

History 205
Selected Topics in History:
Memphis and the Mississippi Delta
Fall 2012, MWF 3:00-3:50
302 Barrett Library

Prof. Charles L. Hughes

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221 Buckman Hall and 306 Barrett Library

Office Hours: 10:00-11:00 AM Monday in 221 Buckman, 1:00-2:00 PM Wednesday in 306 Barrett, or by appointment

This course will provide an introduction to the major themes and questions in the history of Memphis and the Mississippi Delta. Using a variety of sources, we'll explore the significant political, social, economic and cultural changes that have taken place in the region from the 18th century to the present day. We'll frame our investigations around three central questions: 1) How have people in Memphis and the Delta related to each other?, 2) How have they related to the land?, and 3) What has been the historical relationship between Memphis and the Delta? These questions will guide us as we explore a wide range of historical topics.

Course requirements

Your final grade will consist of the following four components:

Attendance and participation (including “discussion starters”) – 30%

Midterm exam – 20%

Essay on The Reivers – 20%

Final project – 30%

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 or family emergency. Excuses must be documented by a note from a doctor, the Dean's office, or a relevant faculty member.

All students are expected to come to each class having completed the readings that are assigned for that particular day. Please bring the assigned readings to class each day, as we will consult them. On Mondays and Wednesdays, our class will be a mixture of lecture and discussion, and your active participation will be necessary for the class to work effectively. On Fridays, we'll change things up a bit and have everything from guest speakers to field trips. Several times during the semester, we'll devote our Fridays to an in-depth discussion of readings. On these weeks, students will be divided into 2 groups (Group A and Group B) and one group will be expected to come to class with “discussion starters.” These “discussion starters” consist of 3 questions, based in the reading material, that you'd like to hear addressed during class. These questions can take many forms, but make sure that they can provoke interesting and substantive conversations. (For example, avoid factual questions like “Where is Beale Street located?” or open-ended questions like “What is it like to be a farmer?” in favor of things like “Why did Beale Street become a center for Black life in Memphis?” or “Did sharecroppers face

conditions that other farmers didn't?") Please submit these discussion starters to me via e-mail by 10 P.M. on the Thursday night before our Friday class. Your participation grade will suffer if you do not submit discussion starters.

The midterm will be an in-class essay exam. The final exam will be a take-home project that will be due at 11 AM on Friday, December 7th. Details on this project are provided on the last page of this syllabus. For information on the Reivers essay, please "Week 9" in the class schedule.

There are also several opportunities for extra credit. There are three special "Evening Events" listed in the course schedule. If you attend an event and write me a one-page summary, you'll receive a maximum of 3 extra-credit points which will be added to your lowest paper or exam grade. If you turn in summaries of all three events, you'll receive up to 9 extra-credit points.

Readings

Five books are required for the course and are available at the Rhodes bookstore:

Chris Myers Asch. The Senator and the Sharecropper: The Freedom Struggles of James O. Eastland and Fannie Lou Hamer. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

James C. Cobb. The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

G. Wayne Dowdy. A Brief History of Memphis. (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011).

William Faulkner. The Reivers. (New York: Vintage, 1992) (originally published 1962)

Laurie B. Green. Battling the Plantation Mentality: Memphis and the Black Freedom Struggle. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

The Cobb and Faulkner books are available on reserve at the Rhodes library. Green's book is available as an e-resource through the library website.

There are additional readings that will be available online, either as internet links or on Moodle. I've noted these readings and their locations in the class schedule.

Abilities

I'm committed to making sure that this course is accessible to all students. Anyone who receives accommodations through the Office of Disability Services should contact me as soon as possible.

Academic Conduct

All work for this course is to be completed in accordance with Rhodes' Honor Code. You are expected to be familiar with the requirements of the Code and to act accordingly in all classroom matters. To demonstrate your commitment, you must write "pledged" and sign your name on every written assignment.

I take academic misconduct very seriously, but I'm also aware that it can be difficult to understand what qualifies as plagiarism. If you have any questions, please contact me and/or consult the "Guide To Effective Paper Writing" published by the Rhodes College Writing Center. *It is your responsibility to understand the specifics of what constitutes misconduct and what does not.*

Classroom Atmosphere

Everyone is a crucial part of making this class successful. So, for the sake of those around you (including me!), please refrain from sleeping, reading the newspaper, talking, text messaging, or using a laptop for non-academic purposes.

Controversy

We're going to be discussing some complex and contentious topics this semester, and I hope that we can create an environment in which everyone feels free to speak openly and honestly. Disagreements will – and perhaps should – occur, and I hope that all of us are willing to use these moments of controversy to better understand the larger themes of the course. However, we must all make sure to keep our discussions constructive and avoid personal attacks. If I sense a discussion going astray, I reserve the right to redirect it or shut it down completely. If anybody feels uncomfortable at any point this semester, please come to see me.

