

S St 401: Southern Studies Seminar

Professor Ryan Parsons
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Lamar 561

Mondays 4 – 6:30 pm
Classroom: Barnard Observatory 108
Office hours by appointment: <https://calendly.com/parsons-um>

The senior year seminar prepares students to *do* Southern Studies, not just engage with it. We will approach this task from two perspectives. First, we will critically engage writing about the South from a range of disciplinary and substantive perspectives. Our objective is not just to learn more about the South, but to learn how scholars produce the ideas that constitute “Southern Studies.” Second, we will prepare to conduct our own research on the South. This will mean different things to each of you depending on the disciplines, methodologies, regions, and substantive questions that mean the most to you. However, by the end of the semester each of us should be prepared to describe, explain, and justify a research project within the broad conversation of “Southern Studies.”

The required readings for this seminar revolve around a broad question: What does it mean to call the South home? Each week we will examine a different book or work that answers, in some way, this question. Our task for each text is to understand the argument it makes and how that argument came together. In addition to the readings, you will complete the first stages of an independent scholarly work (in most cases, a substantial piece of academic writing). By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Critically assess rhetorical and scientific argumentation about the American South across a range of genres
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to Southern Studies
- Apply these analytical skills to a collection of substantive work about the American South
- Produce work that marks your ability to *do* Southern Studies

Assignments

Response Memos – Each week some of you will provide a written reaction to the week’s readings. A memo should include three components: a) a summary of the key arguments and themes that connect each of that week’s readings, b) an analysis of a particular passage or sentence from a reading that you found particularly compelling, and c) a set of questions or discussion topics that should motivate our in-class discussion. These must be posted as a Word document to Blackboard by 11:59PM on the Sunday before class. These memos will be the catalyst for in-class discussions so it is essential that they are submitted in time for your peers to read them. Late memos will not be accepted. Each student is responsible for **4 memos over the course of the semester**.

Scholarly Project – A central goal of this course is to prepare you to be a scholar of the South capable of conducting your own research. To that end, the most significant assignment of the course will be the initiation of some scholarly project. For most students, this will be a 15–20-page (around 5,000 words) literature review and research plan. The project should articulate a compelling research question, survey the existing literature on this topic, assess possibilities for original research on the question, and describe a data collection strategy. Students completing a senior thesis for the Honors

College or other department may adapt this assignment to meet the needs of their thesis work after consulting with me. **Intermediate steps to this assignment will be due throughout the semester.**

Readings

We will read the books below. You may buy any edition or read online versions through the UM library.

- Browne, K. E. (2015). *Standing in the need: Culture, comfort, and coming home after Katrina*. University of Texas Press.
- Cobb, J. C. (2007). *Away down south: A history of southern identity*. Oxford University Press.
- Edin, K., & Shaefer, H. L. (2015). *\$2.00 a day: Living on almost nothing in America*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Edge, J. T. (2018). *The Potlikker Papers: A Food History of the Modern South*. Penguin.
 - eBook available through UM library
- Laymon, Kiese. (2018). *Heavy: An American Memoir*. Simon and Schuster.
- Ward, J. (2017). *Sing, unburied, sing: A novel*. Simon and Schuster.
 - eBook available through UM library

Additional readings will be available on Blackboard.

Grading Scale

A	90 – 100%
B+	85 – 89%
B	80 – 84%
C+	75 – 79%
C	70 – 74% (minimum grade to receive credit towards the major)
D	60 – 69% (minimum grade to receive credit)
F	59% and below

Assessment

Your final project will constitute the bulk of your grade (60%). Memos represent the remaining portion (40%). Borderline grades may be adjusted upwards based on your trajectory over the course of the semester. Rubrics for the final paper will be distributed during the semester. Consistent attendance will be essential to your success in this course, particularly since we meet once a week. There are no “excused” absences – if you miss a week, you must reach out to me about an alternative assignment. *Feeling unwell is always a good reason to miss class* but you will still need to complete the alternative assignment.

Office Hours

You were welcome to stop by during office hours to chat about the readings, talk about your field notes, or ask questions. You can make an appointment for in-person or virtual office hours here: <https://calendly.com/parsons-um>

Academic Honesty and Integrity

I expect you to produce your own work for this class and cite others' ideas appropriately. In cases of inadvertent plagiarism (i.e., incorrect citations) you will be asked to edit and resubmit the assignment. Intentional plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, including copying others' ideas, paying someone to complete your assignments, or cheating during exams, will likely result in your failing the assignment.

Communication

I will do my best to respond to all emails within 2 business days during normal business hours; if you have not had a response by then, please send a follow up message. Emails with questions that can be answered with this syllabus will likely be ignored. Please do not send emails with questions about assignments fewer than 2 days before the deadline.

Attendance

The University requires that I verify attendance during the first two weeks of the semester. Missing the first two weeks of class may result in your being removed from the course roster. Beyond this requirement, students should plan to attend class every session. If you miss class you must complete an alternative assignment, typically an additional written response. Ending the semester with any uncompleted work will mean that you cannot get higher than a "C" for this course. Excessive absences will result in failing the class.

