

SST 101: Introduction to Southern Studies

Professor Ryan Parsons
parsons@olemiss.edu
Office: Lamar 561

Teaching Assistant: Charlie Pappas
cgpappa1@go.olemiss.edu

TTh 1:00-2:15
Barnard Observatory Room 105 (Tupelo Room)

Office hours by appointment: <https://calendly.com/parsons-um>

Course Description

The *New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* has 24 volumes spanning thousands of pages covering topics like literature, urbanization, violence, separate volumes for race and ethnicity, foodways, and religion. Given the massive scope of “Southern Studies,” the task of introducing ourselves to the discipline can feel overwhelming. Rather than attempt to introduce you to each of these big *topics*, we will focus on exploring different *genres*. We cannot fully survey what we know about the South, but we can teach you *how* knowledge about the South is created and shared. There are a range of assigned texts for this class that will expose you to different methods for learning about the South while also introducing you to the various disciplines that make up the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. By the end of the semester, successful students will be able to:

- Describe how different genres or types of text are used to describe a place,
- Provide critical feedback on texts in writing and classroom discussions,
- Draw on course readings and personal experience to form ideas and arguments about the American South
- Employ different methods at a level appropriate for an introductory class.

Required Texts

The course schedule at the end of this syllabus has a complete list of required readings. You should buy or rent the following texts:

- *The American South: A Very Short Introduction* by Charles Reagan Wilson. ISBN-10: 0199943516
- *The Injustice of Place: Uncovering the Legacy of Poverty in America* by Kathryn Edin, Luke Shaefer, and Timothy Nelson. ISBN-10: 0063239493
- *Sing, Unburied, Sing* by Jesmyn Ward.***
- *Heavy: An American Memoir* by Kiese Laymon.***

***eBook available through the UM library

Additional course material (shorter readings, etc.) are listed on the course schedule and are posted to Blackboard.

Assignments

Written Responses – 70%

There are eight written responses due throughout the semester. I will drop your lowest grade except for the final personal reflection assignment; alternatively, you may skip one of the first seven assignments with no penalty. Late submissions will not be accepted. Each assignment is worth 10 points. Everyone must complete the final assignment.

- Ethnographic Fieldnote (September 13)
- Mapping Exercise (September 20)
- Photo Essay (October 11)
- Film Review (October 23)
- Album Review (October 30)
- Recipe Analysis (November 6)
- Academic Book Review (December 6)
- Personal Reflection (December 12, **Required**)

Success Strategies – 35%

“Success Strategies” are behaviors or activities associated with strong performance in college level courses. They also serve as opportunities to become more connected with the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and other organizations on campus. You must receive **35** Success Strategy points for full credit; there are **60** possible Success Strategy points. You may not receive more than 30, but there are many ways to receive full credit in this category:

- Reading quizzes – There will be at least 20 reading quizzes during class throughout the semester. These are intended to assess whether or not you’ve done the reading ahead of time and should be very simple. They will be 1-2 questions and are intended to be complete in a minute or two. Maximum of 20 points.
- Reading notes – submit your notes on course readings. One point per page for up to 10 points. Bad-faith submissions (e.g., writing gibberish, writing in huge handwriting) will receive 0 points.
- Campus Events – attend up to three campus events related to Southern Studies (e.g., the SouthTalks that happen in the Tupelo Room) and submit a 300-word summary of the event. You must stay until the end, including any Q&A. Five points each for a maximum of 15 points.
- Office Hours – Visit my office hours (in person or Zoom) with a question about an assignment or the course material; you can’t just come say hi. Five points per visit for up to one visit.
- Writing Center – Visit the UM Writing Center with one of your written responses and work with them on improving your response. You may also bring in a graded writing response and resubmit it for a re-grade. Five points per visit for up to two visits.

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 will result in your being removed from the course roster. Beyond this requirement, students should plan to attend class every session. Attendance and participation are assessed as part of the Success Strategies discussed above.

Course Schedule

Note: The readings listed for each class session should be read *before class*. Any material in the readings is eligible to be on the in-class reading quizzes. All assignments are due via Blackboard at 11:59pm of the date listed. No late work is accepted.

Week 1

August 27: Course introduction, syllabus overview.

August 29: "30 for 30: Ghosts of Ole Miss" (in class). Syllabus quiz.

Week 2

Note: The University is closed September 2 for Labor Day

September 3: Two readings:

- "The Promise," by C. Wright Mills. Chapter 1 of *The Sociological Imagination*. [On Blackboard, about 23 pages]
- Introduction and Chapter 1 of *The American South* by Charles Wilson [about 21 very short pages]

September 5: *The American South* by Wilson, chapters 2 and 3 [about 32 pages]

Week 3

Note: September 9 is the last day to add classes.

