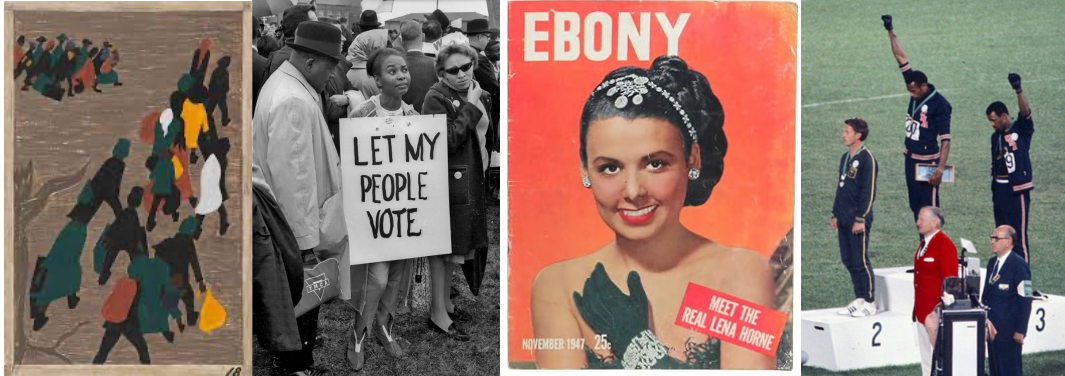


HIST 336/AFAM 390
The African American Experience in the United States:
From Reconstruction to the Present
Spring 2024



Professor: Dr. Suzanne Smith
Office: Horizon Hall, Room 3108
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Course Time and Place:

TR 1:30-2:45 pm, Innovation Hall, Room 204

Office Hours:

TR 3:30-4:30 pm and by appointment.

Course Objectives:

This course examines African American history in the United States from the end of Reconstruction to the present. Throughout the class, we study how African Americans responded to the racial segregation and discrimination that arose after the end of slavery and trace the formation of the modern civil rights movement. Topics covered include the origins of Jim Crow segregation; the history of lynching; the Great Migration; the Harlem Renaissance; African Americans in the military during WWI, WWII, and the Vietnam War; black nationalism; the modern civil rights movement; debates about affirmative action; and the impact of mass incarceration on African Americans. The course concludes with an examination of current public debates about the role of African American history in U.S. public schools.

Learning and Teaching in 2024

I would like to begin this course with an open acknowledgment that—although the immediate threat of COVID-19 has become more manageable—it is still a presence in our lives as well as other stressors that can affect academic performance.

In addition, this is a course in which class discussion involves sharing opinions and interpretations of course material, some of which involves discussing race, gender, class,

and sexual orientation.

Given these circumstances, it is very important as we begin this course to be aware of how much external events can have a direct impact on our ability to do our scholarly work. Moreover, our classroom must be a learning environment that is inclusive of all student perspectives.

For this reason, I would like to emphasize a few points:

- 1) If you are feeling overwhelmed, having difficulty keeping up with assignments, or become physically sick, **please communicate with me *directly as soon as possible* so I can assist you in making thoughtful decisions about how to manage the situation and complete your assignments and the course.**
- 2) I encourage all students in this class to exchange contact information with **2-3 classmates early in the semester** to facilitate keeping up with lecture notes and announcements from class in case you have to miss class for any reason including illness.
- 3) If you need more direct help, please contact the GMU Counseling and Psychological Services Center: <https://caps.gmu.edu/>
- 4) When expressing your opinions about class material, please be mindful that your classmates may have different or opposing views. **Therefore, always speak and write from an “I” perspective.** In other words, *never* assume everyone in class shares your views.
- 5) Please be careful in class discussion or in online communication on class discussion boards to be respectful of each other’s opinions and ideas on *any* topic.

Grading and Assignments:

In this course, you will be graded in three major areas:

- 1) **Class participation:** (20%)
- 2) **Written assignments:**
 - Weekly discussion board posts and responses (25%)
 - Two Analysis Papers (15%)
- 3) **Exams:**
 - Take-Home Midterm Exam (20%)
 - Take-Home Final Exam (20%)

Grading Scale:

A+	98-100%	C	73-76%
A	93-97%	C-	70-72%
A-	90-92%	D+	67-69%
B+	87-89%	D	63-66%
B	83-86%	D-	60-62%
B-	80-82%	F	59% or less
C+	77-79%		

Work Groups:

To make the workload for this class more manageable, I have assigned students to small “work groups” (e.g. Group 1, Group 2, etc.). Each week, your work group will have **one** of three assignments to complete:

- Analysis Paper
- Discussion Board Post
- Response to Discussion Board Post

Our Blackboard webpage will direct you to the assignment you are responsible to complete each week.

