

Last Updated: August 23, 2021  
(Syllabus subject to change. Latest syllabus will be posted on Blackboard)

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**COURSE SYLLABUS**  
Race, Gender and Lynching WMST 615-DL1  
Tuesdays 4:30-7:10PM

**Course Description**

Although the Equal Justice Initiative has counted 4075 African Americans who were lynched between 1877 and 1950, inadequate documentation in an age of racial terrorism means an accurate count is lost to history. Over the past 30 years however an impressive array of lynching scholarship has developed into a burgeoning field that demonstrates the central role of violence in recasting white supremacy for a postbellum southern order that also had national implications. Following the Civil War and Reconstruction, lynching emerged as a mechanism for maintaining a virulent form of white supremacy that upheld disenfranchisement, reinforced economic and social exploitation, and compelled Black subservience. In converting Black men into “black beasts” who were especially prone to raping white women, white supremacists were able to inflame a race hatred narrative that justified the South’s approach to extralegal system of racist violence. However, the actual charges against the victims, who were afforded no right to due process, ranged from the serious to the trivial, with many being lynched not for an alleged crime but for failing to properly conform to the system of racial subordination. While many of the lynchings could be labeled as routine murders that were mostly performed privately, others were created as spectacles of entertainment involving mutilation and sexual torture, and forced confessions before death. In these cases, the mob of spectators and lynchers frequently would pose for postcard pictures and grab souvenirs in the form of body parts as well as tree bark, branches and leaves marked by blood. The course will cover four main areas of inquiry. It will explore the factors that account for the rise and fall of lynching and its spatial and temporal distribution in the South. It will examine the characteristics of the lynched as well as the lynchers, including connections with law enforcement and local judicial systems. It will cover antilynching campaigns by organizations and the resistance of Black communities. Although the course is concentrated on the lynchings of Black men in the South who formed the majority of lynch victims there, the course will also examine the circumstances that led to the lynching of Black women as well as the characteristics of lynchings in sections of the country where there were few Blacks.

**Goals:**

Understanding the connection of lynching to the production of white supremacy and social and cultural norms  
Analyzing differences across states and regions in patterns of lynching and its connection to different forms of economic production  
Studying the forces that contributed to the lynching fluctuations as well as its eventual decline  
Examining the relationship between lynching and the criminal justice systems and local cultures  
Exploring the role of immigration, and gender, ethnic and class hierarchies and cleavages in the functioning of lynching cultures  
Examining federal responses to lynching over time

**Course Books**

Bailey, Amy Kate, and Stewart E. Tolnay. *Lynched: The Victims of Southern Mob Violence*. UNC Press Books, 2015. \*\*\*

Finnegan, Terence. *A Deed So Accursed: Lynching in Mississippi and South Carolina, 1881-1940*. University of Virginia Press, 2013. \*\*\*

Bernstein, Patricia. *The First Waco Horror: The Lynching of Jesse Washington and the Rise of the NAACP*. Vol. 101. Texas A&M University Press, 2006. \*\*\*

Wells-Barnett, Ida B. "Southern Horrors, Lynch Law in all its Phases," in *On Lynchings*. Courier Corporation, 2014. \*\*\*

Waldrep, Christopher. *African Americans Confront Lynching: Strategies of Resistance from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Era*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.

Carrigan, William D. *The Making of a Lynching Culture: Violence and Vigilantism in Central Texas, 1836-1916*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004.

Ifill, Sherrilyn A. (Author) Bryan Stevenson (Foreword) *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the Twenty-first Century*. Beacon Press, revised edition, 2018

Pfeifer, Michael James. *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947*. University of Illinois Press, 2004.

Tyson, Timothy B. *The Blood of Emmett Till*. Simon and Schuster, 2017.

\*\*\* available online through Mason Libraries

## **Course Requirements and Methods of Instruction and Evaluation**

### **Course requirements**

25% - Class participation and blog entries

15% - Leading class discussion

25% - Book analysis, 5 to 7 pages

35% - Final paper, 15 to 18 pages

The book analysis and the final paper must be turned in through the Journals tab on Blackboard. Always save a copy of all your written work and any returned work.

### **- Class participation and blog entries**

We have eleven class meetings in which we discuss course texts. This course follows a standard seminar format. Students are expected to attend class and contribute to each week's discussion of the readings. More than one absence from class requires makeup work in the form of a four-page essay on the literature for the missed class. To facilitate class discussion, students will choose 5 of the classes between August 31 and the Nov. 16 (exclusive of the 2 times you lead class discussion) to write a blog. Blog posts should be one written page assessment on any aspect of the reading you find fascinating, perplexing, informative or questionable. If your comments are relevant to a specific quote or topic in the text, please include the page number or numbers. This posting is **due by noon** the day the class meets.

