HIS 723: Topics in 19th Century History Fall 2008
Dr. Mark Elliott MHRA 3204
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Wed. 6:30-9:20

Reconstruction:
The “Second Founding” of the Nation in Lived Experience, Historiography, and Popular Memory.

DESCRIPTION:

This course approaches the reconstruction of the United States that took place after the Civil War as a “second founding” of the nation. That is to say, this course defines “Reconstruction” as a deeply contested process of forging of a new national identity—which included a new relationship between the Federal government and the states, and between individual citizens—that transformed the dynamics of power in our government, politics, law, culture, social relations and economic life. By defining “Reconstruction” in these terms, this course broadens the temporal and geographical framework of Reconstruction beyond the traditional focus on the former slave states in the years 1865-1877 and explores the dimensions of the “second founding” of the nation in multi-regional, transnational, and comparative contexts over a much broader period, beginning with antebellum antecedents for southern Reconstruction and ending with the contested public memory of Reconstruction in the 20th century.

GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The course will familiarize students with a range of scholarly approaches to Reconstruction, critically assess the latest scholarship in the field, and encourage students to re-conceptualize the Reconstruction period and think creatively about new ways to approach the topic for themselves. This course will also work on several skills required for the successful professional historian, including:

--Reading secondary sources efficiently, with an ability to identify main arguments, critically evaluate methodology, and assess the historiographic contribution of each work.

--Critical analysis and interpretation of primary sources within their historical contexts.

--Participating in sophisticated academic debates and exchanges while maintaining the requisite civility and respect for one’s colleagues, and treating opposing viewpoints fairly without distortion or oversimplification.
--Delivering informative and useful oral presentations to peers.

--Formal writing in specific genres of the profession, including book reviews, introductions to primary source documents, and presentations of research findings.

--The identification of an original topic for historical research, and the formulation of a specific plan for investigation and research that includes a preliminary hypothesis or thesis and a list of possible sources.

**COURSE POLICIES:**

**Participation:**

Attendance is mandatory. Absence from class may have an adverse impact on your participation grade. You are expected to complete each week’s reading before class so that you can participate constructively in a class discussion. Your participation grade will be based on the overall quality of your contributions to the class—not the quantity of contributions you make—and the professionalism with which you conduct yourself in scholarly discussion and debate.

**Presentations:**

Each student will be assigned two presentations over the course of the semester. Presentations will last from 12-15 minutes (speakers will be asked to conclude at 15 minutes). One of these will be a presentation of the main reading for the week. The presenter will be responsible to introduce the author, concisely summarize the argument, discuss the scholarly reception of the book, and assesses the historiographical significance of the main reading. The student must also craft 3-5 questions for discussion arising from the reading. The second presentation will be based on one of the books from the supplementary reading list. In this presentation, the student will summarize the book in more detail for the other students in the class who have not read it, and make comparisons and connections between the book and the main reading for the week. See “Presentation Guidelines” on page 11-12 of this syllabus for a full description of the assignment.

**Blackboard Discussion Forum**

The Blackboard site for the course will allow for class discussion to continue beyond the normal time/place constraints of the classroom. You are required to make at least one substantial comment, and one constructive/observational reply to another student’s posting each week. A “week,” for our purposes, begins and ends at 9:00 am on Wednesday. Your forum postings will be read by the entire class, and you will receive a grade for the quality of your postings at the end of the semester.
Your “substantial comment” must address the course material in some way. It may simply be a comment you wanted to make in class, but did not have the opportunity to make. Otherwise, it may be a reflection on an issue discussed in class, on something you read for this class, or another class, or on your own that relates to the course material in some way. Your response to another student’s posting must be a thoughtful and constructive response (such as if you were having a conversation with them). The rules for use of the forum is as follows:

1. Your grade will be based on the substance of your posting which includes the thought and effort you put into it as well as the length. You can post more than twice a week, but make sure that you have at least one substantial posting each week of at least 200 words, and one reply.

