

**HIS 411A: Seminar in Historical Research and Writing**  
**“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. In this course, students will write an article-length paper that examines a problem of their choosing from this critical period in American history.

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify, analyze, and evaluate the causes and agents of historical change.
- Interpret primary sources in their historical context with an attention to issues of perspective and reliability.
- Critique secondary sources in terms of arguments, assumptions, methods, and sources.
- Formulate historical questions and arguments, support historical arguments with credible evidence, and communicate the results of historical research.

**Policies and Procedures**

**Electronic Devices**

The use of laptops, tablets, cellular phones, or any other type of electronic device is prohibited during class. Use of electronic devices will incur grade penalties.

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance in class is mandatory. The door will close ten minutes after class starts. After ten minutes, students will no longer be admitted to the class and will be considered absent. Each student is allowed one unexcused absence. Four unexcused absences will result in an automatic failure for the course. Those who miss class will receive a zero for their participation for that day. It is the students’ responsibility to contact the professor after an absence to find out what they missed. Students are only allowed to make up their participation grade for excused absences within one week. They must contact the professor within this time period for a make-up assignment.

**Writing Assignments**

Coursework that is not submitted will receive zeroes. Unless otherwise stated, papers and assignments submitted in class are due at the beginning of the class period. Students who submit papers or assignments after the deadline will be penalized with a grade deduction based on the lateness of the paper or assignment. No papers or assignments will be accepted one week after the due date. Students may not submit any late papers or assignments if they have attended a discussion related to that paper or assignment. All sources used in the written coursework must be properly cited with endnotes or footnotes according to conventions detailed in *The Chicago Manual of Style Online*.

## **Plagiarism**

The University defines plagiarism as “representing the words, thoughts or ideas of another, as one's own in any academic exercise.”<sup>1</sup> (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 Rights and Responsibilities for appropriate action, including suspension or expulsion from the University.

## **Calculation of Grade**

- Participation (25%): Students should be prepared to discuss the readings and the coursework on the day that they are assigned. Attendance alone is not sufficient for full participation credit; students must actively participate in discussions and peer review.
- Preliminary Assignments for Research Paper (25%): Students are required to complete preliminary assignments related to the research paper.
- Research Paper (50%): Students are required to complete an 18- to 20-page research paper on a significant historical topic based upon primary source research.

## **Required Readings**

All of the assigned readings will be available on Canvas. The assigned reading list may undergo minor changes; students should be sure to consult the most current and official version of the syllabus on Canvas. Although it is not required for this course, I strongly recommend that all students purchase a copy of Kate L. Turabian, Wayne Booth, et. al., *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), or a more recent edition of the volume.

## **Class Schedule**

The schedule is subject to change with appropriate notice.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://osrr.uncg.edu/academic-integrity/violations-and-sanctions/plagiarism/>

## **01: Tuesday, August 18: Introduction**

## **02: Tuesday, August 25: The Evolution of Black Power**

### Readings:

- Kenneth R. Janken, “Remembering the Wilmington Ten: African American Politics and Judicial Misconduct in the 1970s,” *The North Carolina Historical Review*, vol. XCII, no. 1 (January 2015), 1-48.
- National Black Feminist Organization, “Statement of Purpose,” in Miriam Schneir, ed., *Feminism in Our Time: The Essential Writings, World War II to the Present* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 171-174.
- Roy Innis, “Separatist Economics: A New Social Contract,” in William F. Haddad and G. Douglas Pugh, eds., *Black Economic Development* (Englewood, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), 50-59.
- Earl Anthony, “Pan-African Socialism,” *The Black Scholar*, vol. 3, no. 2, Black Economics (October 1971), 40-45.

### Assignments:

- Analyze Janken’s argument. How does his interpretation differ from traditional understandings of black activism? (500 words)
- Analyze one of the assigned primary source readings. Your analysis should summarize the key points of the primary source. It should also place the primary source in its historical context by addressing who created the source, when it was created, why it was created, and who was the intended audience. (250 words)

## **03: Monday, September 1: A Tale of Two People? The Economics of Black America**

### Readings:

- Dorothy K. Newman, *Protest, Politics, and Prosperity: Black Americans and White Institutions, 1940-1975* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 135-186.
- William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 88-154.

