

History 105.06 – Selected Topics in African American History

Dr. Charles W. McKinney

Spring 2013, 222 Buckman Hall
MWF, 10.00-10.50
Office Hours: M, W
11.00-12.00, 2.00-3.00
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 complicated case 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, weekly writing assignments and one longer writing project. This course is writing-intensive.

Books:

- Douglas Blackmon, *Slavery By Another Name (Slavery)*
- David Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom: Abraham Galloway and the Slaves' Civil War (Fire)*
- Greta de Jong, *Invisible Enemy: The African American Freedom Struggle After 1965 (Invisible)*
- Steven Lawson and Charles Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement (Debating)*

Course Requirements:

2 essays - 20% of final grade

Students will submit **two** 4-5 page essays that will be due on **Monday, February 4** and **Friday, March 8**.

Class Participation– 30% of final grade

As for **class participation**, I expect you to attend every class meeting, 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. If you have an insight on the readings, or if you have a page full of questions, let your voice be heard! 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, students who come to the office during office hours to discuss material covered in class, bring relevant current events/news items to our attention or engage in a productive electronic exchange will thereby enhance their grade in this area.

Debate – 10% of final grade

Each student will participate in **one in-class debate**. You will sign up for one of these debates towards the beginning of the semester. Your evaluation will be based on your thoughtful, informed participation in the debate. We'll talk more about this later. Students who are *not debating* during these scheduled debates will complete a one-page debate assessment analysis.

Synopses – 20% of final grade

On selected Fridays throughout the semester, students will submit a one page, single spaced synopsis of the week's readings. These synopses will contain a brief overview of the readings, an assessment of the major themes presented in the readings and in class, and your original insights about the material.

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

Students will submit an 8-10 page research brief 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 5 item bibliography is due on Monday, March 25 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 research brief is due on **Wednesday, April 24 at the beginning of class.**

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**. I do not accept late papers without the appropriate documentation from the Dean's Office.

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:

Civil War, Reconstruction and the Rise of Modern America

January

W 9 – Introduction; Review syllabus
F 11 – Library Presentation (scheduled)
 READINGS: *Fire*, 1-2

Life in the Antebellum Era

M 14 – Black Life in the North
W 16 – Slave Life
F 18 – Escape and Rebellion – *synopsis due*
 READINGS: *Fire*, 3-6; FILM:

War and Freedom

M 21 – **No Class Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Morehouse, class of 1948)**
W 23 – The Civil War
F 25 – Galloway and Lincoln – *synopsis due*
 READINGS: *Fire*, 7-12

Building Freedom From the Ground Up

M 28 – Reconstruction and Politics
W 30 – “It was a whole race learning to read.”
Feb.1 – *Debate 1*
 READINGS: *Fire*, 13-Epilogue; “Ex-Slaves and the Rise of Universal Education” (Folder)

February

The Rise of Jim Crow and the Persistence of Slavery

M 4 – The Rise of Jim Crow (*PAPER #1 DUE*)
W 6 – Racial Violence
F 8 – Prison Labor
 READINGS: *Road*, 5-6

Confronting Inequality

M 11 – The Movement before the Movement
W 13 – Battling the Machine
F 15 – Slave Labor and World War II – *synopsis due*
 READINGS: *Slavery*, Part 2

The Civil Rights Movement

Laying the Groundwork

M 18 – Local Work
W 20 – Movie: “Slavery by Another Name.”
F 22 – Finish watching “Slavery.”
 READINGS: “Multiple Fronts”; *Invisible*, chp. 1.

Civil Rights: The View from the Top

M 25 – *Brown* and Montgomery

W 27 – Freedom Rides and Birmingham
F 1 – The Importance of Legislation – synopsis due
READINGS: *Debating*, 1-46, select 5 documents

March

Civil Rights: The View from Below

M 4 – Organizations and the Meaning of Leadership
W 6 – SNCC, Nonviolence and MLK
F 8 – Local Movements (**PAPER #2 DUE**)
READINGS: *Debating*, 115-155, select 5 documents

March 11 – 15 Spring Break

Black Power

M 18 – The Meredith March
W 20 – The Panthers and the Rise of Black Nationalism
F 22 – Assessing the Movement – synopsis due
READINGS: TBA

The Movement and Its Legacy

M 25 – The War on Poverty/Education (**RESEARCH PAPER BIBLIOGRAPHY AND THESIS DUE**)
W 27 – Debate 2
F 29 – Easter
READINGS: *Invisible*, chps. 2-4; “Opportunities Lost” (Folder)

African Americans and Contemporary America

April

The Struggle Continues

M 1 – The Debate over Affirmative Action
W 3 – The Continuing struggle to vote
F 5 – Economic Justice– synopsis due
READINGS: *Invisible*, chps. 5-7

Race in the American Imagination

M 8 – “The Cult of Victimization”: Real or Imagined?
W 10 – Race in Contemporary Life
F 12 – **Discussion Day**
READINGS: “Losing the Race”; “Race in the American Mind” (Folder)

Contemporary African American Culture

M 15 – Black Popular Culture
W 17 – The Riddle of Hip Hop
F 19 – Film: “Beyond Beats and Rhymes”
READINGS: “Hip Hop Revolution” (Folder)

Race in Obama’s America

M 22 – Post-racial? Really?
W 24 – The Riddle of Race in the 21st Century – **RESEARCH BRIEF DUE**
F 26 – **URCAS**
READINGS: “Not Even Past” (Folder)