Writing Center

One of Rhodes' best resources is the Writing Center, located in 122 Barrett Library. I encourage you to utilize the Center's services as you prepare your written assignments. Get more info at <http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/>

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

Wednesday, August 22nd – Introduction

Friday, August 24th – Memphis and the Delta before the Americans

WEEK 2

Monday, August 27th – “The Plantation Frontier”: Settlement and Removal
Cobb, Introduction and Chapter 1

George W. Harkins, “To The American People,” found at
<http://anpa.ualr.edu/trailOfTears/letters/1831DecemberGeorgeWHarkinstotheAmericanPeople.htm>

Wednesday, August 29th – Building a Cotton Kingdom
Dowdy, Chapter 1

Friday, August 31st – How To Analyze Historical Documents

WEEK 3

Monday, September 3rd – **NO CLASS: LABOR DAY**

Wednesday, September 5th – The World The Slaves Made
Marius Carriere, “Blacks in Pre-Civil War Memphis,” Moodle
David Libby, “Slaves and the Western Migration” and Defining the Boundaries of Enslavement,” Moodle

Friday, September 7th – Discussion of Readings (Group A)

WEEK 4

Monday, September 10th – The Civil War and Reconstruction
Cobb, Chapter 2
Dowdy, Chapter 2

Wednesday, September 12th – Redemption and Reaction: The Birth of Jim Crow
Cobb, Chapter 3
Dowdy, Chapter 3

Friday, September 14th – Discussion of Readings (Group B)

FIELD TRIP, SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 15th – 11:00 AM, Cotton Museum of Memphis

WEEK 5

Monday, September 17th – Sharecropping: The Compromise That Pleased Nobody
Cobb, Chapters 4-5

Wednesday, September 19th – How A Mosquito Changed Memphis: The 1877 Yellow Fever Epidemic
Dowdy, Chapter 4

Friday, September 21st – Discussion of Readings (Group A)

WEEK 6

Monday, September 24th – The Making of Modern Memphis
Beverly Bond, “Every Duty Incumbent Upon Them: African American Women in Nineteenth-Century Memphis,” Moodle
Kenneth Goings and Gerald Smith, “Duty of the Hour: African American Communities in Memphis, 1862-1923,” Moodle

Wednesday, September 26th – Ida B. Wells and Lynchings
Rychetta N. Watkins, “The Southern Roots of Ida B. Wells-Barnett's Revolutionary Activism,” Moodle
Ida B. Wells, “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases,” Moodle

Friday, September 28th – Case Study #1 – Overton Park (MEET IN OVERTON PARK)

EVENING EVENT ON SATURDAY 9/29:

Rhodes Night at the Levitt Shell, 7:30 PM, Overton Park – Rhodes' Jazz Band will be performing songs by Memphis jazz artists, featuring well-known players Bill Mobley (also a Rhodes alum) and Donald Brown.

WEEK 7

Monday, October 1st – “Mr. Crump Don't Like It”: Machine Politics in Memphis

Dowdy, Chapter 5

Wednesday, October 3rd – Delta Blues
Cobb, Chapter 12

Friday, October 5th – Case Study #2 – Parchman Farm Penitentiary

WEEK 8

Monday, October 8th – “High Water Everywhere”: The Contexts and Consequences of the 1927 Mississippi River Flood

Wednesday, October 10th – **MIDTERM EXAM**

Friday, October 12th – **NO CLASS: FALL BREAK**
Faulkner, Chapters 1-7

WEEK 9

Monday, October 15th – **NO CLASS: FALL BREAK**

Wednesday, October 17th – Migrations and Transitions
Asch, Prologue-Chapter 2

Friday, October 19th – Discussion of Readings (Group B)
Faulkner, Chapters 8-End

***Essay on The Reivers, due MONDAY, NOVEMBER 5th:** In a 4-5 page essay, describe three specific ways that Faulkner's novel connects to the broader historical themes that we've discussed so far this semester. Papers must have a strong thesis which is supported by evidence from Faulkner's novel and at least two other class readings. Papers must be in 12-point font, be double-spaced and have standard margins.*

WEEK 10

Monday, October 22nd – The Great Depression and the New Deal
Asch, Chapter 3
Cobb, Chapters 7-9

Wednesday, October 24th – Beale Street Saturday Night
Margaret McKee and Fred Chisenhall, “Old Beale,” “The Beale Street Beat,” “The Complexion Complex” and “Mr. Crump and the Accomodationists,” Moodle

Friday, October 26th – Case Study #3 – Manassas High (Guest lecture from Dr. John Bass)

WEEK 11

Monday, October 29th – The Roots of the Civil Rights Movement
Green, Introduction-Chapter 5

EVENING EVENT:

Lecture on Ida B. Wells by Dr. Paula Giddings, 6:00 PM, BCLC Ballroom

Wednesday, October 31st – The Rock & Roll Revolution

Pete Daniel, “Rhythms of the Land” and “A Little of the Rebel,” Moodle

Joe Nick Patoski, “Jim Dickinson Was One Cool Cat,” found at

<http://theragblog.blogspot.com/2009/08/joe-nick-patoski-jim-dickinson-was-one.html>

