What kind of society existed in the southern states? This course examines the South between 1790 and 1861. We will also explore the South as a slave society and its black, white and Native American communities. Major organizing questions will concern the composition and working of the southern society and economy and the extent to which the South formed a separate and distinctive civilization in North America. In addition to an increased comprehension of the antebellum South, course objectives include surveying historiographical interpretations and improving students' analytical skills and writing ability.

Students must keep up with the reading assignments and attend regularly, as class participation is important. Moreover, each student will play a part in providing questions and leading discussion for one week of the assigned reading. Even though students will help lead discussion, others should come to class well prepared to discuss and critique the reading.

In addition to the midterm and final examinations, each student will present a 5-minute in-class oral report on a book linked to the readings (see below for suggestions). This is a way to extend the class’s collective historiographical knowledge. A comparative analytical book review of 7 to 10 double-spaced, typed pages that compares the assigned reading with the chosen book will be due one week after the oral report. Ph.D. students will write a longer review that contrasts three books with the assigned reading.

A penalty of 1/2 letter grade per day will be assessed on late papers unless arrangements have been made. Students who have any questions or difficulties with the class should drop by during office hours or schedule an appointment.

Academic integrity is a part of the George Mason honor code. Students may not give or receive help during examinations. A student must have done all of the work on a paper to which her/his 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 and name the source in a footnote. Factual information considered general knowledge does not, however, have to be footnoted.
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.

Grades will be based on the following criteria:
midterm take-home exam: 25% analytic book review (6-9 pages) 25%
discussion leadership/presentation 5%
class participation 10% final take-home exam: 35%

Required books (available in paperback in campus bookstore)
Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Fatal Self Deception: Slaveholding Paternalism in the Old South
Joshua D. Rothman, Flush Times and Fever Dreams: A Story of Capitalism and Slavery in the Age of Jackson
Steven Deyle, Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life
Anthony Kaye, Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South
Sydney Nathans, To Free a Family: The Journey of Mary Walker
Keri Leigh Merritt, Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South
Barbara Krauthamer, Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South
Joyce Broussard, Stepping Lively in Place: The Not-Married Free Women of Civil-War Era Natchez, Mississippi
William J. Cooper, Jr., The Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856
Jonathan Daniel Wells. The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861
Paul Quigley, Shifting Grounds: Nationalism and the American South, 1848-1861

Schedule of work
Aug. 27 Orientation to Course. The Distinctiveness of the Antebellum South. The Mind of the South
Sept. 3 LABOR DAY - NO CLASS
4 LAST DAY TO ADD CLASS
9 LAST DAY TO DROP CLASS (no tuition liability)
10 Introduction to a Slave Society. Read Genovese and Fox-Genovese.
17 The South: Capitalist or Paternalist/Patriarchal relationships? Read Rothman.

Possibilities for Review: Mark M. Smith, Mastered by the Clock: Time, Slavery, and Freedom in the American South OR Kathleen Hilliard, Masters, Slaves, and Exchange: Power’s Purchase in the Old South OR Marli Weiner, Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-80

30  LAST DAY OF WEB WITHDRAWAL PERIOD

Oct. 1  Family and the Neighborhoods of Slavery. Read Kay.  
*Possibilities for Review:* Brenda Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* OR Edward Baptist, *Creating an Old South: Middle Florida’s Plantation Frontier before the Civil War* OR Damian Alan Pargas, *The Quarters and the Fields: Slave Families in the Non-Cotton South*

RECEIVE TAKE-HOME MIDTERM

Oct. 9  NO CLASS. RETURN MIDTERM


22  The Southern Community. Nonslaveholding Whites. Read Merrit.  
*Possibilities for Review:* Charles Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South* OR Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* OR Jeff Forret, *Race Relations at the Margins: Slaves and Poor Whites in the Antebellum Southern Countryside*

29  Native Americans, Slavery, and Removal. Read Krauthamer  

Nov. 5  Gender and Status in the Southern Community. Read Broussard.  
Nov. 12  The White Community and Politics. Read Cooper.


19  The Middle Class, Politics and Culture. Read Wells.

Possibilities for Review: Sean Patrick Adams, Old Dominion, Industrial Commonwealth: Coal, Politics, and Economy in Antebellum America OR Jennifer Green, Military Education and the Emerging Middle Class in the Old South OR Charity Carney, Ministers and Masters: Methodism, Manhood, and Honor in the Old South

26  The Growth of Southern Nationalism. Read Quigley.


RECEIVE TAKE HOME EXAM

Dec. 17  FINAL EXAM DUE BY 5 P.M.