### **- Leading class discussion**

Twice in the semester students will lead class discussion. Students assigned to the same day may collaborate on how to present the readings and the class discussion. On Blackboard the day before class, students should briefly summarize the argument or major theme(s) of the readings (8 to 12 sentences) and then post questions on that reading. There should be at least 6 questions total for the class session.

### **- Book analysis**

Students will write one short paper analyzing the readings for one class session. Students need not choose the book or group of readings on which they lead class discussion. Students should analyze the author or authors' arguments, assess how well the evidence supports the argument or thesis, and explore any gaps or biases in the arguments. Do the themes, arguments, interpretations of the literature fit in with other course readings? Post the book analysis under Journals Section of Blackboard.

By **Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>** students will post under Journals Section of Blackboard their choice of text to be covered for the book analysis. **Oct. 19<sup>th</sup>** is the due date for all papers covering course material before that date. Otherwise the paper is due a week after the class for the discussion of the text has met.

## Final paper

Your final research paper can take several routes. You may research a particular lynching case study or compare different lynching case studies. You may concentrate on a state or locality and analyze various texts that cover lynchings over time in that geographic area. You may explore the work of anti-lynching activists. You should include primary research. (Search newspapers here: <https://infoguides.gmu.edu/dbs>)

By Friday **Nov. 19** you should post in the forum I create on the discussion board the subject of your research, a brief description and the sources that you will use. During the last 2 class sessions, we will discuss a number of proposals at each class.

The final paper is due **Dec. 9th**

## About Research

To find relevant books, you may look at the bibliographies of the various texts we are reading, peruse various library databases, and consult the library liaisons, Jen Stevens and George Oberle.

Jen Stevens, English, Communication & Women's Studies Liaison Librarian.

[jsteven7@gmu.edu](mailto:jsteven7@gmu.edu)

703/993-2211

Jen usually holds office hours in the Women and Gender Studies Center.

George Oberle, Film and Video Studies, History Liaison Librarian

[goberle@gmu.edu](mailto:goberle@gmu.edu) 703/993-4175

## Reference Citation Style

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/resources.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html)

Chicago style (history)

APA (social sciences)

MLA (arts, cultural studies, and other humanities)

## University-wide Grading System

Grade	Quality Points	Graduate Courses
A+	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A-	3.67	Satisfactory/Passing
B+	3.33	Satisfactory/Passing
B	3.00	Satisfactory/Passing
B-	2.67	Satisfactory*/Passing
C	2.00	Unsatisfactory/Passing
F	0.00	Unsatisfactory/Failing

\* Although a B- is a satisfactory grade for a course, students must maintain a 3.00 average in their degree program and present a 3.00 GPA on the courses listed on the graduation application.

[http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=5&navoid=104#grad\\_poli](http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=5&navoid=104#grad_poli)

## **CLASS POLICIES**

### **1. About Blackboard**

This course management system is a very important tool for this class. I will post on Blackboard the syllabus, instructions for all course assignments, deadlines, recommended readings, and links to relevant web sites and selected campus resources. If any changes occur in the syllabus, I will post an updated document. I will announce in class any changes to the syllabus and also alert you through the Blackboard announcements/email.

**2. Laptop or tablet use.** You are expected to turn on your cameras during class and be in a comfortable place where you can sit up. Please refrain from reclining on a bed or lying down on a couch. Please refrain from eating or doing anything distracting during the class period. Beverages are okay to have. If there is a problem with keeping your camera on, please speak about it to me during office hours or by email. Please do not use your cell phone or other devices in ways that are unrelated to our class. Be sure to post your name on your zoom photo. You may choose an online background for your zoom appearances.

**3. Class Room Etiquette.** It is not acceptable to leave class early or take any breaks during class. If you have an appointment that interferes with class time or must suddenly leave, then provide the instructor with an explanation as soon as possible. If you must move, please turn off your camera until you return. If you are not speaking, please keep your microphone off. Please use the hand raise device so I may recognize you to speak.

**4. Student Work.** You should keep copies of all the course work that you post and that is graded and returned.

**5. Contact:** Please **email me through the Blackboard** email system.

**6. Emergencies:** Unfortunately, painful events may disrupt our lives. If there is a death in your family or serious illness, I require you to provide some form of documentation. I'm sorry to have to require a level of proof, but there are on occasion desperate or unscrupulous students who will resort to lying.

In general, if you are having trouble completing assignments, you should speak to me early about the issue.

## MASON POLICIES

### 1. George Mason University Honor System and Code

#### Honor Code

“The Honor Code Pledge reads as follows: To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University Community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set for this Honor Code: Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.”

