

African American Women's History

History 410/510

Fall 2009

Tuesday 5-7:50 pm

Instructor: Professor Melissa Stuckey

260 Condon

Contact information:

mstuckey@uoregon.edu

Office: 323 McKenzie Hall

Office Hours:

T/Th 11AM-12:30PM

or by appointment

Course Description

This course will explore the cultural, economic and political history of African American women in the United States from slavery to the present. Through a combination of books, primary sources, and film we will explore how African American women have addressed what is often referred to as the “double burden” of sexism and racism while seeking to define their own identities as individuals, wives, mothers, workers, and citizens. Major themes will include labor, family, social movements, and civil rights.

Course Requirements and Grading

Class Participation—15%

See details below

Leading Class Discussion—15%

See details below

Portfolio—25%

Due December 1, see details below

Take Home Mid Term Exam—20%

Due November 3

Take Home Final Exam—25%

Due December 8

Required Readings

The following books are required and will be available for purchase at the Duck Store.

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Tera, Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War*.

Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*.

Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty*

Articles and book chapters noted on the syllabus will be posted on Blackboard.

Additional readings may be posted on Blackboard or occasionally distributed as handouts.

Class Participation

This class will be run in a seminar style. Thoughtful and active participation is essential, so come prepared to participate each week. If you do not speak, I will assume that you have not done the reading. Everyone will have an opportunity to lead class discussion. Questions, comments, and healthy and respectful debate are both welcome and necessary as we explore the themes of the course. Strive to engage in dialogue with your peers instead of directing your comments exclusively to me.

Note Taking

You are required take notes on the lectures and readings. Your reading notes must be taken prior to class. As the use of computers is strictly prohibited in the classroom, these notes must be kept in a bound notebook which you are required to bring to every class meeting.

Undergraduate Assignments

Leading Class Discussion

Teams of two will help lead class discussion each week. In the week prior to class your team will work together on a plan to start the session. I am available during office hours and by email if you need feedback during the planning process, but you must meet with your partner and discuss ideas first. You must email me your discussion plans by 7pm Monday so I know what to expect and can communicate any instructions to your fellow classmates. These procedures will help you avoid sending the panicked, "Help! We don't have any idea what to do!" message on Monday night. Some suggestions for how to organize a session:

- One of you can share an analytical take concerning the author and the content.
- To concentrate our attention, you can ask the class to contemplate specific passages before we meet.
- You can send out discussion questions before we meet.
- You can use the discussion to highlight intriguing contradictions, and hypothesize about what is at stake in the reading.

Portfolios

Over the course of the semester, you will compile a portfolio with the following three components.

Reading Reflections. You will write reflections on each week's reading material in the form of letters. These letters may be addressed to editors of newspapers or magazines, family members, friends, the author, or someone else. Be creative in whom you choose to write to. My hope is that by writing your reflections in letter form, you will focus your thoughts more carefully than is often the case in a typical reading response. Think carefully about what your letter needs to convey about the reading to your reader. This will be slightly different depending on who you choose to write to. Use specific examples from the text to illustrate your point. You will hand these responses in at the end of each class. I will look them over and make comments as necessary. I will return them the following week. You will have the opportunity to refine your thoughts and make other edits during the semester before handing them in within your portfolio.

Documentary/film reviews. You will write reviews of three documentaries or films viewed in class. You may take the point of view of a reviewer considering whether the film is a useful teaching tool in the classroom. Questions to consider: What will students learn from watching the piece? How does it in with a body of reading? What kinds of discussion would it generate? Again, submit these the week you complete them (which must be the week after the film if viewed). You will hand these reviews in the week after viewings. Or you may choose to write reflections in letter form as directed above. I will look over them and return them to you.

Critical analyses of images of African-American women. Throughout the semester, you will collect and analyze images of and articles about African-American women. Your sources will be advertisements, magazines, websites, newspapers, articles, music videos, films, television shows, etc. You may choose historical and contemporary images. The image must be reproduced in some way for insertion in your portfolio. If you use a sound recording or moving image, I must be able to access the source, so that I can view it or listen to it while grading this portion of your portfolio. Everything must be properly cited. For multimedia, stable web links are ideal—for example, Youtube while a great tool, is not a stable link because content is often removed. Be sure to include the date you accessed your material as part of your citation. Each analysis should be no more than one page in length. This is an opportunity for you to be creative and apply the work that we do in this class in a contemporary context. You must analyze at least ten different images and/or articles. You may go beyond this minimum, but the quality of your analyses is more important than the quantity of images in your portfolio.

