

African American History Since 1877
HIST 290
MW, CCC 303
8 AM
Syllabus

Contact:

Dr. Lee Willis, Instructor
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Course description:

This class is an exploration of the African American experience from Reconstruction to the present. We will examine the evolution of the Civil Rights movement and how multiple generations fought for political, legal, and society equality. Other areas of focus will include the development of African American culture and material culture, class and gender issues, and regional variations of racism.

An important goal of the course is to introduce you to the major scholars of African American history. We will also examine how African American history has evolved as a field within the historical profession and the kinds of primary sources that historians employ in their research. By the end of the semester you will be able to identify changing methods and interpretations in the field.

Required books:

Text rental

Hine, et al, *The African American Odyssey, vol. 2 (5th edition)*.

For purchase

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (Dial Press, 1963)

Ta-Nehesi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (Spiegel and Grau, 2015).

Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Harvard, 1997).

(Additional Readings on e-reserve and JSTOR are listed in the reading schedule on pages 3 and 4 of the syllabus.)

Class format:

Most class time will be devoted to lectures, but time each week will be reserved for discussions about the reading and course material. Be prepared to discuss assigned readings at the Wednesday class meetings.

Grades:

Book précis: You are required to write one book précis (a brief book analysis) on Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom*. Your précis should be one to two pages (12 pt., double spaced) and should highlight the book's thesis, scope, methods, and significance. I will also provide an additional handout with details about proper formatting and other guidelines for writing précis on D2L.

Review essay: You are required to write a short review essay comparing and contrasting the memoirs of James Baldwin and Ta-Nehesi Coates. The target length of this assignment is 3-5 pages. More information about this assignment will be posted on D2L.

Exams: The midterm and final exams will be a combination of objective questions (multiple choice) and subjective questions (essay). The essays will require you to discuss the assigned readings and to pull together an analysis of the scholarship.

Reaction papers: On five occasions this semester we will read primary source evidence in class and write brief (250-300 word) reaction papers. The purpose of these assignments is to analyze different kinds of evidence that historians use to answer questions about African American history. If you fail to attend class regularly and miss these unannounced assignments, your final grade will suffer.

Grade breakdown:

Précis: 15%
Review essay: 15%
Exams: 50% (25% each)
Reaction papers: 20% (4% each)

Desire2Learn site:

The course syllabus, handouts, PowerPoint slides, and an online gradebook will be available through Desire2Learn. You should log on regularly to check for any course updates.

Personal Responsibility:

On occasion, students in this course have used the work of others rather than doing it themselves. Cheating also includes giving your work to others. I take disciplinary action through Student Affairs against such students.

Cheating is a serious offense against honest students.

I direct you to <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/rights>. See Chapter 14, *Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures*, pages 5 -10, for the disciplinary possibilities if you are caught cheating.

Equity of Educational Access:

If you have a learning or physical challenge which requires classroom accommodation, please contact the UWSP Disability Services office with your documentation as early as possible in the semester. They will then notify me, in a confidential memo, of the accommodations that will facilitate your success in the course.

Disability Services Office, 103 Student Services Center, Voice: (715) 346-3365, TTY: (715) 346-3362, <http://www.uwsp.edu/special/disability/studentinfo.htm>.

Schedule of topics and readings (subject to change):

All readings should be completed by the Wednesday class meeting. Be prepared to discuss weekly reading on Wednesdays.

September 7: Course introduction and Reconstruction. Skim chapters 12-13 in Hine and read David Blight, "For Something Beyond the Battlefield": Frederick Douglass and the Struggle for the Memory of the Civil War" *Journal of American History* 75 (March 1989): 1156-1178. Available on JSTOR.

Week of September 12: Family. Read Hine, chapter 14 and Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom* (excerpts on e-reserve) and begin reading Hunter.

Week of September 19: Religion. Read Hine, chapter 15 and Montgomery, *Under their Own Vine and Fig Tree* (excerpts on e-reserve) and continue reading Hunter.

Week of September 26: Segregation and Disfranchisement. Read Hine, chapter 16 and Hunter, *To Joy My Freedom*. **Précis on Hunter due Wednesday, September 28. The paper should be uploaded to the D2L dropbox by 8:00 AM.**

Week of October 3: Lynching and Extra-legal violence. Read Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* (excerpts on e-reserve). Film excerpts, *Rosewood*.

Week of October 10: Masculinity, femininity, and Jim Crow. Read Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow, chapter three* (excerpts on e-reserve).

Week of October 17: The nadir of race relations. **MIDTERM EXAM: Wednesday, OCTOBER 19.**

October 31: Literature and Culture. Read Hine, chapter 17; Hurston, *Mules and Men* (e-reserve); Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (e-reserve).

Week of November 7: Music and Culture. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* and Spencer, *Blues and Evil* (both on e-reserve). Begin reading Baldwin.

Week of November 14: Partisan Politics. Read Hine, chapters 18-19 and Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln* (e-reserve).

Week of November 21: The (Second) Great Migration. Read Jones, *The Selma of the North* (introduction and chapter one on e-reserve). Finish Baldwin.

Week of November 28: Legal and Extra-legal Challenges to Segregation. Read Hine chapter 21 and Jones, *The Selma of the North* (chapter three on e-reserve). Begin Coates.

Week of December 5: Disillusion, Black Power, and White Backlash. Read Hine, chapter 22-23 and Jones, *The Selma of the North* (chapter eight and conclusion on e-reserve.); finish Coates.

Week of December 12: African American Lives. Read Hine chapter 24. **Review essay on Baldwin and Coates due Wednesday, December 14. The paper should be uploaded to the D2L dropbox by 8:00 AM.**

Tuesday, December 20, 8:00-10:00 AM: Final Exam