

AFRICAN-AMERICAN WORK CULTURE IN THE U.S.
History 250, Spring 1999

Russell Wigginton

Office: 401 Clough

Office Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 10:30-12:00; by appointment

Phone: (office) 843-3997, (home) 272-0885; please do not call after 10:00 p.m.

Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to attain a fundamental understanding of the diverse experiences of working-class blacks in the United States. Ranging from slavery to current affirmative action issues, we will examine various explanations on why blacks historically have lagged behind whites in the work place. Also, we will discuss ways in which blacks responded to their inferior job status. The primary avenues that we will investigate these issues are through culture, politics, and resistance.

Readings:

Grant, Nancy, TVA and Black Americans, Temple, 1990.

Honey, Michael, Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights, Illinois, 1993.

Rachleff, Peter, Black Labor in Richmond, 1865-1890, Temple, 1984.

Roediger, David, The Wages of Whiteness, Verso, 1991.

Supplementary readings available through the History Department.

Grading:

Grades will be determined from the following course requirements:

1. **45%** - Three 3-5 page “reaction” papers. Throughout the semester, students will write essays in response to questions that arise from the readings, lectures, and discussions. Students should note that the first paper counts 5% and the final two papers count 10% each.
2. **20%** - Exam I. The examination will consist of a few short answers as well as at least one more lengthy essay. In answering these questions, students will be expected to incorporate the readings, lectures, and class discussions.

3. **25%** - Final Exam. Same format as Exams I and II, however, this exam will cover

material from t

4. **10% - Participation/Attendance.** While the class will also consist of lectures, the discussion of issues raised will be crucial to the success of the class. Therefore, students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the major themes from the readings.

***Late Policy** - There will be no extensions given on any written assignments without a letter grade per day penalty. The only exceptions will be those that the College deems as “acceptable” in the Student Handbook.

Class Assignments:

“Whiteness” and “Blackness” in Work

- 1/14 Introduction
- 1/19 Roediger, Wages of Whiteness chapters 1-2, p. 3-42.
- 1/21 Barbara J. Fields, “Ideology and Race in American History,” p. 143-177.

Black Workers in Slavery

- 1/26 Roediger, chapter 3, p. 43-64; Jacqueline Jones, “My Mother Was Much of a Woman”: Slavery, p. 11-43.
- 1/28 Michael Johnson, “Work, Culture, and Slave Community: Slave Occupations in the Cottonbelt in 1860,” p. 325-355.; Carole Shamms, “Black Women’s Work and the Evolution of Plantation Society in Virginia,” p. 5-28.
- 2/02 **Paper #1 (5%)**

“Free” Black Workers in the 19th Century

- 2/04 Rachleff, Black Labor in Richmond, 1865-1890, chapters 1-3, p. 3-54.
- 2/09 Rachleff, Black Labor in Richmond, 1865-1890, chapters 4-7, p. 55-123.
- 2/11 Rachleff, Black Labor in Richmond, 1865-1890, chapters 8-10, p. 124-156.
- 2/16 Rachleff, Black Labor in Richmond, 1865-1890, chapters 11-12, p. 157-201.
- 2/18 **Exam I (20%)**

“Age of Progress”

- 2/23 Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Exposition Address," p. 145-151; W.E.B. Dubois, "The Niagara Movement," p. 236-253.
- 2/25 Jacqueline Jones, "To Get Out of This Land of Sufring," p. 152-195.
- 3/02 Hammett, "Labor and Race: The Georgia Railroad Strike of 1909," p. 470-484; Kelley, "We Are Not What We Seem," p. 35-54.
- 3/04 Joe Trotter, "Emergence of the New Middle Class," p. 80-114; William Gatewood, "Aristocrats of Color," p. 3-20.

Black Labor During the Depression and WWII

- 3/16 **Paper #2 (10%)**
- 3/18 Kelley, "Negroes Aint' Black--But Red!," p. 92-116; Kelley, "The Riddle of the Zoot," p.
- 3/23 Grant, TVA and Black Americans, chapters 1-2, p. 3-44.
- 3/25 Grant, TVA and Black Americans, chapter 3, p. 45-72.
- 3/30 Grant, TVA and Black Americans, chapter 4, p. 73-108.
- 4/06 Grant, TVA and Black Americans, chapters 5-7, p. 109-158.

Black Workers in the Civil Rights Era

- 4/08 Michael Honey, Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights, Introduction, chapters 1-2, p. 1-
- 4/13 Michael Honey, Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights, chapters 3-6, p. 67-173.
- 4/15 Michael Honey, Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights, chapters 7-conclusion, p. 177-291.

Black Workers Today

- 4/20 Thomas Sowell, "From Equal Opportunity to Affirmative Action," p. 37-60; John Larew, "Who's the Real Affirmative Action Profiteer?," p. 247-260.
- 4/22 Julie Hessler, "Beneath the Glass Ceiling," p. 135-139; G. Kindrow, "The Candidate
- 4/27 **Paper #3 (10%)**
- 4/29 Summary and Review
- 5/08 **Final Exam (25%); 1:00-3:30**