

History 242 – African American History

Dr. Charles W. McKinney

Spring 2009, 102 Clough
MWF 10.00 – 10.50
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays
4.00 – 5.30 and by appointment

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Course Description

The experiences of African American people in the United States can be described as a continuous quest for empowerment; this quest has been affected by myriad factors (e.g., gender roles, class divisions, secular and non-secular ideologies, regionalism, etc.) in addition to racism. This course, through the use of primary and secondary material, historical documentaries, and critical analyses, will chart the historically complex journeys of African Americans, from the impact of slavery on colonial America to the Black Freedom Struggle of the 1960's and beyond.

Course Requirements:

Books:

- William Chafe, *Remembering Jim Crow (Jim Crow)*
- Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom (Joy)*
- Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul (Soul)*
- Steve Lawson and Charles Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement (Debating)*
- Roger Wilkins, *Jefferson's Pillow (Pillow)*

Reaction Papers - 30% of final grade:

Students will submit **three** 3-4-page reaction papers due on designated days. These papers are designed for you to engage in a deep, critical reading of the material covered in class and in the lectures. In these papers, you will discuss the major themes and concepts that we are dealing with at that point in the class, assess them accordingly and draw coherent conclusions about them. I will give you specific assignments throughout the semester. One of these papers will be a primary source exercise, which I'll discuss during class. One final note on the papers: when I say they should be 3-4 pages long I mean it. *Papers that do not have at least three full pages of text will not be graded.* Although this should go without saying, I'll put it in here anyway: a title page does **not** count as page one of your paper.

In-class discussion/participation – 20% of final grade

I expect you to attend every class, arrive on time and come ready, having done the assigned reading and/or written assignment. Since there will be a very high premium on class discussion, it is imperative that everyone comes to class ready to contribute with comments, questions and insights. Remember though, class participation is not a contest. The people who talk the most do not necessarily "win." What really counts is your ability and willingness to bring something valuable to the discussion that your colleagues and I can build upon in our efforts to bring some clarity to the issues that we are discussing. Of course, this level of participation will require full reading of assigned work. Also, to ensure the best possible experience for all of us, let's refrain from using inappropriate language, or any other activity that may make our classroom less than open and engaging. Also, coming to the office during office hours to discuss material covered in the class also counts towards your class participation grade.

Discussion days and Discussion page:

On many Fridays throughout the semester, we will have in-class discussion (these days will be in **bold** on your syllabus). On those days you will submit a discussion page at the end of class. This page will consist of *at least five well thought out questions and five fully formed discussion topics that you would like to discuss with the class.* You will come to class with this page, and use it to engage your classmates in an informed, thoughtful discussion of the dominant themes and ideas that have presented themselves during the week. I will call on students randomly to begin discussion on these days. *Please note that a fifth of your grade is based on your participation in class.* While in-class discussion days represent a significant

opportunity for you to shine, it is in your best interest to come to class throughout the semester ready to contribute to the intellectual give and take of the class.

Examinations – 25% each of final grade:

There will be two in class examinations, a midterm and a final. Both of these will consist of short answer questions and essay questions. The midterm exam will be held on **March 6**. The final exam will be a take home essay due on **May 9**. We'll discuss this towards the end of the semester. These dates are fixed.

Please do not hesitate to come by my office to discuss any of these requirements.

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.

Policies:

Note on written work:

All written work must be composed on a computer, be double-spaced and in 10 or 12 point font. Have your name, the assignment name (and number if necessary), date, course name and email address on each document you turn in. Students who feel that they need assistance with written assignments should feel free to contact me so that we can discuss whatever challenges you may be facing.

Attendance:

Students will be allowed three unexcused absences. *All other absences after the third one must be excused. Each unexcused absence after the third one will cost you 5% of your **final** grade. If you miss three weeks worth of classes, you can be dropped from the class or flunked.* Valid excuses for missing class include but are not limited to religious observances, college-sanctioned academic or athletic travel, personal illness or injury, family illness or injury or bereavement. Excuses after the allotted three should be accompanied by a note from the Dean's office. Needless to say, infrequent class attendance will negatively impact your class participation grade.

Paper/test grades:

As a general rule, grades are not negotiable. However, I will gladly discuss the grade on any assignment 24 hours after the work is turned in.