Grade Assessment:

- **Class participation:** Class participation is crucial to one's overall grade and will be assessed by **attendance** and **active participation in class discussions**. Regular attendance, evidence of preparation (i.e. having completed and thought about the assigned readings), offering relevant commentary, *respectful* engagement with other students' ideas, completion of in-class assignments, and appropriate class behavior all factor into the class participation grade. *If you are unable to attend class for any reason, it is helpful to notify me via e-mail.*
- **Written Assignments:**
 - **Discussion board postings:** When your group is assigned a discussion board post, **each member of your group** should write **an individual discussion board post** and upload it to Blackboard by **noon on Thursdays**. Discussion posts should be concise (350-500 words) and should focus on what you found most provocative about the reading assignment. Please **do not summarize the readings** in these posts, but discuss what surprised you or deepened your understanding of the course topics for the week. For more details about how to write a successful discussion board post, please review the Discussion Board Post Rubric on our Blackboard.
 - **Response to Discussion Board Posts:** When your group is assigned to **respond** to discussion board posts, **each member of your group** should write **a response to two of the posts** submitted by other students participating in the discussion board for that week. Please post your response to the discussion board **no later than 11:59 pm on Thursdays**. Responses to posts should be approximately 50-100 words; show respect to the person who wrote the post, and should offer meaningful feedback (e.g. Simply writing, “Good job!,” is insufficient.) For complete details, see Discussion Board Instructions on Blackboard.
 - **Analysis Papers:** These papers are **individual** assignments. The first paper will be 3-4 pages in length; the second paper will be 4-6 pages in length. For more details about how to write a successful analysis paper,

please review the Analysis Paper Rubric on Blackboard.

- **Exams:**

- You will have a take-home midterm and a take-home final exam. In these exams, you will be responsible for all material covered in course readings, lectures, and any additional course materials.

Course Materials and Privacy:

- All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course site are private to this class; by federal law, **any materials that identify specific students** (via their name, voice, or image) ***must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.*** Any violation of this policy will be directed to the appropriate GMU university administrators.

Mason E-mail and Communication policies:

- **Mason requires that Mason email be used for all courses.** I will be sending messages to your Mason email and you are responsible for making sure you have access to these messages.
- You may forward your Mason email to other accounts but **always use your Mason e-mail when communicating with me to allow verification of your identity.**
- You are required to check your Mason email account regularly and to keep your mailbox maintained so that messages are not rejected for being over quota.
- When you email me, you can expect a response within 24 hours except on weekends when my response may be delayed for up to 48 hours.
- **Gender identity and pronoun use:** If you wish, please share your name and gender pronouns with me and how best to address you in class and via email. I use [she/her/hers] and you may address me as **“Dr. Smith”** in email and verbally.
- When you email me, please remember to include **HNRS 240** at the beginning of the subject heading to alert me that I have received a message from one of my students.

Course Netiquette when Posting Online Assignments:

- **Class discussion should be collaborative, not combative;** you are creating a learning environment, sharing information, and learning from one another.
- **Always proofread your responses carefully before you post them** so others will not take them out of context or as personal attacks.
- **Be positive to others and diplomatic with your words** and I will try my best to do the same.

- **Be careful when using sarcasm and humor.** Without face-to-face communication, your joke may be viewed as criticism. Experience shows that even an innocent remark in the online environment can be easily misconstrued.
- **Respectful communication is vital to the success of this course. For this reason,** posts that are disrespectful, abusive, written in slang, bullet points, or incomplete sentences **will be deleted and receive no credit.**

General Class Policies:

- 1) **Punctuality:** Please make every effort to arrive in class on time; arriving late to class is disruptive.
- 2) **Cell phones:** Turn off or silence cell phones before class begins and refrain from any texting.
- 3) ****Laptop Free Zone**:** Laptops and other electronic devices may *not* be used during class except by special arrangement. For my rationale, see Cindi May, ["Students are Better Off Without a Laptop in the Classroom,"](#) *Scientific American*, July 11, 2017. Please bring a notebook and pen or pencil with which to take notes on class discussions.
- 4) **Honor Code:** *The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us.* As a Mason student, you should follow these fundamental principles at all times, as noted by the [Honor Code](#): (1) All work submitted should be your own, without the use in inappropriate assistance or resources, as defined by the assignment or faculty member; (2) When you use the work, the words, the images, or the ideas of others--including fellow students, online sites or tools, or your own prior creations--you must give full credit through accurate citations; (3) In creating your work, you should not take materials you are not authorized to use, or falsely represent ideas or processes regarding your work. If you are uncertain about the ground rules or ethical expectations regarding the integrity of your work on a particular assignment or exam, you should ask your instructor for clarification. Support for you to complete your work is available; no grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct.
- 5) **AI Policy:** All work submitted in this course must be your own original work; use of AI writing tools, such as ChatGPT, are prohibited in this course and will be considered a violation of academic integrity. All violations will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.
- 6) **Disability Accommodations:** 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.