2. You will receive a zero for the week if you fail to post before 9:00 am on Wednesday of each week. Therefore, you have a full week, including the weekend, to read the forum comments and respond to them or create new postings. I will check the forum each Wed. morning to record who posted an entry for that week (and I will monitor the board all week and post my own comments to help discussion along).

3. Maintain academic civility, use respectful language and avoid rude remarks. Even more than in face-to-face debate, caution must be exercised in “virtual” debate to avoid insulting or offending others. Nothing derogatory may be said about any student or faculty member on the forum. Misuse of the forum will result in the removal of the offender from the forum discussion list, and a Failing grade for the assignment.

4. Do not use the forum to communicate private questions to me, or anyone else in the class (such as “When is the paper due?”). Send me a private e-mail for that.

**Written Work:**

There will be three significant papers over the course of the semester. The first will be an analytical assessment of a primary source. The second will be a dual book review comparing one of the main readings for the class with one of the books from the supplementary reading list. The third will be a research prospectus that defines an issue for research and offers a preliminary thesis or hypothesis for investigation. Detailed assignment sheets describing the expectations, length, and due dates for each assignment will be given out in class. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each day the paper is late. All written assignments must be completed and turned in to the professor in order to pass the class.
Final Grade:

Your final grade will be based on the following formula:

- 40% Class participation (including presentations).
- 15% Blackboard Discussion
- 15% Primary Source Paper.
- 15% Book Review Paper.
- 15% Research Prospectus

Required Books:

- Albion Tourgée, A Fool’s Errand By One of the Fools (1879).
- Martha Hodes, White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth Century South (1997).
- Heather Cox Richardson, West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America after the Civil War (2007).

CLASS SCHEDULE
Week 1.  CURRENT APPROACHES TO RECONSTRUCTION


Supplementary Reading:

Week 2.  EARLY HISTORIOGRAPHY


Supplementary Reading:
John W. Burgess, *Reconstruction and the Constitution* (1902)

Week 3.  FOUNDATION OF MODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY


Supplementary Reading:


Mike Fitzgerald, Splendid Failure: Postwar Reconstruction in the American South (2007).

Week 4. NORTHERN RECONSTRUCTION

Sept. 17 Reading: David Gellman and David Quigley, Jim Crow New York, all.

Supplementary Reading:


Week 5. CASE STUDIES IN THE SOUTHERN STATES

Sept. 24 Reading: Jane Dailey, Before Jim Crow, all.

Supplementary Reading:


Barbara Jeanne Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century (1985)
George Rable, *But There was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (1984).


Week 6. **SEX, GENDER, AND RECONSTRUCTION**

**Oct. 1 Reading:** Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men* all.

**Supplementary Reading:**


Tera Hunter, *To Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors after the Civil War*


Week 7. **EVIDENCE AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION**

**Oct. 8 Reading:** Albion W. Tourgée, *A Fool’s Errand By One of the Fools*, all.

Due (Friday): 1st Paper

**Supplementary Reading:**


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**Week 8.**  
**MARKET CULTURE AND RECONSTRUCTION**

**Oct. 15**  
**Reading:**  
Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract*, all.


**Supplementary Reading:**


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**Week 9.**  
**RECONCILATION AND RELIGION**

**Oct. 22**  
**Reading:**  
Ed Blum, *Reforging the White Republic*, all.


**Supplementary Reading:**
Stanley P. Hirshson, *Farewell to the Bloody Shirt: Northern Republicans and the Southern Negro, 1877-1893* (1962).

**Week 10. THE WEST, NATIONALISM, AND RECONSTRUCTION**

**Oct. 29 Reading:** Heather Cox Richardson, *West From Appomattox*, all.


**Supplementary Reading:**
Week 11.   INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND RECONSTRUCTION

Nov. 5 Reading: Eric T. Love, Race Over Empire, all.


