

HIST 244  
American Civil Rights History, 1877-1970  
Spring 2013, MWF 2:30-3:35  
Seney 209

Dr. Susan Youngblood Ashmore  
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## COURSE SYLLABUS

### Course Description:

This course will introduce you to the modern civil rights movement in America from 1877 to 1970 by paying particular attention to how historians do their work. As a survey that concentrates on the struggle for black freedom we will pay particular attention to the social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of the grass-roots movement that ended legalized segregation. In order to understand how America in general, and the South in particular, came to terms with its white supremacist past we will look at three themes throughout the semester: first, the variety of ways African Americans reacted against oppression; second, the ways the political system—on the federal, state, and local level—responded to the demands for change; and third, the myriad ways white southerners reacted to their changing environment. The struggle for African Americans to gain recognition as full citizens did not follow a straight path, and as a result this course will look at why it took almost one hundred years to accomplish some important goals. We will have the opportunity to visit historical sites associated with the civil rights movement in Atlanta, Georgia, and the Alabama Black Belt.

### Course Goals:

There are several objectives for this course. First, by gaining a factual knowledge of this historical period the course seeks to assist students in learning to think historically, or to become historically minded, by recognizing and criticizing evidence and using primary and secondary sources to draw conclusions based on historical evidence and the multiple sides of any historical issue. Second, this course strives to help students discover, understand, and appreciate the interplay of forces and personalities that shaped the history of the modern civil rights movement. Third, as a writing rich course that fulfills the sophomore writing requirement, this course will also assist students in developing and refining their writing abilities by organizing, describing, and reaching conclusions on paper about material that they have studied. These skills will benefit students in the future when they are in upper division courses.

**Required Reading:** These books are available at the campus bookstore and on reserve at the library

Blair L. M. Kelley, *Right to Ride: Streetcar Boycotts and African American Citizenship in the Era of Plessy v. Ferguson*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994.

Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, eds., *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*, New York: New York University Press, 2001.

Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Brown v. Board of Education: A Brief History with Documents*, Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 1998.

Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait*, New York: Beacon Press, 2011.

John Lewis, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt*, New York: New York University Press, 2009.

Primary documents and journal articles provided through JSTOR on the library web page or on Reserves Direct found on the library web page.

**This course fulfills the sophomore writing requirement and a course in the History/Society/Culture component of the Oxford College General Education Program.**

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### **Grading and Assignments:**

Essay on Creation of Jim Crow and Early Responses, 6-8 double-spaced pages, (15%) due at the *beginning* of class on **Monday, February 11th**. **Various short writing/creative assignments** (photo-voice, film responses, reading journal writing) due at the beginning of class announced throughout the semester (10%) Midterm essay exam (20%) given on **Monday, March 25th** Film Analysis, 6-8 double-spaced pages, due at the beginning of class on **Wednesday, April 24th** (20%) **Final essay exam** (25%) given on **Monday, May 6<sup>th</sup> from 2:00-5:00 p.m.** **Class participation and attitude** (10%) includes attending dinner with Dr. Lafayette;; as well as regular attendance and active participation in class discussions. All assignments as well as your final course grade will be based on the +/- system.

### **Honor Code:**

We are a community of scholars. Therefore, academic dishonesty is not tolerated. Your name or signature on a paper, test, or journal entry submitted for credit shall indicate you have neither given nor received unauthorized information on the work, nor have you condoned the giving or receiving of unauthorized information by others. As a student at Oxford College of Emory University you have agreed to abide by the honor pledge and have taken upon yourself the responsibility of upholding the Honor Code; you are urged to inquire of the Honor Council about any doubtful case at any time throughout the semester. For complete details on the Honor Code please see the Oxford College Catalog found on line.

Note on writing and plagiarism: Students must be scrupulous to avoid plagiarism and to give very precise and complete citations for any work used in any way. Always make it exactly clear to the reader through the use of quotation marks and citations which words, if any, are taken from some other source. Be very careful if you draw on any source—whether from the internet, a film, a photograph, or an archival reference—to give the precise source of each and every word used. Even when paraphrasing you need to cite the source used. For further details see William Kelleher Storey, *Writing History: A Guide for Students*, especially Chapter 3 (on reserve in the library) as well as the American Historical Association's "Statement on Plagiarism" that will be handed out and discussed in class.

### **Attendance Policy:**

Class begins at 2:30 and ends at 3:35. This is a course that requires your regular attendance and active participation in class. Students are allowed two absences, every absence after that will deduct points from the class participation/attitude portion of your final course grade. It is your responsibility to obtain missed notes from class and to turn in all assignments on time. During class discussion of reading material I expect you to have prepared before class. You will be expected to attend the dinner with Dr. Bernard Lafayette.

