activism”; “Ida B. Well-Barnett” (Folder)
T 6	World War II and an Emerging Movement Read: <i>Battling</i> , Intro, chps. 1-3; “The White Rose Mammy” (Folder)
R 8	Introduction to Oral History/Crossroads Introduction Read: “Oral History Reader”; “Memories of H.T. Lockard”
T 13	National Civil Rights Museum Tour
R 15	The Early Phase of the Movement – 1959-1964

Read: *Battling*, chps. 4, 6; select one U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Hearings from The “Crossroads” site; one oral interview

- T 20 The Movement’s High Point? – 1964-1968
Read: *Battling*, chps. 7-conclusion; two oral interviews
- R 22 **Special Guest Star: Wayne Dowdy, Hooks Library**
Movie and a Pizza Night: “At The River I Stand”
- T 27 Black Power and Student Movement(s)
Read: Kinchen “Black Power”; two oral interviews
- R 29 1968 and Beyond: **Special Guest Star – Prof. Gail Murray**
Read: Murray, “White Privilege, Racial Justice”; two oral interviews

October

- T 4 A Question of Culture
Read: Daniel, “Lost Revolutions”; one interview from a musician
Primary Source paper due
- R 6 **John Bass Presentation**
Read: “Music of Black Americans”
- T 11 Making Sense of Memphis
Read: *Memphis*, Intro – chap. 6
- R 13 **Paper Proposal Due/ Stax Museum Tour**
- T 18 **Fall Break**
- R 20 Making Sense of Memphis
Read: *Memphis*, chps. 7-11
- T 25 Oral Interview Analysis
Bring your analysis to class for discussion
- R 27 Making Sense of Memphis
Read: *Memphis*, chaps. 7-11
Movie and a Pizza Night: “Wattstax”

November

- T 1 Education: Last Front in the Civil Rights Struggle?
Read: *Lost*, chaps. 1-3
- R 3 Busing and Beyond
Read: *Lost*, chap. 4; Kiel, “Exploded Dreams”

- T 8 Oral Interview Analysis
 Bring an analysis of a relevant interview to class for discussion
- R 10 Assessing the State of Education in Memphis
 Read: *Lost*, chaps. 5-7; find 3 articles from the *Commercial Appeal*
 dealing with the consolidation issue
- T 15 No class – Office Hours for student check-ins for research paper
- R 17 **Paper Due/Discuss Oral Presentations**
- 22-24 **Thanksgiving Break**
- T 29 – T 6 **Oral Presentations**