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Office Hours: T/Th 10:30am – 12:00pm

**FYWS 151.12 *White Trash, NASCAR, and Fried Chicken:*
Constructions of the American South
T/TH 12:30 – 1:45pm; Barrett 214**

A Brief Course Description

This class will look closely at the American South, and investigate the myriad ways this region is represented in our popular culture. By looking at a cross section of texts, including literary works, pieces of journalism, music, films, documentaries, and photographic images, we will explore not only how the South is viewed today, but also the ways in which it has been scripted throughout American history. Over the course of the semester we will consider stereotypical portrayals of the Land of Dixie alongside texts that work to develop a more nuanced understanding of the American South. How do these texts work to complicate, dismantle, or reinforce previous assumptions regarding the region? By addressing these questions and many more, we will begin to form an understanding of how and why the South is scripted and defined in very particular ways.

This class is designed to develop your ability to write clear and effective argumentative prose. We will approach writing not as a product, but as a process that involves recognizing, developing, and effectively expressing our most interesting questions as compelling arguments. Requiring the analysis of not only assigned readings, but also each other's writing, this class emphasizes revision as an indispensable part of the critical-thinking process.

Required Texts

Allison, Dorothy. *Bastard out of Carolina* (1992)
Ayers, Edward and Bradley Mittendorf Eds. *The Oxford Book of the American South: Testimony, Memory, and Fiction* (1997)
Cobb, James C. *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (2005)
McPherson, Tara. *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (2003)

Grading

10% - Participation
5% - Mini Paper
15% - Paper 1
20% - Paper 2
50% - Final Research Project

Course Requirements

Attendance

Attendance is required. **You are allowed three absences.** Each absence beyond those three will result in a one-tier grade reduction of your final grade. Hence, a B- becomes a C+. **If you miss eight classes, you will automatically fail the course.** Sorry. In addition, as tardiness is an ever-growing problem, you will be penalized for coming to class late. For every three times you are late to class, I will mark down one absence. ***Note: There is no difference between an excused and an unexcused absence so please plan accordingly.***

Participation

Each student's participation is vital to the overall disposition and accomplishment of the group. Your participation grade is based on the regularity and quality of your contributions to discussion. Comments that help advance the discussion and that enable all class members to contribute are highly valued. These kinds of comments are only possible when you have come to class fully prepared, and have completed all of the required reading. Thus, over the course of the semester I will randomly give quizzes to make sure that you are keeping up with the reading/viewing requirements. **You will receive one absence for each failed quiz.**

Writing Assignments

All writing assignments are due at the beginning of class, whether you are there in person or not. If I do not receive papers by such time they will be considered late. Brief extensions for good reasons (i.e. illness, family emergency) are permissible with my approval; otherwise, late assignments will be penalized, resulting in a one-tier grade reduction for each day the assignment is late. Hence, a B- becomes a C+.

All essays written for this course should follow the MLA rules of style and citation. In addition, all written assignments should be typewritten in **12-point Times New Roman** font and **double-spaced** with **1 inch margins**. Each paper you turn in should also be stapled and numbered. **Failure to follow any of these formatting requirements will result in a grade reduction.**

Papers

I encourage everyone to visit me during my office hours to discuss his or her papers (or any aspect of the class for that matter). I am always happy to look at and comment on any early drafts. I also recommend visiting the Writing Center. For each of these assignments you will be given a handout detailing specific expectations and requirements. ***Note: Unless otherwise stated, final drafts will not be accepted electronically.***

Mini Paper (2 pages ~ 500 words): Due 9/4

Paper 1 (5 pages ~ 1300 words): Due 9/25

Paper 2 (7 pages ~ 1800 words): Due 10/16

Final Research Project (50%)

This is a multi-faceted project, requiring a significant amount of research. Below is a brief description of each requirement, but you will be given detailed handouts closer to the due dates of each assignment.

