

History 105: Selected Topics in African American History

Dr. Charles W. McKinney

Fall 2007, 313 Clough Hall
MWF 9.00 – 9.50
Office Hours: M, R 10.00 – 12.00
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 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 - 40% of final grade

Students will submit **four** 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 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.

Debate/Class Participation– 30% 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. 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.

Research Paper – 30% of final grade

Students will submit a 10 page research paper 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 stating your thesis, outlining your topic and containing a 10 item bibliography is due on November 2 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 **December 3 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. 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 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.*

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

August

- 22 Welcome! Introductions; go over syllabus; discussion
- 24, 27 Slavery in the New World, Part I
READING: *Road*, chp. 1 – 2
- 29, 31 Slavery in the New World, Part II
READING: *Road*, chp. 3

September

- 3 Labor Day (No Class)**
- 5 Making Race
READING: Michael Omi, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 53-76
(public folder)
- 7 Film: "Africans in America"

Reaction Paper #1 due September 10

- 10, 12 Which Came First: Race or Slavery?
READING: 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)
- 14, 17 Slavery and the Founding of the Republic, Part I
READING: *Pillow*, Intro – chap. 3
- 19, 21 Slavery and the Founding of the Republic, Part II
READING: *Pillow*, chaps. 4 – 5
- 24 Cotton, Color and the Constitution
READING: *Road*, chaps. 4 – 5
- 26 Expansion, Anti-Slavery and Resistance
READING: *Road*, chap. 6

Reaction Paper #2 due September 28

28 Civil War: Building Freedom from the Ground Up
READING: "A War for the Union" (public folder)

October

1 **Debate #1**

Segregation and the Jim Crow Era

3, 5 Making Segregation
READING: *Segregation*, Intro – chap. 2

8, 10 Railroads and other Contested Spaces
READING: *Segregation*, chap. 3; 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)

12 Gender and the Evolution of Segregation
READING: *Segregation*, chap. 5

13 – 16 Fall Break

17 Segregation and the Rise of Jim Crow
READING: *Segregation*, chap. 6, *Jim Crow*, chap. 1

19 School and Work behind the Veil
READING: *Jim Crow*, chap. 4, pp. 205-208, 245-267

22 Memory and Family: Internal Struggles against Segregation
READING: *Jim Crow* chaps. 2 – 3

Reaction Paper #3 due October 26

24, 26 Film: "The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow"

29 **Debate #2**

31 Fighting the Machine: Resistance to Jim Crow
READING: *Jim Crow*, chap. 6

November

The Civil Rights Movement and Beyond

Research Proposal and Bibliography due November 2

2 Challenging the Master Narrative of the Movement

5 The Battle for Democracy
READING: Tyson, "Wars for Democracy" (public folder); *Road*, chap. 11

7 Civil Rights – The National View, Part I
READING: *Debating*, 3 – 44

- 9 Civil Rights – The National View, Part II
READING: *Debating*, 45 – 97
- 12 Civil Rights – Local Movement, Part I
READING: *Debating*, 99 – 138
- 14 Civil Rights – Local Movement, Part II
READING: *Debating*, 139 – 150
- 16, 19 Film “Freedom Song”
- 21 – 25 Thanksgiving Break**
- 26 Tennessee and the Black Freedom Struggle
READING: Fleming, “We Shall Overcome” (folder)
- 28, 30 Living in a Post-Civil Rights Society
READING: Payne article; John McWhorter article (public folder for both)

December

- 3 **Research Paper Due**
- 5 Major themes memo discussion
- 7 **Reaction Paper #4 (Major themes memo) due at 1.00PM**