

History 105.02 – Selected Topics in African American History

Dr. Charles W. McKinney

Spring 2006, 313 Clough Hall
TR 9.30 – 10.45
Office Hours: M, T 11.00 – 12.30
and by appointment

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Course Description

In order to understand the history of the American Republic, it is clear that students of history must contend with the riddle of African American citizenship. This course will critically examine several key issues and time periods in the African American experience and place them within a larger historical context. Also, students will consider the role historians play in shaping popular conceptions of historical events. Using primary and secondary sources and film, students will come to a greater understanding of the central issues presented in the course, and respond to these issues in a series of critical essays and one longer writing project.

Books:

- James and Lois Horton., *Hard Road to Freedom: The Story of African America (Road)*
- Roger Wilkins, *Jefferson's Pillow: The Founding Fathers and the Dilemma of Black Patriotism (Pillow)*
- William Chafe, Raymond Gavins, Paul Ortiz, eds., *Remembering Jim Crow (Jim Crow)*
- John David Smith, ed., *When did Southern Segregation begin? (Segregation)*
- Charles Payne, Steven Lawson, eds., *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968 (Debating)*

Course Requirements:

Reaction Papers - 30% of final grade:

Students will submit **three** 3-5 page reaction papers that will be due on designated dates. The main point of the papers is to provide a critical reaction to the readings covered in a particular segment of the class. In these papers, you will discuss and evaluate the major themes that arise in the readings you select for the paper. While a (very) short synopsis of the readings can make its way into the papers, reaction papers will ultimately be graded based on the *conclusions* you draw about the readings themselves, and the ways in which they help/do not help you understand particular topics or themes.

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.

Discussion days and Discussion page:

On the final day of each segment, 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 related to the readings and discussions in the segment.* You will come to class with this page, and use it engage your classmates in an informed, thoughtful discussion of the dominant themes and ideas of the segment. I will call on

students randomly to begin discussion on that day. 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.

Research Essay – 30% of final grade (Research Proposal/thesis/bibliography – 10%; Final Research Essay – 20%)

Students will submit a 10-15 page research essay that uses secondary and primary source documents to explore key issues raised (or not raised) in the course. I will be happy to assist you in your efforts to identify primary source documents for this paper. **A 1-2 page proposal outlining your research topic, stating your thesis and containing a 10 item bibliography is due on March 9 at the beginning of class.** I will be more than happy to work with you on this proposal before it is due. Don't hesitate to come and see me about it so you can present your best work. Don't forget – this proposal will be graded. Be sure to take an ample amount of time to think through your proposal.

The final paper is due on **April 11 at the beginning of class.**

Final Exam – 20% of final grade

The final exam will be an open book, take home essay exam. Students will be expected to write (rather eloquently) on several themes that present themselves throughout the course. We'll discuss the exam as we approach the end of the semester.

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.* 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. Infrequent class attendance will negatively impact your class participation grade.

Paper 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:

All papers are due **at the beginning of class**. Papers turned in after class will be considered one day late. Unexcused late assignments will be penalized by one letter grade for each day late.

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.
- ***I reserve the right to amend this syllabus as necessary***

Class Schedule:

Slavery and the Origins of the American Republic

January 12: Welcome!

Introductions; go over syllabus; discussion

January 17: Slavery in the New World, Part I

Road, chaps. 1-2

January 19: Slavery in the New World, Part II

Road, chap. 3

January 24: Making Race

Michael Omi, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 53-76 (public folder)

January 26: Which came first: Racism or Slavery?

Winthrop Jordan, "Modern Tensions and the Origins of American Slavery", *Journal of Southern History*, v. 28 (February, 1962), 18-30; Edmund Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox", *Journal of American History* v. 39 (1972), 5-29 (both of these articles are available on JSTOR)

Reaction Paper #1 Due (1/26)

January 31: Slavery and the Founding of the Republic, Part I

Pillow, Intro – chap. 3

February 2: Slavery and the Founding of the Republic, Part II

Pillow, chaps. 3-5

February 7: Cotton, Color and the Constitution

Road, chaps. 4-5

February 9: Film

"Africans in America"; **Reaction Paper #2 Due (2/9)**

February 14: Discussion

Discussion Questions Due

Segregation and the Jim Crow Era

February 16: Building Freedom from the Ground Up

"A War for the Union" (public folder); *Road*, chap. 8

February 21: Making Segregation
Segregation, 3-84

February 23: Of Railroads and other Contested Spaces
Segregation, 85-102; Kenneth Goings, Brian Page, "African Americans Versus the Memphis Street Railway Company: Or How to Win the Battle and Lose the War, 1890-1920" in *Journal of Urban History* vol. 30, no. 2 (January 2004) (public folder)

Reaction Paper #3 Due (2/23)

February 28: Gender and the Evolution of Segregation
Segregation, 103-152

March 2: Segregation and the Rise of Jim Crow
Segregation, 153-165; *Jim Crow*, chap. 1

March 7: Memory and Family: Internal Struggles against Segregation
Jim Crow chaps. 2-3

March 9: School and Work "Behind the Veil"
Jim Crow, chap. 4, pp. 205-208, 245-267

Research Essay Proposal Due (3/9)

March 10-19: Spring Break

March 21: Fighting the Machine: Resistance to Jim Crow
Jim Crow, chap. 6

March 23: Discussion
Discussion Questions Due

The Civil Rights Movement

March 28: The Battle For Democracy
Tyson article, "Wars for Democracy" (public folder); *Road*, chap. 11

March 30: Civil Rights – The National View, Part 1
Debating, 3-44

April 4: Civil Rights – The National View, Part 2
Debating, 45-97

April 6: Civil Rights – Local Movements, Part 1
Debating, 99-138

April 11: Civil Rights – Local Movement, Part 2
Debating, 139-150

Research Essay Due (4/11)

April 12 – 16: Easter Break

April 18: Film
"Freedom Song"

April 20: Film
Finish watching "Freedom Song"

April 25: Where are we now? The Aftermath of the Movement
Charles Payne article; John McWhorter article (both in public folder)

April 27: Discussion

Discussion Questions Due. Come prepared to discuss your research essay!

April 28:

We will attend the URCAS Presentations

May 1-6: Finals