Paper Proposal (5%): 10/30

You are to write a 2 page (approximately 500 words) paper proposal. This proposal should be part introduction to your paper and part summary of the main points you intend to address in order to support your thesis statement. This brief piece of writing should encapsulate your overall goals for the research paper.

Annotated Bibliography (10%): 11/11

You are required to compile an annotated bibliography to accompany your research paper. This bibliography should include no less than five sources, each of which must be annotated (no less than 200 words per citation).

Presentation (5%): 12/2 and 12/4

Each of you will present your research project to the class during the final weeks of the semester. Each student will have roughly 7-9 minutes to present his/her research to the class. You will be graded on your ability to synthesize your extensive writing and research into a brief, easily digestible presentation. Remember too that creativity counts. When designing this presentation think of interesting and inventive ways to hold the class's attention. A sign-up sheet for presentation dates will be posted two weeks before presentations begin.

Research Paper (30%): 12/9

This paper should be an extended analysis of the topic of your choosing, related to the subject matter of this course and employing a significant amount of outside research.

Papers should be 10-12 (3000 – 3600 words) pages in length.

Workshops

Each major paper you write for this class will go through some kind of drafting and/or workshop process. For those of you unfamiliar with this process it simply means that your drafts will be reviewed by a number of individuals, including the fellow, your classmates, and myself. As a group we will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the draft, we will offer revision suggestions, and you will have the chance to ask questions. The workshop process will vary depending on the assigned paper; therefore, you will be given detailed workshop instructions along with the writing prompt for each essay.

However, a few general notes about the workshop process are necessary:

Grading: I will not grade your rough drafts, but I will be grading you on your participation in the workshop process. I will take into consideration your contributions, or lack there of, to this process. For instance, I will note the thoroughness of comments and the timeliness of submissions. I will also note how well developed or how poorly developed your drafts are. Yes, these are rough drafts, but they should also be well

thought out pieces of writing that are on their way to becoming clear and articulate essays.

You will not receive a distinct workshop grade; instead, your participation in the workshop process will affect the grade you receive on your finished papers. Your workshop participation will account for **10 points** of each paper. If you turn in your drafts, submit helpful comments to your peers, and participate in discussions you will receive full credit for each workshop. However, failing to do any of these things will result in a grade reduction.

Due to the nature of the workshop process, late drafts will not be accepted.

Letters and Comments: Along with your drafts, you will also be required to submit a few other pieces of writing during the workshops for your second and final paper.

Along with your workshop draft, you will also submit a self-review letter of no less than 150 words. This letter is a chance for you to explain to your reader what your primary goals are for this paper and how well you think you have been able to reach those goals thus far. You will also need to include any concerns or questions you have that you would like the readers to address as they review your work.

You are also required to comment on the drafts of your peers during group workshops. You will need to come up with a list of revision suggestions. You should offer 3-4 revision suggestions for each draft you review during the workshops. These typed suggestions should address that draft's strengths and weaknesses and offer advice for improvement. I also encourage you to make in-text comments on printouts of each paper as well. You should come to workshop sessions with both lists and printouts of each draft in-hand. Bring two copies of your lists with you: one copy for the student whose work you are commenting on and one to turn in at the end of the workshop.

And finally, be **RESPECTFUL** of each student and his or her work. This is a time for you to offer each other helpful criticism, as well as learn more about the writing and revision process.

Writing Fellow

Each FYWS is assigned a writing fellow. Below you will find the name and email address of the fellow I am working with this semester. She will assist the class in a number of capacities, including periodically attending class, responding to drafts, running small group workshops, and holding "office hours."

Fellow: Emily Neale neaeg-17@rhodes.edu

Department of English Expectations and Policies

A college course is more than simply a set of assignments; it is an intellectual process, one which requires active engagement from beginning to end in order to achieve its intended results. With this in mind, the Department of English has formulated a number of expectations and the policies that support them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to the syllabus for a particular course, you should address them to the instructor.

