

George Mason University
Department of History and Art History

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Tuesdays, 7:20-10 p.m.
Robinson B 204

History 622, Section 001: The South Since 1865

"What is southern history? More to the point, what is 'the South'?" So begins Laura Edwards's essay, "Southern History as U.S. History," written to mark the 75th anniversary of *The Journal of Southern History* in 2009. This course examines the history of the American South from the end of the Civil War to the end of the 20th century, starting with such fundamental questions as whether and in what ways "the South" was distinctive in the history of the United States. We will begin by exploring the nature of southern society at the point of emancipation, then examine how white southerners reestablished their political, economic, and cultural dominance. Diverse readings on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century will bring us to the period when the (supposedly) "solid South" began to crack: namely, the New Deal. Recent scholarship on "the long civil rights movement" and the "long backlash" will frame our study of the South in the second half of the twentieth century, culminating in reflections on recent historical and historiographical trends.

Throughout the course, we will employ gender as a category of analysis along with region, race, and class. We will also study historiography in addition to history and work to improve students' analytical, writing, and oral communication skills.

Learning objectives:

By the end of this course, students will be able to demonstrate extensive knowledge of the history of the U.S. South from 1865 through the end of the 20th century. They will grasp how white racial dominance was established and maintained through political, economic and cultural means and how race, class, and gender hierarchies and discourses were inextricably intertwined. They will know a great deal about black southerners' efforts to resist and overcome racial oppression using a variety of strategies that shifted over time from Reconstruction through the long civil rights movement. They will also grasp social and economic changes in the South, including the development of cities and suburbs in the once overwhelmingly agricultural region.

While gaining knowledge and understanding of the southern past, students will also develop their critical reading, writing, and thinking skills through mid-semester and final essay assignments, a book review, and in-class discussions. They will also develop an understanding of how and why academically trained historians emphasize historiography in their study of the past.

Required books: (Most are available at campus store; see schedule for additional readings)
Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (2003).

Glenda Gilmore, *Gender & Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (1996).

Stephen Prince, *Stories of the South: Race and the Reconstruction of Southern Identity, 1865-1915* (2014).

Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (1995).

James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (2005).

Alison Collis Greene, *No Depression in Heaven: Religion and the Great Depression in the Mississippi Delta* (2015).

Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South* (2003).

Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (1995).

Susan Ashmore, *Carry It On: The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama, 1964-1972* (2008).

Joseph Crespino, *Strom Thurmond's America* (2012).

Course requirements and grading:

- Active, informed, & thoughtful participation & submission of discussion questions (30%)
- Essay, 6-7 pages (1800-2100 words), due via Blackboard by 7:20 p.m. on Oct. 18 (20%)
- Book review, 2-3 pages (600-900 words) with oral presentation (15% plus 5%)
- Final essay or project, 12-15 pages (3600-4500 words) or the equivalent, due Dec. 13 (30%)

Participation and discussion questions: I expect students to read each week's reading assignment thoroughly and come to class prepared to ask questions, raise issues, and engage in a thought-provoking conversation. I will do my best to evaluate participation more on the intellectual quality than on the sheer quantity of a student's comments, but quantity is also important: students who are eager to talk demonstrate familiarity with the readings and provide intellectual stimulation for the whole group.

Students may also contribute to their participation grade by submitting a one-paragraph summary and 3-5 discussion questions on any assigned book for any number of weeks during the semester. These are due via Blackboard by noon on the day we are to discuss that reading. Because I intend to incorporate students' questions into my own discussion planning, I will not accept late submissions for participation credit. Nor should any student expect to make an A for the participation portion of the grade based on written submissions alone, even if s/he submits something every week. Meanwhile, it is possible to make an A in participation without submitting any summaries and discussion questions at all. My point: graduate seminars favor those who engage orally and think on their feet, not just on paper, and this class is designed to foster those skills.

I will give every student a preliminary participation grade along with my comments on the first essay.

First essay assignment: By September 27, I will provide 2-3 essay prompts designed to help you synthesize our first several weeks of readings. I expect your essays to be 6-7 double-spaced pages (1800-2100 words) in length, with Chicago-style footnotes and bibliography. (For a brief guide, see http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html). Essays are due via Blackboard by the start of class on October 18.

Book review and oral presentation: This assignment is designed to improve our individual and collective knowledge of the historiography in southern history post-1865. For most weeks of the semester, one or two students per class will give an oral presentation and turn in a concise (2-3 pages/600-900 words) review of a book not listed on our syllabus. First, on September 6, I will ask you to rank topics/dates. Once I have assigned you a topic/date, you must locate and read a scholarly book related to the topic, in addition to the regularly assigned reading for the week. Your review can be comparative, if that makes sense, or it can focus solely on your chosen reading. To identify appropriate books, you may wish to consult the historiographical essays featured in the same issue of the *Journal of Southern History* we are using for the first night of class and/or other scholarly resources. I am also happy to offer suggestions and ask that you let me know at least two weeks in advance what book you intend to review, particularly so that we can avoid overlap among classmates. Book reviews are due via Blackboard by 7:20 pm on your assigned date and should be double-spaced with a journal-style header in this format:

Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920. By Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, c. 1996).

