

History 499  
Senior Seminar: The Old South  
Fall 2011

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Office Hours: W 4:30-5:30, TH, 3:30-5, 6:30-7:15,  
and by appointment

This seminar focuses on the American South during the period just before the Civil War, 1815-60. This aim of this course is the writing of an excellent research paper, roughly 20-30 pages long, which is based on primary sources and also utilizes important secondary sources. Students will be able to choose from a range of social, political, cultural, and military subjects; research topics that utilize local history resources are welcomed.

In this course we will focus on the parts of the research paper: defining research topics, undertaking historical research, writing a well organized, well argued paper, and revising it to make it better. The assignments will be structured around helping you think about historical problems and improve your arguments and writing style.

The assigned reading for this course is not large, but it is important that you have it completed before class time and that you attend class, so that we can discuss the readings in class and use the readings to practice our writing and argumentation. This course fulfills all or in part the writing-intensive requirement for the History major.

Both your first version and final papers should be submitted **both electronically in Word and in hard copy**.

Academic integrity is a part of the George Mason honor code, and academic dishonesty is a serious misdeed with consequences for your academic career. You must have done all of the research and writing on a paper to which your name is signed. **Plagiarism** is defined in the GMU honor code as "presenting as one's own, the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment." Students who use the words of others must place the borrowed language in quotation marks or a block quotation and indicate the source in a footnote or endnote.

This course involves you in a shared endeavor: the research and writing of history. While these are individual activities, the class seminar should support you in it. Exchange of ideas, including vigorous debate, lies at the heart of the university. Civility in the presentation of your ideas and respect for the ideas of

others are essential. Part of the assigned work is the critique of another classmate's first version. These critiques will be written as well as oral, with written copies given to both the paper writer and to me. Here the critic will be expected to give constructive advice to help improve the paper.

Students with questions either about the class or their performances or grades should visit during office hours or arrange a conference at another time by telephoning or emailing.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703 993 2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

#### USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES:

WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200;

<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES "Ask a Librarian"

<http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

Required Books: (available in student bookstore)

J. William Harris, ed., *The Old South: New Studies of Society and Culture*

James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders*

To help you with matters of organization and citation, you should either own or have access to a recent edition of either *The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers*, or Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing).

Grades will be based on the following:

Short Papers, In Class Discussion and Writings 15 %

Outline, annotated bibliography, and first version of paper 30%

Presentation & Critique: 5 %

Final Paper: 50%

Submitting all required work is very important to your grade, as skipped work receives a zero. Late submissions will lose ½ letter grade each day.

Aug. 31 Introduction to class and major themes about the South

Sept. 6 **LAST DAY TO ADD CLASS** – Check your registration

- 7     **MEET IN FENWICK LIBRARY** in the Instruction Room (A-214) for a session with reference librarian, Mr. Byrd. At the break we will return to our classroom  
**Choosing a topic.** Using secondary resources successfully. Read Oakes, intro and chs. 1-5; Harris, Intro and ch. 1-2. Turn in 2-3 pp. typed response on how Genovese and Oakes differ or agree.
- 14    Slavery and Enslaved People. Read Harris, chs. 3, 5 and 6.  
**Email your own tentative research question to me before class.**
- 21    **NO CLASS. Individual Conferences at my office.** Bring research thesis, and bibliography of primary and secondary sources.
- 28    Women in Southern Society. Read Harris, chs. 7, 9, 10-11. Turn in 2-3 pp typed response on how much autonomy and freedom southern white women experienced?
- 30    **LAST DAY TO DROP CLASS**
- Oct. 5     **NO CLASS.** Work on research. **E-mail me a progress report.**
- 12    Planters and Secession. Read Oakes, chs. 6-9.
- 19    **PAPER OUTLINE AND PRELIMINARY ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE. NO CLASS. Individual conferences at my office.**
- 26    Bring your questions, problems, and an example from a published history or novel of excellent intro and concluding paragraphs.
- 28    **END OF SELECTIVE WITHDRAWAL PERIOD**
- Nov. 2     Workshop on organization, footnotes, and citation style.
- 9     **NO CLASS -- FIRST VERSION OF PAPER DUE**
- 16    Workshop on questions and problems
- 23    **NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING BREAK**
- 30    Class presentations and critiques
- Dec. 7     Class presentation and critiques
- 14    **FINAL PAPER DUE** by 5 p.m.