Thomas Brown, ed. Reconstructions, Chapter 5

Supplementary Reading:

Week 12. TRANS-NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Nov. 12 Reading: Rebecca J. Scott, Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery

Due (Friday): 2nd Paper

Supplementary Reading:
John C. Rodrigue, Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Free Labor in Louisiana’s Sugar Parishes, 1862–1880 (2001)

Week 13. RECONSTRUCTING THE CONSTITUTION


Thomas Brown, ed. Reconstructions, Chapter 6.
Supplementary Reading:

Week 14.  THANKSGIVING BREAK

Nov. 26  CLASS CANCELLED

Week 15.  THE MEMORY OF RECONSTRUCTION


Supplementary Reading:

Week 16.  FINAL PAPER DUE

Dec. 13  Submit your paper no later than 12:00 noon.
PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

Professional historians are called upon to give formal presentations in a wide variety of settings. The ability to communicate information within a set time limit in a manner that is both engaging and appropriate for the occasion is an essential skill. The two presentations you will be making in this class will provide an opportunity to work on this skill. In order to make your presentation successful, please abide by the following guidelines.

PRESENTATION STYLE: When it comes to formal presentations, style counts! Do not read word-for-word from a sheet of paper, in an inaudible voice, with your eyes averted from your audience. Poor presentation styles not only distract audiences from absorbing the information presented, they create a bad impression of the competence of the presenter.

As a rule, presenters should make eye contact with their audience regularly, making an effort to look around the room so that each member of the audience feels that the presenter is aware of their presence. Words should not be spoken too quickly, but at a reasonable pace and in a voice loud enough for all to hear. Presenters should be thoroughly familiar with their material, projecting to the audience a mastery of their own presentation. The presentation should be well-timed and not either ramble on beyond the time allotted, or cut off mysteriously short of the anticipated length.

Beyond the basics, there is no single “correct” style of presentation. Some effective presentations may be mellow and thoughtful, others may be dynamic and energizing. Some may use humor effectively, while others may rely upon a passionate or urgent appeal. Chose a style that is correct for your subject matter and that fits your personality. To prepare, it may help to put yourself in the place of your audience. Think of presentations you’ve witnessed of the same type that you’ve been asked to deliver. Borrow from styles that you thought were effective and that feel right for you. Always try to focus on your audience as you deliver your information, being attentive to their response to what you are saying, and look for opportunities to connect with them.

PRESENTATION CONTENT: Your presentations in this class should accomplish the following tasks.

1). Provide some useful background information on the author beyond what you can discover from the book jacket. For example, if the author is a famous historian, explain briefly what they are known for. If it is a first-time author, tell us who directed their dissertation, and identify other influences on their work. Tell us anything notable you can discover about the author that sheds light on the book.

2). Provide a concise summary of the thesis/argument and methodology of the book. Remember, when you are presenting on the common reading for the week, your classmates have also read the book. It is never worthwhile to take the class on a chapter-by-chapter tour of the contents of the book. You should simply try to clarify the overall arguments in your own words, and make some attempt to assess its contribution to the
historiography (Thomas Brown’s *Reconstructions* may be of help here). You also may want to discuss some particularly salient points or examples from the book to illustrate how the author supported their arguments.


4. For common readings, the presenter must craft 3-5 questions for class discussion. These questions should be designed to spark debate or discussion. The class will address them one at a time. For supplementary readings, the presenter should draw some connections between their book and the common reading. What, if any, challenges are posed to the argument of the common reading? How do these books agree or disagree? What unanswered questions arise from comparing them?

**PRESENTATION SELECTIONS:** On the first day of class, Professor Elliott will accept volunteers to give presentations for each of the common readings. When there are no volunteers, students will be assigned at random to present on the weekly readings. On second day of class (week 2), Professor Elliott will accept volunteers to give presentation on supplementary readings. There will be 1-2 supplementary book presentations each week. Students should come prepared to the second class with a list of books they would like to volunteer to present from the supplementary list. Since there is no guarantee that each student will be allowed their first choice, it would be wise to have several choices in mind, each from a different week’s supplementary list.