If you miss a due date for the midterm or final exam, **only absences due to medical or family emergencies** (for example, you are in the hospital) are valid. You will need to present written evidence of your illness or family emergency for an excused absence. If you miss a due date on a written assignment, a late penalty of **five points per day** (including weekends) will be deducted from your grade for that assignment. If you turn in your written assignment in after the beginning of class but on the same day it is due you will be deducted **2.5** points from your grade for that assignment. If you turn in your written assignment after the beginning of class, place it **under** my office door, Language Hall 213. You cannot change the time of your final exam because of travel plans, vacation plans, job opportunities, or having more than one final exam on one day.

I encourage you to visit me during my office hours, or make an appointment with me if my office hours do not coincide with your schedule. One of the positive experiences you can have at Oxford College is getting to know your professors well. So, take advantage of that opportunity and come see me throughout the semester.

### **Class Etiquette:**

**Office Hours and Visiting Your Professor:** I encourage you to visit me during office hours or by appointment. This provides you with the chance to discuss something from class in more detail, get ideas on ways to improve your writing, talk politics, share music you love, etc. One of the benefits of an Oxford College education is the opportunity you have to know your professors well. Take advantage of that opportunity.

**Class Discussion:** We will spend time this semester discussing readings written by professional scholars, civil rights activists, as well as by ourselves. In this process of discussion it is important to nurture the habit of being a good listener. Practice paying close attention to what others are saying as well as what you are saying. Through this process of listening well we will also respect each other. Our goal is to understand, not to operate only out of a place of judgment. In this manner we will be able to see the nuance and historical context of what we study to gain

a deeper understanding. It is also essential that we build a sense of trust among ourselves that will enable us to speak frankly about some difficult parts of America's historical past. If education means anything it changes us. That is not easy because we do not like change. So we have to be prepared to face historical reality to enable us to see the world from the perspective of others.

**Electronics:** I do not take phone calls during class so you should not either. Turn off your **cell phone** when you are in class, watching a film, or when we are visiting a historic cite. Do not refer to your cell phone text messages at anytime during class or during an exam. If necessary I will require that you leave your cell phone with me during class or an exam. Do not leave class to check your cell phone for a call or a text message. You should be able to sit through the entire 65 minutes of class without leaving the room. I do not allow students to take notes using a **laptop computer or other similar device** unless they have permission from me. If you need to use a laptop for taking notes please see me during the first week of class. If you are given permission to use a laptop computer it is a privilege that can be revoked. If it becomes clear you are using your computer for something other than note taking, I will tap on your desk twice, and you will be asked to leave the class. Thereafter, you will have lost your privilege of using a laptop in class. You may not listen to your **ipod or MP3** player during class or during an exam.

**E-mail:** We will have a class conference on LearnLink that corresponds with this course. I will post on the conference all assignments as well as other pertinent items that may enhance class discussion. When communicating with your fellow classmates on the conference or with me on my personal e-mail address do not post anything that you would not be comfortable saying to your classmates or to me in person. Most importantly, remember that even though you cannot see them, you are communicating with real human beings whenever you send e-mail. Do not let the impersonal screen make you forget to be as respectful in your communication as you would be when speaking face to face. Take time to think about your message before you send it. Never send a message when you are feeling emotional, particularly if you are upset or angry.

E-mail has become an important part of our society. All of us use it on a regular basis. However, the convenience of e-mail can often lead to informality and misunderstanding. For this reason, there are different rules for writing in formal situations—class discussions, e-mail messages to professors, student discussion lists—that do not necessarily apply when writing to friends and family. So, here are my suggestions for using e-mail in our class. When writing to me or on our LearnLink conference you should use a serious tone. Address me by my proper title, follow rules of grammar and mechanics, and do not use all lower or upper case letters or instant messaging abbreviations. You should use black ink in your e-mail messages. Avoid using curse words and other slang in formal situations. I have heard it said that writing is like fashion, one style is not appropriate for every situation. For example you would not wear your bathing suit to a job interview at a bank. So, get in the habit of using your professional voice when communicating as a professional, in your case your profession right now is being a college student.

Do not assume just because you *can* get in touch with me when you want to that I will be available to read your message. I rarely check e-mail once I leave campus, which is usually around 5:30 p.m., and I don't check e-mail over the weekend. So, note that I read e-mail from 9:00-5:30 Monday through Friday.

**I also do not accept written assignments via e-mail.** Only turn in a hard copy of your written assignments either at the beginning of class, or if it is late, under my office door, Language Hall 213.

Finally, remember that e-mail is not a very private communication system. Your messages can be printed out, and they can also be sent on to others as forwarded messages. Any private message you send potentially can come under public scrutiny; therefore you should not write anything that would cause you or someone else embarrassment or trouble should your e-mail become public.