<https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>

See Office of Academic Integrity definitions below:

#### What is Cheating?

<https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/what-is-cheating/>

#### What is Lying?

<https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/what-is-lying/>

#### What is Plagiarism?

<https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/what-is-plagiarism/>

### 2. Class Registration

Students are responsible for verifying the accuracy of their own schedules. Students need to check PatriotWeb regularly to verify that they are registered for the classes that they think they are. This is particularly important since students are no longer dropped for nonpayment. Faculty may not allow a student who is not registered to continue to attend class and may not grade the work of students who do not appear on the official class roster.

Deadlines each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar's Web Site [https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/fall\\_2021/](https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/fall_2021/)

The **add and drop deadlines** for classes:

Last day to add classes: Sept 7

Last Day to Drop with 100% tuition refund: Sept 7

Final Drop Deadline with 50% tuition refund with no tuition refund: Sept 14

Unrestricted Withdrawal Period: Sept 15 - Sept 27

### 3. Accommodations for students with disabilities

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the

administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email:ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

**4. Mason email:** In order to comply with student privacy laws, faculty and students must use their Mason email accounts when corresponding with each other (Blackboard email is connected to Mason email). Please activate and check your Mason email regularly so as not to miss any important announcements.

Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. I will not respond to messages sent from or send messages to a non-Mason email address.

## **STUDENT SERVICES**

### **1. Writing Center**

Johnson Center 227E; (703) 993-1200

<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

The University Writing Center provides free tutorial sessions for all students needing help with any writing project from freshman essays to scholarly publications. You are highly encouraged to take advantage of this free service! After the first writing assignment, I may recommend that you visit the writing center.

### **2. Learning Services**

Learning Services provides a variety of experience-based learning opportunities through which students explore a wide range of academic concerns

<https://learningservices.gmu.edu/>

### **3. University Career Services**

We are committed to educating and preparing students for meaningful careers in a global society.

<https://careers.gmu.edu/>

### **4. Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, and Interpersonal Violence**

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual or interpersonal misconduct: As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, complicity, and retaliation to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University

Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center or Counseling and Psychological Services

You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu)  
See: <https://diversity.gmu.edu/title-ix/sexual-or-interpersonal-misconduct-report-form>

**Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC)**

SUB I, Room 3200 703-993-3686 <https://ssac.gmu.edu/>

**24 hr. Sexual and Interpersonal Violence Crisis Line:** 703-380-1434

**Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**

CAPS "provides a wide range of services to students, faculty, and staff. Services are provided by a staff of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors. CAPS individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs are designed to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance." 703-993-2380. <http://caps.gmu.edu>

**5. Women and Gender Studies Center;** Johnson Center, 240K, 703-993-2986

The Women and Gender Studies Center sponsors programs and events that are relevant to this course. It has a library of material that may be checked out. We also support several student organizations and provide internship opportunities. We also offer free printing to all of our enrolled students and minors. Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 9-7; Tuesdays and Thursdays: 9-6; Friday: 9-4 (virtual) <https://wmst.gmu.edu/center>

**6. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ+) Resource Center**

SUB I, Room 2200 703-993-2702 <https://lgbtq.gmu.edu/>

**7. Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment (CCEE)**

SUB I, Room 2400 703-993-2700 <https://ccee.gmu.edu/>

**George Mason University: Diversity Statement**

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth.

An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an



environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected.

The reflection of Mason's commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond policies and procedures to focus on behavior at the individual, group and organizational level. The implementation of this commitment to diversity and inclusion is found in all settings, including individual work units and groups, student organizations and groups, and classroom settings; it is also found with the delivery of services and activities, including, but not limited to, curriculum, teaching, events, advising, research, service, and community outreach.

Acknowledging that the attainment of diversity and inclusion are dynamic and continuous processes, and that the larger societal setting has an evolving socio-cultural understanding of diversity and inclusion, Mason seeks to continuously improve its environment. To this end, the University promotes continuous monitoring and self-assessment regarding diversity. The aim is to incorporate diversity and inclusion within the philosophies and actions of the individual, group and organization, and to make improvements as needed.

### **Women and Gender Studies Commitment to Diversity Statement**

The Women and Gender Studies program seeks to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.

## **Class Schedule**

### **August 24**

Introduction

### **August 31**

Theoretical, Methodological Issues and Accounting for Intergenerational Harm

Smångs, Mattias. "Doing violence, making race: Southern lynching and white racial group formation." *American Journal of Sociology* 121, no. 5 (2016): 1329-1374.

Smångs, Mattias. "The lynching of African Americans in the US South: A review of sociological and historical perspectives." *Sociology compass* 11, no. 8 (2017): e12500.

Trotti, Michael Ayers. "What counts: Trends in racial violence in the postbellum South." *The Journal of American History* 100, no. 2 (2013): 375-400.

