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HIST 405-01, Norman Mailer and Postwar America, Fall 2011

Item Type	Syllabus
Authors	Saxe, Robert F.
Publisher	Memphis, Tenn. : Rhodes College
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Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10267/15888

HIST 405-01 – Norman Mailer & Postwar America

Saxe - Section #12163, Clough 304, 9:30-10:45 T-TR

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Office Hours – MF, 10-11 or by appointment, 207 Buckman

Course Description:

Time Magazine once noted that "for a heady period, no major event in U.S. life seemed quite complete until Mailer had observed himself observing it." Norman Mailer was called "brilliant," "bombastic," "revolutionary," "racist," and many other things over his storied career as one of America's preeminent intellectuals since 1945. This course will examine postwar American history using Mailer's work, both fiction and non-fiction, to get at the meaning of topics like WWII, the Cold War, Sixties protest, race in America, the sexual revolution, and others. Students will read three longer works (*The Naked and the Dead*, *The Armies of the Night* and *The Executioner's Song*), as well as several of his more important essays (ex. "The White Negro" and "The Time of Her Time"). Students will also construct research essays, using Mailer's work as a starting point.

Required Texts:

Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead*

The Armies of the Night

The Executioner's Song

The professor will provide additional readings throughout the course.

Course Requirements:

Exams

Take home Midterm – October 4. 10% of final grade

Take home Final – December 6. 10% of final grade

Class Participation

Active participation in class discussion – 20% of final grade. Active participation in class discussion is the best way to achieve a good class participation grade. Class participation also includes good conduct. Failure to participate in class, neglecting to do the reading for the day, sleeping or leaving during class, playing games on your laptop or doing text messaging during class may all have a negative impact on your grade.

Essays

All essays should be typed, double-spaced, and should contain the following at the top of the first page: name, word count, date, and a meaningful title. In addition, any use of sources must be cited using Chicago-style footnotes (see http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html for help or you may ask the instructor). A title page and works cited page are not necessary. At the end of each essay, the Rhodes pledge should be printed and signed.

Students will write a series of short essays throughout the semester.

Essay #1 – due in class, September 15 - 10% of final grade

Essay #2 – due in class, October 11 - 10% of final grade

Essay #3 – December 1 - 10% of final grade

Research Essay – 30% of final grade.

Research paper of approximately 4500 words. This paper must be a work of original research, using Mailer's work as a starting point for a commentary on some issue in WWII or postwar America. The most difficult challenge of this kind of essay is to decide on a workable topic. A quick survey of the required readings may help to narrow down an area of interest. Another approach is to look at the types of sources that are both available and interesting to the writer and develop a topic from that point. The nature of the topic of this paper is wide open, but it will need to be related to the theme of postwar America. Students are encouraged to meet with the professor to discuss any questions with finding or shaping a topic.

List of deadlines for the final essay

1. September 6 – Introductory abstract and bibliography

This is a 200-300 word abstract of your proposed topic in as detailed form as possible. You will also need to include a preliminary list of primary and secondary sources. This needs to be a hard copy that I receive in class.

2. September 22 – Final Bibliography

The final list of all the sources you will include in your essay. This needs to be a hard copy that I receive in class.

3. November 3 – Final draft of essay

The last draft of your essay is due. It must include a bibliography. Due, in class, and an email copy must be sent to me, as well.

4. November 17 – Revised draft

After receiving comments from the professor, students will have the option of revising their draft and turning it in December 8 outside the professor's office by noon. Students can improve their paper grade up to one full letter grade through revision. Due, in my office by 5, and an email copy must be sent to me, as well as the previous draft of the paper with comments.

Course Policies:

Class attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed three absences without penalty. Students are required to find out what they missed in class on the day of their absence. If students miss more than two classes, they are required to meet with the professor to discuss their absences. Failure to do so will result in the lowering of a student's final grade by one third grade point for every absence over three. Please consider this policy when planning for extracurricular activities (sports, mock trial, etc.)

Due dates and times for writing assignments and exams are fixed. All assignments are due in class, not in the professor's mailbox. Late assignments will receive a failing grade. All assignments must be turned in to the professor. Failure to complete an assignment will result in a failing grade for the class. If you have questions about plagiarism, please talk to me directly.

The professor supports the Rhodes College Honor Code. To demonstrate commitment to the Code, each student must write "pledged" and sign his/her name on every assignment.

Course Calendar

August 25

Introduction

August 30

The Naked and the Dead, Introduction, Part I (all), Part II, (ch. 1-4)

September 1

The Naked and the Dead, Part II (ch.5-7)

September 6

The Naked and the Dead, finish Part II

Introductory paragraph and bibliography for research essay

September 8

The Naked and the Dead, Part III (ch.1-5)

September 13

Finish *The Naked and the Dead*

September 15

Essay #1 due in class

September 20

"The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster"

September 22

"Hip, Hell, and the Navigator"

Final bibliography for research essay due in class

September 27

"The Time of Her Time"

September 29

"Millett and D.H. Lawrence"; "Brooding over Abortion"

October 4

“A Debate with William Buckley”

Take Home midterm due in class

October 6

The Armies of the Night, Book One (ch. 1-4)

October 11

Finish *The Armies of the Night*

Essay #2 due in class

October 18

Fall Break

October 25

The Dick Cavett Show

October 27

“Interview with Ehrlichman”; “Nixon’s Fall”

November 1

Selections from *The Fight*

November 3

Final draft of essay due in class

November 8

The Executioner’s Song, Book One (Part 1-2)

November 10

The Executioner’s Song, Book One (Part 3-4)

November 15

The Executioner’s Song, Book One (Part 5-7)

November 17

Revised draft, turned in to Saxe’s office by noon

November 22

The Executioner’s Song, Book Two (Part 1-2)

November 24

Thanksgiving

November 29

The Executioner’s Song, Book Two (Part 3-4)

December 1

The Executioner's Song, Book Two (Parts 5-7)

Essay #3 due in class

December 6

Evaluation; Take Home Final due in class