On December 1, you will hand in a three-ring binder or sleeved portfolio containing a table of contents and your work. Think carefully about organization and presentation. Content, clarity, neatness, creativity, and thoughtful layout will all be considered in your portfolio grade.

Take Home Midterm Exam and Take Home Final Exam

The midterm and final examinations will consist of essay questions based on the readings we have covered at each point. You will receive the midterm exam on October 27 and it is due in class on November 3. You will receive the final exam on December 1. It is due on December 8 at 6pm, during our regularly scheduled exam time. You will hand it in at my office in McKenzie Hall.

Graduate Student Assignments

Book Reviews

You are required to write 3 four to five page comparative book reviews. Each review will consider at least two monographs. Of the texts on the syllabus, you may choose to review *To 'Joy My Freedom* and *Storming Caesar's Palace*, but you must also select additional monographs that would be appropriate review alongside these texts. You may also choose to go beyond the syllabus to select both texts for each book review. You may submit your book reviews any week during the term, but you can only submit one review

at a time. Consult *Reviews in American History* for guidance in how to write long book reviews.

Final Assignment

For your final assignment you will choose one of the following three options: historiographical essay, research paper, or mock dissertation prospectus. In consultation with the instructor you will develop a reading list consisting of approximately 7-10 monographs (excluding those listed on the syllabus) that reflect your interests and from which your final assignment will be derived. 12-15 pages.

Class Rules and Policies

Attendance

Because this class meets only once a week, it is important that you attend every class session. One unexcused absence will lower your class participation grade by one letter grade (A lowers to B). Two unexcused absences will result in class participation grade of zero. More than two unexcused absences will result in failure of the course. Properly excused absences will not harm your grade. This includes flu related absences affecting you or someone in your household and under your direct care (i.e. an ill child).

Email

All email communications will be sent to your University of Oregon email address. Please use only your university email address when contacting me. I will not respond the messages sent via commercial email accounts (i.e. Gmail or Yahoo).

Late work

Late work will not be accepted.

Assignments

All assignments must be typed, double spaced, and in Times New Roman font, with standard margins.

Academic Integrity

Unless otherwise specified, all assignments, presentations, and examinations are to be completed independently.

Plagiarism is using others' ideas and/or words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information. Plagiarism will result in failure of the course and will be reported. Please ASK if you have any questions.

Classroom Decorum

In this classroom people and ideas are respected. Interrupting and other outbursts will not be tolerated. Please put turn your cell phones off prior to the start of class. Absolutely no text messaging. No computer use without prior permission. No eating or gum chewing in class, beverages are acceptable.

Disability Statement

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability related barriers to your participation, please notify me as soon as possible. You may also wish to contact Disability Services in 164 Oregon Hall at 346-1155 or disabsrv@uoregon.edu.

This syllabus is subject to modification as necessary.

Week 1

September 29

Week 2—The Ante Bellum Years

October 6

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Week 3—Civil War and Reconstruction

October 13

Tera, Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War*, Chapters 1 through 5.

Week 4—Post Reconstruction and the Progressive Era

October 20

Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom*, Chapters 6 through 10.

Week 5—Great Migration, Great Depression

October 27

Articles TBA (Blackboard).

Week 6—World War II and Strains of Civil Rights

November 3

Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, Parts 1 and 2.

Week 7—The Modern Civil Rights Movement

November 10

Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, Parts 3 and 4.

Week 8—Post Civil Rights Reform

November 17

Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty*, Chapters 1 through 4 and Jennifer Nelson, “‘An act of valor for a woman need not take place inside of her,’: Black Women, Feminism, and Reproductive Rights,” in *Women of Color and the Reproduction Rights Movement* (Blackboard).

Week 9—Post Civil Rights Reform continued

November 24

Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace*, Chapters 5 through 9.

Week 10—The Modern Moment

December 1

Articles TBA (Blackboard).

Take Home Final Exam due December 8, 2009 by 6pm.