Direct quotations from the book under review should be cited in parentheses at the end of the sentence. For this assignment, use Chicago-styles notes (preferably endnotes) only if citing some source other than the book under review.

Your oral presentation should last **no more than 10 minutes** and should focus on introducing the book you read and putting it into historiographical context for your classmates. I will grade the oral presentations on the following criteria:

- Clarity and organization, especially in identifying a book's main arguments and contribution to scholarship as well as the nature of the author's sources and methods of analysis
- *Avoidance* of the dull chapter-by-chapter summary approach
- Time management to allow completion within 10 minutes
- Ability to engage and maintain audience attention
- Ability to respond to questions from the audience

It will be virtually impossible to make up for a missed presentation, so think carefully as you rank your preferred topics/dates. I will do my best to give everyone their first choice.

Final essay or project: The final essay or project needs to demonstrate familiarity with the readings from the second half of the course plus additional materials. The nature of those "additional materials" will depend on which of two directions you choose to go.

Option 1 is to read at least three additional, scholarly books on southern history, broadly defined, since the 1930s and write a historiographical essay of 12-15 double-spaced pages (3600-4500 words). All three additional books need to be unique to this assignment (i.e., not on the syllabus and not used for the book review). A Chicago-style bibliography of the readings you expect to discuss is due by email on Nov. 15 and should be included with the final essay.

Option 2 is a small-scale research project for which each student will write a proposal, identify available primary and/or secondary sources, conduct independent research, possibly do a brief oral presentation for the class, and turn in some form of final product on or before Dec. 13. I am open to web-based projects such as Omeka exhibits and will work with students individually to define manageable projects that are comparable in scope to the historiography option. Proposals for research projects are due on Nov. 1.

Course schedule and readings:

- August 30** **Course introduction**
 Laura F. Edwards, "Southern History as U.S. History," *Journal of Southern History* 75 (August 2009), 533-64 (e-journal via Mason Libraries)
- Sept. 6** **Slavery and the Structure of Southern Society**
 Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, pp. 1-313
- Sept. 13** **Reconstruction and the Triumph of White Supremacy**
 Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, pp. 317-476
 Gilmore, *Gender & Jim Crow*, pp. xv-146
- Sept. 20** **Race and the Reconstruction of Southern Identity**
 Prince, *Stories of the South*
- Sept. 27** **The Progressive Era, Southern-style**
 Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 147-228
 MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*
- Oct. 4** **The "New South" and Southern Renaissance**
 Cobb, *Away Down South*, 1-211
- Oct. 11** **No class; Monday classes meet on Tuesday this week**
- Oct. 18** **FIRST ESSAY DUE**
 In-class film: *Scottsboro: An American Tragedy*
- Oct. 25** **The South and the New Deal**
 Greene, *No Depression in Heaven*
- Nov. 1** **Labor and the Origins of the Civil Rights Movement**
 Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism*
- Nov. 8** **Election night; No class**
- Nov. 15** **The Civil Rights Movement**
 Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*

- Nov. 22 Extending the Movement**
Ashmore, *Carry It On*
- Nov. 29 The Long Backlash**
Crespino, *Strom Thurmond's America*
- Dec. 6 The End of Southern History and/or the Nuevo New South**
Readings to be announced (but no new books to buy)
- Dec. 13 Final essay or project due**

Class policies and additional information:

Academic Integrity: I expect students in this course to live up to George Mason University's Honor Code, which states: "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work." I will pursue any concerns about academic dishonesty and will report suspected students to the University's Honor Board for disciplinary action, including a failing grade in the course.

Attendance and late paper policy: Students may miss a single class without penalty; however, even one absence is strongly discouraged and any additional absences will significantly affect the course grade. If you miss a class when you are supposed to give a presentation, there will be virtually no way to make it up. Please contact me well in advance of any necessary absence.

I will accept late papers with the penalty of half a letter grade for every 24-hour period past the deadline.

Office hours and appointments: I hold regular office hours as noted above, but they tend to get busy with undergraduate advising because of my role as Undergraduate Director. Graduate students are better off to make an appointment so we can meet without interruption. I am also happy to answer quick questions before or after class or during our breaks, but I cannot linger long after 10 p.m. Email is the best way to reach me.

Accommodations: Students who require academic accommodations should contact me promptly and must make arrangements through the Office of Disability Services (ods.gmu.edu; 703-993-2474).

Other useful information:

Writing Center (writingcenter.gmu.edu): A114 Robinson Hall, 703-993-1200

Counseling and Psychological Services, plus Learning Services (caps.gmu.edu): 703-993-2380

Last day to drop without tuition penalty: September 6

Last day to drop with tuition penalty: September 30