

**HIS 511A**  
**Seminar in Historical Research and Writing**  
**W 3:30-6:20**  
**MHRA 1204**  
**Fall 2013**

**Dr. Mark Elliott**  
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**Office Hours:**  
**TUE 2:00-3:00**  
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## **Reconstruction in History and Memory**

No period of American history has been as revised as thoroughly as the period of Reconstruction after the Civil War. Subject to highly-politicized interpretations, Reconstruction has been grossly distorted in both popular culture and professional history. From the films *Birth of A Nation* and *Gone with the Wind* to the scholarship of William Dunning and Claude Bowers, propaganda has often overshadowed historicism in the most influential accounts of Reconstruction. During the era of the Civil Rights movement, moreover, historical debates over Reconstruction often mirrored partisan debates over the politics of civil rights. This course will explore both the history and the historical memory of Reconstruction, using this period as an example to better understand the ideological stakes that can be involved in the recounting of history. The class will examine the evolution of historical writing on Reconstruction, and the portrayals of Reconstruction in popular culture, while weighing these portrayals against original primary sources from the era. Taking a “long” perspective on this era, the course will not restrict its focus to the years 1865-1877 but rather will follow the public debate over this historical period well into the 20th century. Student research projects may examine any aspect of the history or memory of Reconstruction.

The purpose of this course is to provide history students with a capstone experience in the major that requires them to undertake an original research project of their own choosing. Students will work on historical thinking, historical research methods, evidentiary analysis and argumentation. Learning how to collect and interpret primary sources—such as memoirs, oral histories, letters, newspapers, magazines, novels, film, cartoons, and drawings—is essential to produce original research in history. Students will be introduced to a variety of primary sources and trained in methods of collection and interpretation of sources. Students also will read a number of secondary sources and learn how to master the historiography of their chosen research topic. Secondary sources will also serve as models of historical methodology and interpretation for students to emulate. By critically evaluating these secondary sources in class discussion and written papers, students will assess the work of professional historians and thereby learn how to construct historical arguments of their own.

### **LEARNING GOALS:**

--Students will improve their ability to undertake original historical research by collecting and interpreting historical documents, and framing creative analytical questions to drive their research.

--Students will learn to define a research topic that is interesting to scholars and manageable to research within the timeframe of a semester.

--Students will improve their ability to analyze and interpret historical documents, and to understand them in their historical contexts.

--Students will improve their ability to make historical arguments, and to assess those made by others, and to express themselves clearly orally and in writing.

--Students will develop their skills in making both formal and informal presentations, both individually and as part of a group.

## **COURSE POLICIES:**

### **Attendance:**

A student who is not present to sign the attendance sheet at the beginning of class will be marked "absent." More than one absence will lower your final grade. Missing a total of 4 or more classes (one-third of the semester) will result in an automatic "F" for the course. No exceptions. Please use your one unpenalized absence wisely, reserving it for an emergency or serious sickness. Students are responsible for completing on time all work assigned (or due) on days in which they are absent.

### **Participation:**

You are expected to complete each week's reading before class so that you can participate constructively in a class discussion and be informed for the lectures. You must be attentive and engaged during class. Sleeping in class or leaving class early without permission will also cause you to be marked absent. Cell phones and laptops should be turned off and stored away. No talking, twittering, texting, e-mailing or internet browsing during class.

There may be in-class quizzes on the readings to keep up with the readings and films. Quizzes grades will count toward your overall participation grade.

### **Presentations:**

Each student will be assigned to a team of 2-4 students. Each team will be asked to do one in-class presentation based on assigned readings. When it is their turn, each team will prepare a handout that identifies the main issues addressed in the readings in a one-page outline, and raises questions for class discussion. During presentation times, the class will be broken up into groups for roundtable discussions. Each member of the presenting team will be given the task of making a 10 minute presentation to one roundtable, and then leading a 10 minute discussion on the readings.

Every student will make a second presentation at the end of the semester to the entire class. This presentation will discuss the research conducted on the student's term paper, focusing on one central piece of original evidence discovered. Final presentations will be no longer than 10 minutes.

### **Written Work:**

Due dates for written work is listed on the syllabus. Late assignments will be docked points for each day that it is late. After one week, late assignments may not be accepted.

First, students will keep a research journal that will be updated regularly on the Blackboard site. Some weeks students will post important assignments such as the "paper proposal" and "annotated bibliography" to their journal, and other weeks they will provide updates on their progress. For every journal entry, students will be asked to provide constructive commentary and feedback for another student.

Second, students will write a short argument paper that uses a specific group of sources (provided by Dr. Elliott) as an evidentiary basis for an historical argument (due **Sept. 23**).

Finally, the major assignment this semester will be a term paper of 4500-6000 word essay (roughly 15-20 pages) based on their own primary and secondary research. After identifying a topic (no later than **Oct. 2**), students will be expected to collect primary sources that will become the basis of their research paper. The final paper must present a thesis supported by primary source evidence. Students must use formal footnotes according to the **Chicago Manual of Style** and include a bibliography of sources.