- 7) **Diversity and Inclusivity Statement:** The Honors College *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 this class to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.*

8) **Add and Drop Deadlines:**

Last Day to Add:	Tuesday, January 23
Last Day to Drop with a refund:	Tuesday, January 30
Last Day to Drop with no refund:	Tuesday, February 20

Required Readings:

James O. Horton and Lois Horton, *Hard Road to Freedom, Vol. 2*

Langston Hughes, *The Ways of White Folks*

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

Richard Wright, *Native Son*

Wallace Terry, *The Bloods*

Additional articles and primary documents are available on Blackboard under “Course Content.”

Class Schedule:

All class materials and assignments will be posted in a “Weekly Module” on Blackboard on a week-by-week basis to avoid confusion. Every Friday, I will post the next week’s materials and assignments.

Please note that the schedule presented here is **provisional**. In other words, it is often necessary to adapt or revise assignments. Rest assured, any changes to the schedule presented here will be announced in advance in class and on Blackboard via “Course Announcements.” For this reason, **please make a habit of checking your GMU e-mail regularly for any updated information about class assignments or deadlines.**

Finally, Blackboard’s interface can be temperamental. If you have difficulty accessing any course content or assignment or notice a deadline that appears incorrect, please **e-mail me immediately** so that I can fix the problem.

Week 1 (Jan. 15-19):

Introduction: Learning African American History in 2024

Required Texts:

- Steven Brint, “The Political Machine Behind the War on Academic Freedom,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 28, 2023.
- Toluse Olorunnipa, “Civil War Talk in Presidential Contest Reveals Fresh Divisions on Race,” *The Washington Post*, January 13, 2024.
- "The Debate Over Critical Race Theory," *The Daily Podcast, The New York Times*, July 2, 2021

Assignments:

ALL Groups:

- **Introduction Week Discussion Board**
 - Initial Post due: **Noon on Thursday, January 18**
 - Response to classmate due: **11:59 pm, Thursday, January 18**
- **"Introduce Yourself!" Blog**
- **Syllabus Quiz**
 - **Due: Sunday, January 21 by 11:59 pm**

Week 2: (Jan. 22-26)

“Up From Slavery”: Booker T. Washington and Origins of Modern Black America

Readings:

- Excerpts from Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (Available on Blackboard)
- *Hard Road to Freedom, Vol. 2*, Chapter 8

Assignments:

ALL Groups:

Students with last names that begin with **A-Ma: Discussion Board post due by noon on Thursday.**

Students with last names that begin with **Mo-Z: Write two responses to peers by 11:59 pm on Thursday.**

Week 3: (Jan. 29-Feb. 2)

W.E.B. Du Bois and The Problem of the Color Line

Readings:

- Excerpts from W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, pp. 209-252, 320-354, 377-389 (TNC);

Chapters I-III; IX-XI; XIV (if using another edition of the book).

- *Hard Road to Freedom, Vol. 2, Chp. 9*

Assignments:

ALL Groups: Students with last names that begin with **Mo-Z: Discussion Board post due by noon on Thursday.**

Students with last names that begin with **A-Ma: Write two responses to peers by 11:59 pm on Thursday.**

Week 4: (Feb. 5-9)

Ida B. Wells and the Anti-Lynching Movement

Readings:

- Ida B. Wells, excerpts from *Crusade for Justice* and *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all its Phases* (Available on Blackboard)

Assignments:

Group 1: Analysis Paper #1 **due by 11:59 pm Friday.**

Group 2: Discussion Board Post due **by noon on Thursday.**

Group 3: Response to Discussion Board Posts **due by 11:59 pm Thursday.**

Week 5: (Feb. 12-16)

The “New Negro”: 1918-1930

Readings:

- Robert Jackson, “The Secret Life of Oscar Micheaux: Race Films, Contested Histories, and Modern American Culture,” from *Beyond Blackface: African Americans and the Creation of American Popular Culture, 1890-1930*, W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed. (Available on Blackboard)
- Cara Caddoo, “Colored Theaters in the Jim Crow City” from *Envisioning Freedom: Cinema and the Building of Black Modern Life* (Available on Blackboard)

Assignments:

- Group 2:** Analysis Paper #1 **due by 11:59 pm Friday.**
- Group 3:** Discussion Board Post due **by noon on Thursday.**
- Group 1:** Response to Discussion Board Posts **due by 11:59 pm Thursday.**