Attendance: The success of a course depends to a significant extent upon the presence of students alert and prepared to address the subject under discussion. Unavoidable absences should be discussed with the instructor, ideally before they occur. Excessive absences will result in a lowering of grade, in some cases to an F.

Deadlines: Writing assignments, tests, etc., are carefully scheduled as stages toward the fulfillment of the course's goals and cannot be indefinitely deferred without frustrating those goals. Brief extensions for good reasons may be permissible with the instructor's prior approval; otherwise, late assignments will be penalized and may result in their not being accepted for credit.

Submission of all work: All major assignments are integral to the goals of the course. Failure to complete any major assignment will result in a grade of F for the course.

Intellectual honesty: All work is assumed to be the student's own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another without the instructor's prior approval. Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, the internet or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. Students are advised against posting their work on the internet since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. Students are advised to maintain drafts of their work to verify its originality. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student if convicted will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Clear evidence of plagiarism (failure to use quotation marks around verbatim or copied language, failure to adequately paraphrase, and failure to cite the source of quoted, paraphrased, or borrowed text and ideas), regardless of the Council hearing outcome, may likewise result in failure of the course. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism, will be penalized as the instructor deems appropriate. If you are uncertain about how or whether to document sources, consult your teacher.

Schedule of Assignments

The following schedule is subject to change; however, sufficient notice will be given before any changes are made. Always bring the appropriate books and/or handouts to class.

Week 1

8/28: Introduction

Week 2

9/2: “My Red State Odyssey” (handout)

9/4: Mini Paper Due; W. J. Cash’s “The Mind of the South” (from *The Oxford Book of the American South*); Introduction to *Away Down South*

Week 3

9/9: *Gone with the Wind*

9/11: “The New South and the Old Cause” from *Away Down South*

Week 4

9/16: Paper 1 Draft Due; readings from *Confederates in the Attic* (handout)

9/18: *Reconstructing Dixie*, pages 95-127

Week 5

9/23: Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (from *The Oxford Book of the American South*); “Blackness and Southernness: African Americans Look South Toward Home” from *Away Down South*

9/25: Paper 1 Due; *Ghosts of Ole Miss* (ESPN 30 for 30 Films)

Week 6

9/30: Southern Music: Readings from *A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American South* (handout)

10/2: Readings from *Last Train to Memphis* (handout); “The King of White Trash Culture: Elvis Presley and the Aesthetics of Excess” (handout)

Week 7

10/7: Southern Food: selected readings (handout)

10/9: Paper 2 Draft Due

Week 8

10/14: Paper 2 Workshop

10/16: Paper 2 Due

Week 9

10/21: Fall Break

10/23: The Confederate Flag: “Divided by a Common Past” from *Away Down South*

Week 10

10/28: Rednecks and White Trash: selected readings (handout)

10/30: Proposal Due

Week 11

11/4: *Bastard out of Carolina*, Chapters 1-5

11/6: *Bastard out of Carolina*, Chapters 6-10

Week 12

11/11: Annotated Bibliography Due; *Bastard out of Carolina*, Chapters 11-15

11/13: *Bastard out of Carolina*, Chapters 16-end

Week 13

11/18: “‘Telling Stories of Queer White Trash’: Race, Class, and Sexuality in the Work of Dorothy Allison” (handout)

11/20: Final Paper Draft Due

Week 14

11/25: Final Paper Workshop

11/27: Thanksgiving Break

Week 15

12/2: Presentations

12/4: Presentations

Week 16

12/9: Final Paper Due; “The South and the Politics of Identity” from *Away Down South*

A Few Notes:

1. Assignments should be completed by the date listed.
2. Films should be watched prior to the days we discuss them in class.
3. Not all reading assignments and handouts are included in this schedule. Periodically, you will be required to read selections that accompany these assignments.
4. Handouts and reading assignments not included in the texts you purchased for this course will either be passed out in class or posted online. Reading assignments posted online should be printed out and brought to class for discussion.