Friday, November 2nd – **NO CLASS: PROF. HUGHES OUT OF TOWN**

WEEK 12

Monday, November 5th – Civil Rights Organizing in Memphis

Green, Chapter 6

Wednesday, November 7th – Local People: SNCC and the Organizing Tradition in the Delta

Asch, Chapters 4-6

Cobb, Chapter 10

Endesha Ida Mae Holland, “Memories of the Mississippi Delta,” found at

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mqrarchive/act2080.0026.001/261?didno=act2080.0026.001%3A43;rgn=main;view=image>

Friday, November 9th – Discussion of Readings (Group A)

Readings

WEEK 13

Monday, November 12th – Case Study #4 – The North Bolivar County Farm Cooperative

Asch, Chapter 7-8

Wednesday, November 14th – “We The People”: Soul Music in Memphis

Green, Chapter 7

Craig Werner, “Soul Food: The Mid-South Mix,” Moodle

THURSDAY, 11/15 EVENING EVENT:

Tribute to Jimmie Lunceford and Manassas High Music, 5:00-9:00 PM, Memphis Center, Rhodes College (more information coming soon)

Friday, November 16th – Discussion of Readings (Group B)

FIELD TRIP, SATURDAY NOVEMBER 17th – 11:00 AM, Stax Museum of American Soul Music

WEEK 14

Monday, November 19th – Film: “At The River I Stand”

Green, Chapter 8-Conclusion

Wednesday, November 21st – **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Friday, November 23rd – **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK**

WEEK 15

Monday, November 26th – From Segregation to Re-segregation: Schools in Memphis and the Delta
Asch, Chapters 9-10
Daniel Kiel, “Exploded Dream: Desegregation in the Memphis City Schools,” Moodle

Wednesday, November 28th – “Renewal” and Renaissance in Memphis
Dowdy, Chapter 6

Friday, November 30th – **NO CLASS: MEETINGS ABOUT PRIMARY SOURCE PROJECT**

WEEK 16

Monday, December 3rd – The Delta from the 1970s to the 2010
Cobb, Chapter 11
Ali Colleen Neff, “True Blues Ain't No New News,” Moodle

Wednesday, December 5th – “High Water Everywhere,” The Remix: The 2011 Mississippi Flood
John Barry, “Floods are a reminder of the Mississippi River's power,” found at
http://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2011/05/floods_are_a_reminder_of_the_m.html
Mark Guarino, “Mississippi flooding: In impoverished Delta, echoes of 1927 disaster,” found at
<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2011/0512/Mississippi-flooding-In-impoverished-Delta-echoes-of-1927-disaster>

FINAL PROJECT DUE: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7th at 11:00 AM

FINAL PROJECT

One of the best parts of being a historian is that we get to search through the wealth of primary sources that exist in the world, until we find the stuff that is really important, interesting and/or cool. Sometimes these documents are well-known (historians are still writing books on the Constitution, for example), but often they are other under-appreciated or totally unknown. We get to reclaim them. We have the immense privilege of introducing those sources, and the people who created them, to the rest of the world. We get to describe why the document is uniquely illuminating, put it in historical context, and (hopefully) convince our audience that it's significant. In your final project, you'll get a chance to do this. You'll write a paper in which you profile 3 primary sources related to the history of Memphis and the Mississippi Delta.

To find these sources, you will utilize two online archives:

-Rhodes' Crossroads to Freedom Digital Archive (www.crossroadstofreedom.org), a collection of material that Rhodes students and faculty have collected over the past several years. This ever-growing archive is one of the best sources of information on Memphis history and culture, and contains everything from posters to oral histories.

-The Digital Archive of the Memphis Public Library, or "Dig Memphis" (<http://memphislibrary.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/>), an archive of material that is drawn from the vast holdings of the library's special collections. Curated by local historian G. Wayne Dowdy (who we're reading this semester), "Dig Memphis" has a variety of material that will be useful to you.

Guidelines

-Write a 3-4 page essay about each document. Each essay should do three things:

- 1) Describe the document – What's in it? Where does it come from?
- 2) Explain why it's important – Why should we care about it? What does it reveal or illustrate?
- 3) Relate it to the broader history of Memphis and the Mississippi Delta – How does it connect to the things we've looked at this semester? How might it either confirm or challenge the authors we've read?

-Your project should begin with a 1-page introduction, which briefly introduces the documents you found and the themes you'll be exploring in your essays.

-Each essay, and the introduction, must have a strong thesis statement, supported through specific evidence from the primary document and other course readings.

-Your project should be written clearly and be free of grammatical and spelling errors.

-Be creative and have fun!

Requirements

-Papers should be 10-13 pages in total length, with 3-4 pages for each primary source and a 1-page introduction. No conclusion or title page is necessary.

-12-point font, double-spaced, standard margins

-You must use at least one document from **each** online archive.

-You must use at least **two** different kinds of documents (oral histories, newspaper articles, photos, etc.)

-You must use evidence from at least **three** other course readings.

-You do not have to include copies or transcripts of the documents in your paper.

-Papers are due in my office by 11:00 AM on Friday, December 7th