COVID-19 Accommodations and Responses

Masks are not required by the University but are always allowed. None of us should make judgements or assumptions about people who choose to wear a mask. The University requires students to report a COVID-19 diagnosis to the Student Health Center online at <https://coronavirus.olemiss.edu/report/> or by calling 662-915-7274. If you have been exposed to COVID-19, current guidance is to wear a high-quality mask for 10 days and test yourself on day 5. If you need to miss class because you are feeling ill or need to isolate, let me know in advance and I will do my best to record lectures and provide supplementary material.

Student Support Services

The University prepared the following information regarding mental health services:

The University Counseling Center is a professional facility offered by the University of Mississippi to assist students, faculty, and staff with many types of life stressors that interrupt day-to-day functioning, including the stressors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. They offer individual counseling, couple's counseling, group counseling, stress management, crisis intervention, assessments and referrals, outreach programs, consultations, and substance abuse services. There is no fee for currently enrolled University students and everything you say to your counselor is confidential. You can contact the Counseling Center for information about mental health issues at <https://counseling.olemiss.edu>, counselg@olemiss.edu, 662- 915-3784, 320 Lester Hall, and <https://www.facebook.com/universitycounselingcenterolemiss/>. You can schedule an appointment or get information about appointments by calling the UCC at 662-915-3784.

Updated Contact Information

Please note the following requirement from the University:

The University must have accurate contact information, including cell phone numbers, to facilitate student communications and contact tracing. Students should check and update their University contact information available at <https://olemiss.edu/mystudentprofile>.

Disability Access and Inclusion

The following language was written by the Student Disability Services office:

"The University of Mississippi is committed to the creation of inclusive learning environments for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your full inclusion and participation, or to accurate assessment of your achievement, please contact the course instructor as soon as possible. Barriers may include, but are not necessarily limited to, timed exams and in-class assignments, difficulty with the acquisition of lecture content, inaccessible web content, and the use of non-captioned or non-transcribed video and audio files. If you are registered with SDS, you must log in to your Rebel Access portal at <https://sds.olemiss.edu/rebel-access-portal> to request approved accommodations. If you are NOT registered with SDS, you must complete the process to become registered. To begin that process, please visit our website at <https://sds.olemiss.edu/apply-for-services>. SDS will:

1. Complete a comprehensive review to determine your eligibility for accommodations,
2. If approved, disseminate to your instructors a Faculty Notification Letter,
3. Facilitate the removal of barriers, and
4. Ensure you have equal access to the same opportunities for success that are available to all students.

If you have questions, contact SDS at 662-915-7128 or sds@olemiss.edu.¹

If you feel that there are other barriers to your success in this course (including disabilities not covered by SDS or difficult personal circumstances) please feel free to reach out to me to discuss ways to improve your experience in this course.

¹ Student Disability Services, University of Mississippi. (n.d.). *Syllabus Statement*. Student Disability Services - Syllabus Statement. Retrieved July 26, 2022, from <https://sds.olemiss.edu/syllabus-statement/>

Class Schedule

Class session structure: We will spend the first ~2 hours discussing the week's readings. The memo writers for the week will be responsible for leading discussions by providing analyses and questions. The final hour of the class will be devoted to discussing research methods and your proposal.

Week 1 (August 21): Introductions

Week 2 (August 28): Hollywood

In Class: *Sweet Home Alabama*

Read before: Selections from *American Studies: A User's Guide* [On Blackboard, ~45 pages]

Labor Day (September 4)

Week 3 (September 11): History and Identity

Readings: *Away Down South* Part 1

Memos:

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |

Research tool: Research questions and genre

Week 4 (September 18): History and Identity

Readings: *Away Down South* Part 2

Memos:

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |

Research tool: Methods and data

**** One page project proposal due ****

Week 5 (September 25): Community Study I

Readings: *Standing in the Need* Part 1

Memos:

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|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 5. | 6. |
| Research tool: Theoretical framing | |

Week 6 (October 2): Community Study II

Readings: *Standing in the Need* Part 2

Memos:

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |

Research tool: Literature reviews

4-5 page theory section due

Week 7 (October 9): Fiction I

Readings: *Sing, Unburied, Sing*

Memos:

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|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |

Research tool: Sources

Week 8 (October 16): Fiction 2

Readings: *Sing, Unburied, Sing*

Memos:

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|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |

Research tool: Literature reviews

** Annotated bibliography and project outline due **

Week 9 (October 23): Food History

Readings: *The Potlikker Papers*

Memos:

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |

Research tool: Literature reviews

****Literature Review section due****

Week 10 (October 30): Sociology

Readings: *\$2 a Day*

Memos:

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|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |

Research tool: Peer review

****In class peer reviews****

Week 11 (November 6): Documentary

Watch: *Lalee's Kin*

**** A rough draft of whatever you have finished of your final paper due – you may submit as much material as you wish. This is the last opportunity to receive feedback before the final deadline. ****

Week 12 (November 13): Memoir

Readings: *Heavy*

Memos:

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |

Thanksgiving

Week 13 (November 27): Music and Place

Readings: *Tha Carter III*

Memos:

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |

Finals Week: All assignments due by 11:59 PM on December 1.