

Fall 2009 | University of North Carolina, Greensboro
Prof. Watson Jennison | Email: wwjennis@uncg.edu | Office: HHRA 2143 Phone: 334-4092
Office Hours: Mondays, 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. and Wednesdays, 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

HIS 511A: The Black '70s

Course Syllabus

This class will investigate the decade following the peak of the civil rights movement, a period that has largely been overshadowed by the tumult and fame of the preceding years. The 1970s were a time of dramatic change for black Americans as they sought to capitalize on the hard-fought victories of the previous two decades. Popular depictions of black culture in the 1970s revolve around black power, dashikis, and afros. We will move beyond the clichés and stereotypes connected with this period to investigate the ways in which blacks translated the legislative victories of the civil rights era into reality. Students will write a research paper exploring an aspect of the cultural, political, and economic transformations of the 1970s.

Course Requirements: The main expectation of the course is that students will complete a seminar paper, with an approximate length of 17-20 pages for undergraduates, and 23-25 pages for graduate students. Each paper should be an original, primary source research paper that combines the elements of clear writing, clear organization, knowledge of the subject matter, and the ability to analyze and interpret the past. These research papers will be written in stages, with considerable opportunity for feedback from the instructor and from other students about the topic, organization, research design, and first draft.

Students will submit several preliminary writing assignments, including a proposal, bibliography, and narrative outline. Because critiquing others' work often illuminates one's own, students will comment on each other's writing assignments.

The class will be entirely discussion in format, based upon a program of readings completed in common. All readings will be available on Blackboard.

Attendance and Late Policy: A basic requirement of this class is regular attendance. The instructor will excuse absences with a doctor's note or legitimate documentation of other emergencies. A single unexcused absence will result in the lowering of the student's final grade by a full letter grade; two unexcused absences will result in failure.

Final Grade Composition:

- Class Participation 25%
- Research Paper (2 drafts) 60%
- Other Written Assignments 15%

No incompletes will be given for this course.

Plagiarism Policy: The University defines plagiarism as "intentionally or knowingly representing the words of another, as one's own in any academic exercise."¹ (See the University's [Academic Integrity Policies](#) for further information.) All sources (books, articles, documents, internet sites, etc.) used in any paper or assignment must be properly cited or will be considered plagiarism. Any instance of plagiarism will receive a zero and will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for appropriate action, including suspension or expulsion from the University.

Course Schedule

Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due on the date they are listed.

Week 1 (August 24): Introduction – Myths of the '70s

Reading: Angela Davis, "Afro Images: Politics, Fashion, and Nostalgia," in *Soul: Black Power, Politics, and Pleasure*, pp. 23-31

Week 2 (August 31): The Rise of Black Power

Readings: William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement in American Culture, 1965-1975*, pp. 112-191 on [blackboard](#); Amiri Baraka, "There is No Revolution without the People" on [blackboard](#); Michele Wallace, "We Would Have to Fight the World" on [blackboard](#)

Assignment:

- Two-page reaction paper on the assigned reading due at the beginning of the class.

Week 3 (September 7): Class Canceled – Labor Day

Week 4 (September 14): Chocolate Cities and Local Politics

Readings: David R. Colburn, "Running for Office: African-American Mayors from 1967-1996," James B. Lane, "Black Political Power and Its Limits: Gary Mayor Richard G. Hatcher's Administration, 1968-87," and Heather Ann Thompson, "Rethinking the Collapse of Postwar Liberalism: The Rise of the Mayor Coleman Young and the Politics of Race in Detroit," in *African-American Mayors: Race, Politics, and the American City*, eds. David R. Colburn and Jeffrey S. Adler on [blackboard](#) ([Part I](#) and [Part II](#)); "The Gary Declaration: Black Politics at the Crossroads" on [blackboard](#)

Assignments:

¹ <http://studentconduct.uncg.edu/policy/academicintegrity/violation/plagiarism/>

- Two-page reaction paper on the assigned reading due at the beginning of the class.
- Prepare a list of three possible topics for your final paper. For each topic, write one paragraph stating your interest in the topic and the questions you might explore.

Week 5 (September 21): Economics of the Black Community

Readings: William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race*, pp. 144-83 [blackboard](#); The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, “Our Thing Is DRUM!” on [blackboard](#)

Assignment:

- Two-page reaction paper on the assigned reading due at the beginning of the class.

Week 6 (September 28): Popular Culture

Readings: Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations*, pp. 388-416 on [blackboard](#); Alvin Poussaint, “Blaxploitation Movies: Cheap Thrills That Degrade Blacks,” in *Psychology Today*, Feb. 1974 on [blackboard](#)

Assignments:

- Two-page reaction paper on the assigned reading due at the beginning of the class.
- Identify the final topic for your paper and submit a one-paragraph description that explains the significance of the topic and the questions you will explore.