Week 6: (Feb. 19-23)

The Great Depression and the New Deal

Readings:

- *Hard Road to Freedom, Vol. 2, Chp. 11*
- Langston Hughes, *The Ways of White Folks*

Assignments:

- Group 3:** Analysis Paper #1 **due by 11:59 pm Thursday.**
- Group 1:** Discussion Board Post due **by noon on Thursday.**
- Group 2:** Response to Discussion Board Posts **due by 11:59 pm Thursday.**

Week 7: (Feb. 26-March 1)

World War II and Double Victory

Readings:

- *Hard Road to Freedom, Vol. 2, Chp. 11*
- James N. Gregory, Chp. 4, "Black Metropolis," from *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Available on Blackboard)

Assignments:

ALL Groups: Students with last names that begin with **A-Ma: Discussion Board post due by noon on Thursday.**

Students with last names that begin with **Mo-Z: Write two responses to peers by 11:59 pm on Thursday.**

Week 8: (Mar. 4-8)

Spring Break! Enjoy!

Week 9: (Mar. 11-15)

Midterm Week

Readings:

- Richard Wright, *Native Son*

Assignment: **Take-Home Midterm** due on Blackboard by 11:59 pm on Thursday, March.

Week 10: (Mar. 18-21)

The Cold War Era and the Dawn of the Modern Civil Rights Movement

Readings:

- *Hard Road to Freedom, Vol. 2, Chp. 12, Sections 12.1 – 12.3*
- Film: *The American Diplomat*
- Mary Dudziak, “Josephine Baker, Racial Protest, and the Cold War,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 81, No. 2 (Sept., 1994), pp. 543-570 (Available on Blackboard)

Assignments:

ALL Groups:

Students with last names that begin with **Mo-Z: Discussion Board post due by noon on Thursday.**

Students with last names that begin with **A-Ma: Write two responses to peers by 11:59 pm on Thursday.**

Week 11: (March 25-29)

New Perspectives on the African American Freedom Struggle

Readings:

- *Hard Road to Freedom, Vol. 2, Chp. 12, Sections 12.4 -12.7*
- Timothy Tyson, “Robert Williams, ‘Black Power,’ and the Roots of the African American Freedom Struggle,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (Sept. 1998), pp. 540-570 (Available on Blackboard)
- Danielle L. McGuire, “‘It Was like All of Us Had Been Raped’: Sexual Violence, Community Mobilization, and the African American Freedom Struggle,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 91, No. 3 (Dec. 2004), pp. 906-931 (Available on Blackboard)

Assignments:

- Group 1:** Analysis Paper #2 due **by 5:00 pm on Friday.**
- Group 2:** Discussion Board Post due **by noon on Thursday.**
- Group 3:** Response to Discussion Board Posts due **by 11:59 pm Thursday.**

Week 12: (April 2-5)

The Fire Next Time

Readings:

- *Hard Road to Freedom, Vol. 2, Chp. 13, 13.1-13.3*
- James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

Assignments:

- Group 2:** Analysis Paper #2 due **by 5:00 pm on Friday, April 13.**
- Group 3:** Discussion Board Post due **by noon on Thursday.**
- Group 1:** Response to Discussion Board Posts due **by 11:59 pm Thursday.**

Week 13: (April 8-12)

African Americans in Vietnam

Readings:

- *Hard Road to Freedom, Vol. 2, Chapter 13, 13.4-13.6*
- Wallace Terry, *The Bloods*

Assignments:

- Group 3:** Analysis Paper #2 due **by 5:00 pm on Friday.**
- Group 1:** Discussion Board Post **due by noon on Thursday.**
- Group 2:** Response to Discussion Board Posts **due by 11:59 pm Thursday.**

Week 14: (April 15-19)

Conservatism and Race

Readings:

- *Hard Road to Freedom, Vol. 2, Chapter 14*
- Primary source documents on the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill controversy (Available on Blackboard)
- Earl Lewis, "Race as Commodity: Hill and Thomas as Consumer Products" (Available on Blackboard)

- Barbara Smith, “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around (Available on Blackboard)

Assignments:

ALL Groups:

Discussion Board Post due by noon on Thursday and write one response to a peer **by 11:59 pm.**

Week 15: (April 22-26)

African Americans in the 21st Century

Readings:

- *Hard Road to Freedom, Vol. 2*, Chapters 15-17
- Heather Thompson, “Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 97, No. 3 (December 2010), pp. 703-734 (Available on Blackboard)

Assignments:

ALL Groups:

Discussion Board Post due by noon on Thursday and write one response to a peer **by 11:59 pm.**

**Take-Home Final Exam:
Due Thursday, May 7 by 3:00 pm.**