September 10: Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 from *The Injustice of Place* by Edin, Shaefer, and Nelson. [About 68 pages]

September 12: Chapters 3-4 from *The Injustice of Place* by Edin, Shaefer, and Nelson [52 pages]

ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDNOTE DUE ON BLACKBOARD, SEPTEMBER 13

Week 4

September 17: Chapters 5-6 from *The Injustice of Place* by Edin, Shaefer, and Nelson [47 pages]

September 19: Chapters 7-9 from *The Injustice of Place* by Edin, Shaefer, and Nelson [75 pages]

MAPPING EXERCISE DUE ON BLACKBOARD, SEPTEMBER 20

Week 5

September 24:

- Chapters 1 and 5 from *Mississippi: The Closed Society* by James Silver [on Blackboard, about 65 pages]
- Chapters 3-4 in *The American South* [about 31 pages]

September 26:

- “The Symbolic Lynching of James Meredith: A Visual Analysis and Collective Counter Narrative to Racial Domination” by Barbara Combs, et al. [On Blackboard, about 15 pages]
- Chapter 5 in *The American South* [about 13 pages]

Week 6

October 1: “Mapping Microaggressions on a Southern University Campus: Where Are the Safe Spaces for Vulnerable Students?” by Johnson et al. [On Blackboard, about 17 pages]

October 3: Browse the website of the UM Slavery Research Group, particularly the page “Saying Their Names”: <https://slaveryresearchgroup.olemiss.edu/saying-their-names/>

Week 7

October 8:

Listen: <https://sarahisomcenter.org/blog/queering-oxford-the-long-path-to-pride>
[About 20 minutes]

October 10: Two readings:

- <https://mississippitoday.org/2023/12/04/in-this-shrinking-mississippi-delta-county-getting-a-college-degree-means-leaving-home-behind/> [Online, short]
- Parsons, R. (2022). Moving out to move up: Higher education as a mobility pathway in the rural south. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 8(3), 208-229. [On Blackboard, about 20 pages]

PHOTO ESSAY DUE ON BLACKBOARD, OCTOBER 11

Week 8

Note: October 14 is the last day to drop classes.

October 15: In class – “Lalee’s Kin” part 1

October 17: Two readings:

- In class – finish “Lalee’s Kin”
- Before class: Chapter 6 from *The American South* [about 15 pages]

Week 9

October 22:

- Listen to *Tha Carter III* by Lil Wayne [available on Youtube, etc., about an hour]
- Read: “Southern Rap and the Rhetoric of Region” by Graham [On Blackboard, about 15 pages]

FILM REVIEW DUE ON BLACKBOARD, OCTOBER 23

October 24:

- Listen to: A blues album of your choice
- Read: Chapter 7 in *The American South* [about 13 pages]
- Read: Prelude, Introduction, and Conclusion of *I Don't Like the Blues* by Brian Foster [on Blackboard, about 25 pages]

Week 10

October 29: [Guest Lecture by Charlie Pappas]

ALBUM REVIEW DUE ON BLACKBOARD, OCTOBER 30

October 31:

- Chapter 8 in *The American South* [about 13 pages]
- Browse the website of the Southern Foodways Alliance. Listen/watch at least one piece of their media and be prepared to say something about it.
<https://www.southernfoodways.org/>

Week 11

November 5: Chapters 1-4 of *Sing, Unburied, Sing* by Jesmyn Ward

RECIPE ANALYSIS DUE ON BLACKBOARD, NOVEMBER 6

November 7: Chapter 5-8 of *Sing, Unburied, Sing* by Ward

Week 12

November 12: Chapters 9-12 of *Sing, Unburied, Sing* by Ward

November 14: Chapters 12-15 of *Sing, Unburied, Sing* by Ward

Week 13

November 19:

- Chapter 6 in *The American South* [about 16 pages]
- Read "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner [on Blackboard, about 10 pages]

November 21: No class, but get a head start on reading *Heavy*

Note: Thanksgiving Break: November 23 to December 1

Week 14:

December 3: Parts I and II of *Heavy* by Kiese Laymon

December 5: Parts III and IV of *Heavy* by Laymon

ACADEMIC BOOK REVIEW DUE ON BLACKBOARD, DECEMBER 6

Finals Week:

Personal Reflection assignment due THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12 at NOON.

Additional Information and Campus Resources

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/>