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## SCHEDULE

Jan 16	Syllabus, Defining the Civil Rights Movement—what is it?	
Jan 18	Creation of racial segregation	Kelley, 1-50
Jan 21	No Class – King Holiday—Watch “Freedom Riders” pbs.org in anticipation of dinner with Dr. Lafayette	Jan 29th
Jan 23	<i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> (1896)	Kelley, 51-86, Martin 76-86

	Jan 25	Response to Jim Crow	Kelly, 139-200
	Jan 28	Response to Jim Crow	Martin, 61-86, Jeffries, 1-38
**Jan 29		<b>Dinner with Dr. Bernard Lafayette 5:30 Dean's Dining Room, MLK Service 7:30 Old Church</b>	
	Jan 30	Response to Jim Crow Segregation	
	Feb 1	Creation of the NAACP	
	Feb 4	Great Depression	
	Feb 6	New Deal	
	Feb 8	No Class – work on essay	
	Feb 11	World War II	Dittmer, 1-40, Martin 102-109, FDR 4 Free Speech
		<b>Essay One Creation of Jim Crow and Early Responses due at the beginning of class</b>	
Feb 13	NAACP Plan to Overturn <i>Plessy</i>	Martin, 1-38, Charles H. Houston “The Need for Negro Lawyers”	
	Feb 15	<i>Brown v. Board of Education</i>	Martin, 199-237
	Feb 18	<i>Brown v. Board of Education</i>	Martin, 199-237
Feb 20	Response to <i>Brown v. Board of Educ</i>	Dittmer, Chap 3; Lewis, Prologue, Chap 1, 2, 3	
	Feb 22	Montgomery Bus Boycott	Collier-Thomas, Chap 4
	Feb 23-24	Watch HBO film “Boycott” on reserve at library for discussion in class Feb 25th	
Feb 25	Montgomery Bus Boycott	Frady, pp 1-57, King Holt Street Baptist address	
Feb 27	Martin Luther King, Jr. and the SCLC	Septima Clark document, Collier-Thomas Chap 7	
	March 1	1950s South	Lewis, Chap 4, 5, 6, Dittmer, Chap 4
	March 4	Student Sit Ins and Creation of SNCC	Lewis, Chap 7, 8, 9, 10
		<b>Film response of “Boycott” due at the beginning of class</b>	
	March 6	Freedom Rides	
	March 8	SNCC in Mississippi	Dittmer, Chap 5, 6, 7
	March 11	No Class – Spring Break	
	March 13	No Class – Spring Break	
	March 15	No Class – Spring Break	
	March 18	Birmingham Campaign	King, ix-95
	March 20	Birmingham Campaign	King, 96-152
	March 22	March on Washington and Federal Response	Lewis, Chap 11, 12
March 25	<b>Mid-Term Essay Essay exam – all lectures through SNCC in Mississippi, readings, documents, films, photographs</b>		
	March 27	Bob Moses in Mississippi	Dittmer, Chap 8, 9, 10
March 29	Freedom Summer 1964	Dittmer, Chap 11, Lewis, Chap 13, Collier-Thomas 139	
	March 30-31	Watch “Freedom on my Mind” for discussion on April 3rd	
April 1	Atlantic City and Aftermath	Dittmer, Chap 12, Lewis Chap 14, Collier-Thomas Chap 8	
	April 3	<b>Film response of “Freedom on My Mind” due at the beginning of class</b>	
		Discussion of “Freedom on My Mind”	
	April 5	The Civil Rights Act–why it mattered e-reserves	
	April 8	Selma	Lewis Chap 15, 16
	April 10	Selma	e-reserves

	April 12	Lowndes County Alabama	Jeffries, Chap 2, 3
	April 13-14	Watch “Lay My Burden Down” for discussion on April 17th	
	April 15	Voting Rights Act	Lewis, Chap 17
	April 17	Black Power Alabama Style	Jeffries, Chap 4, 5, 6
	April 19	Black Power Mississippi Style	Dittmer, Chap 14, 15, 16
	April 22	Dr. King and the Vietnam War	Lewis, Chap 18, Riverside Church Address
		April 24	SCLC in Memphis
		<b>Film analysis due at the beginning of class</b>	
April 26	ack Politics after 1968	Jeffries, Chap 7, Epilogue, Dittmer Chap 18, Afterward, Collier-Thomas Chap 16	
April 29	How the Civil Rights Movement is Remembered	Obama “In Order to Form a More Perfect Union”	
		April 30	Reading Day
	May 6	<b>Monday, Final Essay Exam 2:00-5:00, bring pen or pencil</b>	