### Assignment:

- Analyze the readings by Newman and Wilson. What are the respective authors’ arguments? What do the two pieces reveal about the economic plight of black Americans in the 1970s? (500 words)

## **04: Tuesday, September 8: Chocolate Cities and the Rise of Black Electoral Politics**

### Readings:

- Heather Ann Thompson, “Rethinking the Politics of White Flight in the Postwar City, Detroit, 1945-1980,” *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 25, no. 2 (January 1999), 163-198.

- Bill Strickland, “The Gary Convention and the Crisis of American Politics,” *Black World*, vol. 21, October 1972, 18-31.
- Robert Staples, “Land of Promise, Cities of Despair: Blacks in Urban America,” *The Black Scholar*, vol. 10, no. 2, Black Urban Community (October 1978), 2-11.

Assignment:

- Analyze Thompson’s argument and historiographical intervention. Whom does she challenge and on what basis does she do so? (500 words)

### **Thursday, September 10: Description of Topic**

Assignment:

- Research Paper – Description of Topic (target range of 1 to 2 pages; due by noon): Detail your main topic of study, main historical question(s) and theme(s), main historical actor(s) under study, time frame of your proposed paper, and general primary source evidence base.

### **05: Tuesday, September 15: On the Screen and In the Air: Black Popular Culture**

Readings:

- Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations* (London: Routledge Press, 1998), chapters 10 and 11.
- Alvin F. Poussaint, “Blaxploitation Movies: Cheap Thrills that Degrade Blacks,” *Psychology Today* 42 (Feb. 1974), 22, 26-27, 30, 32, 98.
- Barbara Morrow Williams, “Filth Vs. Lucre: The Black Community’s Tough Choice,” *Psychology Today* 42 (Feb. 1974), 98-99, 102.
- Optional: Reading by Kate L. Turabian, “Planning Your Argument” and “Planning a First Draft,” *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 48-70.

Assignment:

- Compare and contrast the views of African Americans toward “blaxploitation” films as revealed by the readings. What accounts for the differences in opinion? (500 words)

### **Thursday, September 17: Proposals**

Assignment:

- Research Paper - Proposal (minimum of five pages and target range of five to seven pages; due by noon): Your proposal must lay out the parameters of your paper in three sections that address the following questions: [1] Topic: What is your main topic of study? Why is your topic significant? What is/are the main historical question(s) that you will explore in your paper? Who is/are the main historical actor(s) under study? What is the time frame of your proposed paper? [2] Historiography: What arguments do other historians make about your topic?

How do you position yourself within this debate? [3] Primary Sources: What specific primary source evidence will you employ to support your argument? How might your primary source evidence be biased or limited?

**06: Tuesday, September 22: Feedback on Proposals – Individual Meetings**

**Thursday, September 24: Annotated Bibliography**

Assignment:

- Research Paper - Annotated Bibliography of Sources (minimum of two pages and target range of two to three pages; due by noon): Compiling an annotated bibliography of relevant sources facilitates the identification of gaps in your research. Annotate your sources by including for each entry a brief description of the set of sources as well as a brief explanation of the relevance of the set of sources to your historical interests and questions.

**07: Tuesday, September 29: Feedback on Annotated Bibliography – Individual Meetings**

**08: Tuesday, October 6: Individual Meetings**

**Thursday, October 8: Preliminary Outline**

Assignment:

- Research Project: Preliminary Outline (minimum of one page and target range of one to two pages; deliver one copy to 2143 MHRA by noon): Your outline should lay out the main sections of your research essay and 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. This assignment is intended to help you write a well-organized research essay.