Week 7 (October 5): Proposals, Proposal Presentations, and Work Plan

Assignments:

- **Proposal:** Submit a three- to five-page proposal in class. Your proposal should set out the parameters of your paper, your working hypothesis, and your intervention in the historiography by addressing the following questions: What is your main topic of study? What is/are the main historical question/s that you will explore in your paper? Who are the main historical actors under study? What is the time frame of your proposed paper? What specific primary source evidence will you employ to support your argument? What are the relevant secondary sources on your topic? What arguments do other historians make about your topic? How do you position yourself within this debate? These questions are meant to help you get started on your paper. Incorporate the answers to these questions into a thoughtful and coherent proposal for your paper. Remember that this is only a plan. Make your best predictions as you answer, but do not be surprised if you alter them as you proceed.
- **Work Plan:** Submit in class a one-page schedule of work to complete your

- research paper.
- **Proposal Presentation:** Prepare a five-minute presentation of your proposal for the class. Proposal presentations familiarize students with each others' research topics and facilitate the exchange of information and ideas. Your presentation should convey to your audience the main points of your proposal, specifically the parameters of your paper, your working hypothesis, and your intervention in the historiography. Your presentation should last no more than five minutes. Rehearse your presentation beforehand to stay within these time limits. Your presentation will be graded according to the following criteria: adherence to presentation requirements, preparedness and preparation, the content of the presentation, the clarity of the presentation, and interaction and engagement with fellow students. Your fellow students will have an opportunity to ask questions or offer comments on your proposed topic.

Week 8 (October 12): Class Canceled – Fall Break

Week 9 (October 19): Individual Meetings (No Class)

Individual Meetings

- A sign-up sheet will be distributed in class to schedule times.

Assignment:

- **Annotated Bibliography:** Prepare and submit an annotated bibliography that includes the main primary and secondary sources that will form the basis of your paper. These preliminary bibliographies should be divided under headings for primary and secondary sources, then under topical headings, and then alphabetized by author. Annotate your sources, both primary and secondary, by including for each topic a brief description of the set of sources as well as a brief explanation of the relevance of the set of sources to your paper. The annotated bibliographies are due Friday, October 16 at noon.

Week 10 (October 26): Narrative Outline

Assignments:

- **Narrative Outline:** Prepare a narrative outline of your final paper. Include a bibliography of both primary and secondary sources that you will be using in your paper. Submit a seven- to ten-page narrative outline for your research paper by Friday, October 23 at noon. Your narrative outline should include drafts of your introduction as well as paragraphs explaining your main arguments in your main sections. Your outline should reflect the logic of your argument. In other words, the sections of your outline should clearly relate and each section should advance your argument. For each section and/or sub-section, identify the relevant primary and secondary sources. In creating your outline, think about holes in your argument and how you might address them. Consider counterarguments that could possibly undermine your argument. Refine your narrative outline to take these counterarguments into account, either by countering the counterargument

- preemptively or by refining your argument. This assignment is intended to help you write a well-organized and well-argued thesis.
- Submit your outline to your fellow classmates. Primary and secondary readers will be assigned to critique the outlines.

Week 11 (November 2): Individual Meetings (No Class)

Individual Meetings

- A sign-up sheet will be distributed in class to schedule times.

Week 12 (November 9): Individual Meetings (No Class)

Individual Meetings

- A sign-up sheet will be distributed in class to schedule times.

Week 13 (November 16): Rough Draft Group 1

Reading and Assignment:

- Group 1 must submit their rough drafts to the entire class by 5 p.m. on Friday, November 13. Members of Group 2 will be assigned as primary and secondary critics of the rough drafts of Group 1. Even though Group 1 will not be assigned as critics on the papers of those in their group, they are still responsible for reading each rough draft.
- Revision plans, due on the following Wednesday, Group 1

Week 14 (November 23): Rough Draft Group 2

Reading and Assignment:

- Same drill as Week 13 with Group 1 and Group 2 reversed. Group 2 must submit their rough drafts to the entire class by 5 p.m. on Friday, November 20. Members of Group 1 will be assigned as primary and secondary critics of the rough drafts of Group 2. Even though Group 2 will not be assigned as critics on the papers of those in their group, they are still responsible for reading each rough draft.
- Revision plans, due on the following Wednesday, Group 2.

Week 15 (November 30): Individual Meetings (No Class)

Individual Meetings

- A sign-up sheet will be distributed in class to schedule times.

Week 16 (December 7): Final Draft Due for Groups 1 and 2