Late Papers:

Papers are due at the beginning of class. Papers that are one day late will be penalized one letter grade. “My computer crashed the night before the paper was due” is not an excuse for a late paper; rather, it is a testament to poor time management on your part. *Papers over one day late will receive an F. However, please note that you must turn in all of the assigned work in order to pass the class.*

Missed Tests:

Make-up exams are available for students who miss class for an excusable reason (see above). Students should contact me and arrange a mutually convenient time within a week of the student's return.

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.

Additional Information:

- Please turn off all cell phones, pagers, games, and any other object that can beep, buzz, ring or vibrate. These devices are extremely disruptive when they go off in the middle of class
- The readings for the week should be done by the *beginning of each week*
- ***I reserve the right to amend this syllabus as necessary***

Class Schedule:

January 14: Introduction

Discussion: Why African American History?

January 16: Library Orientation

Barret Library, Room 128

January 19: Holiday (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – **Morehouse Class of 1948**)

January 21, 23: Building Freedom and Unfreedom

(*Pillow*, Intro – chapter 2)

January 26, 28, 30: Slavery and the Founding of the Republic

M: Building Freedom and Unfreedom (cont'd)

W: Slavery and the Founding of the Republic

F: **Discussion Day**

(*Pillow*, Intro – chapt. 2; “Racial Formation” – in public folder)

February 2, 4, 6: The Question of Black Humanity

M: “Are They Human?”

W: Making the Rules: Science, Economics and the Evolution of Racial Theory

F: Constructing Race in the Eighteenth Century

(*Trials of Phyllis Wheatley; A Hideous Monster*, both in public folder)

February 9, 11, 13: Slavery and the Founding of the Republic, Part II

M: Humanity and Revolution

W: “We Deserve our Freedom.”

F: Black Life and Institution Building in the North

(*Pillow*, chapters 3-4; *African American Voices* article in public folder)

Reaction Paper #1 due February 13

February 16, 18, 20: Marking Bodies, Making Racial Difference

M: The Chattel Principle

W: The World the Slaves made

F: **Discussion Day**

(*Soul*, Intro – chapter 3)

February 23, 25, 27: People or Property?

M: Slavery and White Society

W: Life in the shadow of the market

F: **Discussion Day**

(*Soul*, 4 – Epilogue)

March 2, 4: Abolition, War and Beyond

M: Freedom and Respect

W: Who Freed the Slaves?

(“A War for the Union” – public folder; Bederman article – public folder)

March 6:

Midterm Exam

March 9, 11: The Freedom Generation

M: Building Freedom from the Ground Up

W: Life in the Post-War Era

(*Joy*, Intro – chapter 5)

March 13

Reaction Paper #2 due

March 14 – 22

Spring Break

March 23, 25, 27: Making a New World

M: Pleasure and Respectability: Intra-class politics and the beginnings of Jim Crow

W: The Rise of Segregation in the South

F: **No Class**

(*Joy*, chapters 6 – 10)

March 30, April 1, 3: Racial Apartheid in the South

M: The Consolidation of Jim Crow

W: Memory and Family

(*Jim Crow*, chapters 1 – 3)

April 6, 8, 10: Life Behind the Veil

M: School and Work

W: Resistance to Jim Crow

F: **Easter Friday**

(*Jim Crow*, chapters 4 – 6)

Reaction Paper #3 due April 8

April 13, 15, 17: Civil Rights: A View from the Top

M: The Master Narrative

W: The Federal Government Saves the Day?

F: **Discussion Day**

(*Debating*, 3 – 58, three documents)

April 20, 22, 24: Civil Rights: A View From the Trenches

M: Groundwork

W: SNCC!

F: “Malcolm v. Martin” and other false dichotomies

(*Debating*, 115 – 155, documents 1 – 6)

April 27, 29: Contemporary Black America

M: Victimhood in Black America

W: Race in the Age of Obama

(“Race in the American Mind” – article file name is 243 – in folder; John McWhorter, “Losing the Race” – public folder)

Supplemental Reading: Ogbar on hip hop (folder); McWhorter, “Hip Hop Holds Blacks Back” @

<http://www.city-journal.org/printable.php?id=1112>

May 1

URCAS

May 9

Final Exam