### **Academic Integrity Policy:**

All work submitted in your name must be your own original work for this class with proper citation or credit given to all sources. All papers will be turned in using the "Safe Assignment" function on Blackboard which automatically scans your paper for plagiarism. Each student should be familiar with the Academic Integrity Policy, and the penalties for plagiarism. Refer to this address on the UNCG website for more details:

<http://studentconduct.uncg.edu/>

### **Grading Breakdown:**

100 Points: Participation in class discussion You can earn up to 10 points per discussion. We will have 10 graded class discussions. No constructive contributions to discussion = 0 points. Minimal

participation = 5-6 points. Strong participation = 7-8 points.  
Outstanding participation = 9-10 points).

- 50 Points: Class Presentation #1.
- 50 Points: Class Presentation #2
- 40 Points: Research Journal (each posting worth 5 points)
- 50 Points: Short Argument Paper
- 20 Points: Primary Source Assignment
- 50 Points: Annotated Bibliography
- 20 Points: First Submission of Research Paper
- 20 Points: Peer Review Assignment
- 100 Points: Final Research Paper

**Final Grade Scale:**

**A** 465-500; **A-** 450-464; **B+** 435-449; **B** 415-434; **B-** 400-414;  
**C+** 385-399; **C** 365-384; **C-** 350-364; **D+** 335-349; **D** 315-334; **D-**  
300-314; **F** 299 or less.

**Readings:**

The books listed below are available for purchase at the bookstore. Other readings and films can be accessed through the class blackboard site under the “Course Documents” heading.

**Required or Recommended Books:**

Storey, *Writing History*  
Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction*  
Fitzgerald, *Splendid Failure: Postwar Reconstruction in the American South*  
Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South*

**Week 1. INTRODUCTION**

**Aug. 21** Class Introduction

**Film:** Watch clips from the film “Birth of a Nation.”

**Week 2. THE DUNNING SCHOOL AND POPULAR MEMORY**

**Aug. 28** **Reading:** Bowers, Chapter from *The Tragic Era*  
Du Bois, “The Propaganda of History” (1935)  
Ron Briley, “Hollywood’s Reconstruction and the Persistence of Historical Mythmaking” (2008).

**Film:** Explore the film “Birth of a Nation” which is accessible on Blackboard.

**Week 3. RECONSTRUCTION IN HISTORY**

**Sept. 4 Reading:** Fitzgerald, chapter from *Reconstructions*  
Students either choose Foner, *Reconstruction*, or Fitzgerald, *Splendid Failure*. Read all.

**Week 4. THE HISTORY OF RECONSTRUCTION MEMORY**

**Sept. 11 Reading:** Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant*, all.

**Workshop:** Writing a proposal.

**Sept 13 Due Friday:** Preliminary Topic on Research Journal

**Week 5. THE POLITICS OF MEMORY**

**Sept. 18 Reading:** Documents on The Kirk-Holden War on Blackboard.  
Storey, *Writing History*, Chapter 1

**Workshop:** Endnote and Refworks workshop (Librarian visit).

**Week 6. GENDER AND RECONSTRUCTION**

**Sept. 23 Due Monday: Primary Source Analysis Paper**

**Sept. 25 Reading:** Martha Hodes, “The Sexualization of Reconstruction Politics: White Women and Black Men in the South after the Civil War” (1993)  
Mary Farmer-Kaiser, “With the Weight of Circumstances like Millstones around their Necks” (2007)  
Jane Turner Censer, “Mary Bayard Clarke’s Plain-Folk Humor: Writing Women into the Literature and Politics of Reconstruction (2012).

**Workshop:** Creating an Annotated Bibliography

- Week 7. FORGOTTEN HISTORY**
- Oct. 2 Reading:** Chapters from Cecelski and Tyson, *Democracy Betrayed*.  
 Scott Reynolds Nelson, “Who Was John Henry? Railroad Construction, Southern Folklore, and the Birth of Rock and Roll” (2005);  
 Elliott, chapters from *Color-Blind Justice*.
- Due: Revised Term Paper Proposal**
- Week 8. WORKING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES**
- Oct. 9 Due: Primary Source Assignment**
- Week 9. ARCHIVAL RESEARCH**
- Oct. 16 VISIT TO SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**
- Due: Annotated Bibliography**
- Workshop: Plagiarism.**
- Week 10. RESEARCH AND WRITING**
- Oct. 23 Research and Writing on Project**
- Week 11. RESEARCH AND WRITING**
- Oct. 30 Research and Writing on Project**
- Week 12. RESEARCH AND WRITING**
- Nov. 6 Due Thursday: First Paper Submission Due on Blackboard.**
- Workshop: Writing Center**
- Week 13. DISCUSS DRAFTS**
- Nov. 13 Due: Peer Review Responses**

Reading:

**Week 14. ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

**Nov. 20** Paper Presentations

**Due:** Final Research Paper

**Week 15 . FINAL EXAM PERIOD: ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

**TBA** Paper Presentations