Waldrep, Christopher. "War of Words: The Controversy over the Definition of Lynching, 1899-1940." *The Journal of Southern History* 66, no. 1 (2000): 75-100.

Gaston, Shytierra. "Historical racist violence and intergenerational harms: Accounts from descendants of lynching victims." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 694, no. 1 (2021): 78-91.

### **Sept 7**

#### Lynching Case Studies Outside the South and Traditional Lynching Studies

Pfeifer, Michael J. "The Northern United States and the Genesis of Racial Lynching: The Lynching of African Americans in the Civil War Era." *The Journal of American History* 97, no. 3 (2010): 621-635.

Webb, Clive. "The lynching of Sicilian immigrants in the American South, 1886-1910." *American Nineteenth Century History* 3, no. 1 (2002): 45-76.

Chapter 4 Carrigan, William D. and Clive Webb. "The Rise and Fall of Mob Violence against Mexicans in Arizona, 1859–1915," in Pfeifer, Michael J., ed. *Lynching Beyond Dixie: American Mob Violence Outside the South*. University of Illinois Press, 2013. Available online through Mason Libraries

Campney, Brent MS. "State Studies and the Whiteness of White-on-White Lynching." *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 20, no. 1 (2021): 104-113.

### **Sept. 14**

#### Legal Strategies and Resistance

Waldrep, Christopher. *African Americans Confront Lynching: Strategies of Resistance from the Civil War to the Civil Rights Era*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008, Intro to 91.

Burns, Adam. "Without Due Process: Albert E. Pillsbury and the Hoar Anti-Lynching Bill." *American Nineteenth Century History* 11, no. 2 (2010): 233-252.

Watson, Martha Solomon. "Mary Church Terrell vs. Thomas Nelson Page: Gender, Race, and Class in Anti-Lynching Rhetoric." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* (2009): 65-89.

Wells-Barnett, Ida B. "Southern Horrors, Lynch Law in all its Phases," in *On Lynchings*. Courier Corporation, 2014, 1-40.

### **Sept. 21**

Bernstein, Patricia. *The First Waco Horror: The Lynching of Jesse Washington and the Rise of the NAACP*. Vol. 101. Texas A&M University Press, 2006.

**Sept. 28** -----Atypical Victims, women

(Post under Journals Section of Blackboard, your choice of text to be covered for the book analysis)

Chapter 1 McLure, Helen. “Who Dares to Style This Female a Woman?’ Lynching, Gender, and Culture in the Nineteenth-Century U.S. West,” in Pfeifer, Michael J., ed. *Lynching Beyond Dixie: American Mob Violence Outside the South*. University of Illinois Press, 2013. Available online through Mason Libraries

Brown, Haley. "The Lynching of Mary Jackson in Harrison County, Texas, 1912." *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 124, no. 2 (2020): 182-200.

Feimster Crystal Nicole. Chapter 5 “New Southern Women and the Triumph of White Supremacy” (page 125-157) and Chapter 6 “The Lynching of Black and White Women” (158-185) in *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching*. Harvard University Press, 2009. Available online through Mason Libraries

Bailey, Amy Kate, and Stewart E. Tolnay. “Atypical Victims, *Lynched: The Victims of Southern Mob Violence*. UNC Press Books, 2015, 178-202

**Oct 5** -----Local Study

Carrigan, William D. *The making of a lynching culture: Violence and vigilantism in Central Texas, 1836-1916*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004.

**Oct. 12** Monday classes/labs meet (Tuesday classes do not meet this week)

**Oct. 19** -----National Studies

Pfeifer, Michael James. *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947*. University of Illinois Press, 2004.

**Oct. 26**

Bailey, Amy Kate, and Stewart E. Tolnay. *Lynched: The Victims of Southern Mob Violence*. UNC Press Books, 2015, 1-177.

**Nov. 2** -----Comparative Study

Finnegan, Terence. *A Deed So Accursed: Lynching in Mississippi and South Carolina, 1881-1940*. University of Virginia Press, 2013.

**Nov. 9** -----Case Studies

Tyson, Timothy B. *The Blood of Emmett Till*. Simon and Schuster, 2017.

**Nov. 16 -----**Lynching Legacy and Restorative Justice

Ifill, Sherrilyn A. (Author) Bryan Stevenson (Foreword) *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the Twenty-first Century*. Beacon Press, revised edition, 2018

**Nov. 19 (Friday)** Discussion Board post on your research is due.

**Nov. 23**

Richards, Yvette, “The 1928 Christmas Day Lynchings of the Taylor Sisters: Family Networks in the Making of Violence,” draft

### **Presentations of Paper Research**

**Nov. 24-Nov28.** Recess

**Nov. 23**

### **Presentations of Paper Research**

**Dec. 9** Final Paper due Friday **at midnight**

Post under Journals Section of Blackboard.