**09: Tuesday, October 13: Feedback on Preliminary Outline – Individual Meetings**

**10: Tuesday, October 20: Individual Meetings**

**Thursday, October 22: Narrative Outline**

Assignment:

- Research Paper - Narrative Outline (minimum of seven pages and target range of seven to ten pages; due by noon): The narrative outline should include drafts of the introduction (including paragraphs that present the historiographical intervention) as well as paragraphs explaining your main arguments in the main sections. The narrative outline should reflect the logic of the argument. The sections of the narrative outline should clearly relate and each section should advance the argument. For each section and/or sub-section, identify the relevant primary and secondary sources. In creating the outline, students should think

about holes in the argument and how they might address them. Consider counterarguments that could possibly undermine the argument. Refine the narrative outline to take these counterarguments into account, either by countering the counterargument preemptively or by refining the argument.

### **11: Tuesday, October 27: Feedback on Narrative Outline – Individual Meetings**

Reading:

- Kate L. Turabian, “Drafting Your Report,” *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 71-81.

### **Friday, October 30: Drafts, Group 1**

Assignment:

- Research Paper - Draft (minimum of fifteen pages; post on Canvas and due by noon): Students should strive to submit as complete a draft as possible. The draft must address a non-specialist audience of educated adults and present necessary background information where relevant to make the paper relatively self-contained and comprehensible; include an introduction which lays out the relevant scholarship and situates the approach, topic, and argument within the existing scholarship; present the results of the primary source research. Keep in mind: the more complete your draft, the better the feedback and the better the final product.

### **12: Tuesday, November 3: Peer Review of Drafts, Group 1**

Assignment:

- Research Paper - Two Reviews of Drafts (minimum of one page each and target range of one to two pages each; submit one copy to the professor and one copy to the author): You will review the drafts of two other students. In your review, consider the following questions: On argument: What is the author’s main argument? What paragraph best encapsulates the author’s argument? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the author’s argument? Does the author’s argument seem too simplistic, obvious, or ahistorical? Does the author make a case for the originality of his or her work? Does the author lay out the relevant historiography? Does the author situate himself or herself within the relevant historiography? On evidence: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the author’s evidence base? What points need additional evidence? How original are the author’s interpretations? To what extent does the author rely upon secondary sources? To what extent does the author rely on primary sources? On organization and clarity: Is the paper well organized? What is the organizational strategy? What are the main sections and section arguments? Does the author adopt the best organization for his or her argument? What points need clarification? Are all portions of the paper relevant to the author’s main argument? On grammar and style: Are there any recurring grammatical or stylistic problems? (Identify recurring grammatical and stylistic problems, but

DO NOT correct every grammatical and stylistic mistake.) Offer additional comments and suggestions concerning argument, organization, sources, grammar, and style where relevant. Note on the paper any passage, concept, argument, or organization that does not make sense to you as a reader. These are peer reviews, so the tone of your review should indicate that you regard the author as an equal. Be critical, but constructive. Most important, be HONEST.

### **Friday, November 6: Drafts, Group 2**

Assignment:

- See instructions above.

### **13: Tuesday, November 10: Peer Review of Drafts, Group 2**

Assignment:

- See instructions above.

### **14: Tuesday, November 17: Revisions – Individual Meetings**

Assignment:

- Optional: Kate L. Turabian, “Revising Your Draft,” “Writing Your Final Introduction and Conclusion,” and “Revising Sentences,” *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 102-119.

### **15: Tuesday, November 24: Presentations**

Assignment:

- Research Paper - Presentation (minimum of 5 minutes and target range of 5 to 7): Your presentation should convey to your audience the main points of your paper, including your argument and your main evidence. Your presentation should last no more than 7 minutes. Write out and rehearse your presentation beforehand to stay within this time limit. Your presentation will be graded according to the following criteria: adherence to presentation requirements, preparedness and preparation, the content of the presentation, and the clarity of the presentation.

### **Final Paper due Tuesday, December 1 at noon.**

Assignment:

- Research Paper - Final (eighteen pages to twenty pages, excluding notes; submit one copy): The research paper must meet the following requirements: address a significant question related to the black experience in the 1970s; follow historical methodologies and adhere to standards of historical scholarship; engage concepts, arguments, and information from secondary sources; identify, analyze, and assess the relevant historiography and advance a historiographical argument; be an original research paper on a significant historical question, relying on primary

sources as the main evidence base and not simply summarizing known facts or interpretations; be properly footnoted and include an updated bibliography of all consulted resources