

Spring 2010 | University of North Carolina, Greensboro  
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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:00 - 11:00, and Thursdays, 10:00 to 11:00 and by appointment

## **HIS 502: Select Topics in African American History “Before Civil Rights”**

### **Course Syllabus**

We typically imagine the 1950s and 1960s, the era of the Civil Rights Movement, as the time in which blacks finally stood up and fought for their rights. This class starts this story of American history earlier by examining the black experience in America between 1900 and 1950. During this era, blacks did not sit idly by while whites invented the system of racial oppression known as Jim Crow segregation. Blacks moved from the countryside to the city, from the South to the North and West, and from the fields to the factory. These movements were all part of the larger struggle for black equality that occurred in the first half of the twentieth century, before the advent of the Civil Rights Movement. Among the topics we will explore are the Great Migration, black participation in WWI and WWII, the emergence of the New Negro, and the Harlem Renaissance. Examining the movements before the Civil Rights Movement uncovers black protest in social, political, economic, and cultural realms, which challenge our narrow focus on civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s.

**Course Requirements:** The requirements for this course include assigned readings for each class, periodic assignments and quizzes on the assigned readings, and three papers. Graduate students will also be required to write two book reviews and a historiographical paper.

**Assigned Readings:** There are three books assigned for this class: W. E. B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*; Nella Larson, *Passing/Quicksand*; and Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*. Each of these books can be purchased at the University Bookstore or on-line. Additional readings are on Blackboard, E-reserves, and the internet. These readings will be linked to the Syllabus on Blackboard and listed under Course Documents as they become available. The assigned reading list may undergo minor changes; students should be sure to consult the most current version of the Syllabus on Blackboard.

Graduate students taking this course will also be required to read two additional books: Martin Summers, *Manliness and Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* and Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression*.

**Attendance and Late Policy:** You are allowed two absences. After two absences, you will receive a zero for participation for that day. In addition, students will be dropped

from the class for excessive absences. Assignments submitted in class are due at the beginning of the class period. Students who submit assignments after the deadline will be penalized with a grade deduction based on the lateness of the assignment. No assignments will be accepted one week after the due date. All assignments must be submitted in hard copy.

### **Undergraduate Final Grade Composition**

- Participation 15%
- Assignments 10%
- Papers (3 x 25%) 75%

### **Graduate Final Grade Composition**

- Participation 15%
- Assignments 10%
- Papers (3 x 15%) 45%
- Book Reviews (2 x 5%) 10%
- Historiographical Paper 20%

**Participation:** Participation in discussion is mandatory. Students should be prepared to discuss all of the week's assigned readings by Tuesday of each week, except in cases when class is canceled. Attendance alone is not sufficient for full participation credit.

**Assignments:** Students will be given brief in-class and take-home writing and research assignments based on the assigned readings. Students will also be periodically quizzed on readings and lectures.

**Papers:** Students are required to write three papers based on assigned readings, the first due on February 18, the second due on March 30, and the third due on April 29.

Graduate students' book reviews are due on February 25 and March 25 and historiographical paper on May 6.

**Plagiarism Policy:** The University defines plagiarism as "intentionally or knowingly representing the words 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 Conduct for appropriate action, including suspension or expulsion from the University.

### **Week 1 (January 19, 21) The Legacy of Reconstruction**

Reading: W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-80*, pp. 711-29 on [blackboard](#)

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

## **Week 2 (January 26, 28) “The Nadir of Race Relations”**

Readings: Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in all its Phases* on [blackboard](#); Walter White, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch*, chapters 1 and 5 on [blackboard](#); Jesse Crawford, “Cheating the Georgia Chain Gang” on [blackboard](#); “A Georgia Negro Peon” on [blackboard](#)

## **Week 3 (February 2, 4) “The Problem of the Color Line”**

Reading: W. E. B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folks*

## **Week 4 (February 9, 11) World War I and the Great Migration**

Readings: Richard Wright, *Black Boy*, chapter XV on blackboard; “Letters of the Negro Migrants of 1916-18,” *Journal of Negro History*, IV (July 1919), pp. 290-340 on blackboard; Excerpts from Eric Arnesen, ed. *Black Protest and the Great Migration: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 61-64, 128-46 on blackboard; W. E. B. Du Bois “Close Ranks” on blackboard

## **Week 5 (February 16, 18) Post-War Violence and the New Negro** **\*First Paper due February 18**

Readings: Alain Locke, “The New Negro” on blackboard; Excerpts from Eric Arnesen, ed., *Black Protest and the Great Migration: A Brief History with Documents*, pp. 123-27 on blackboard; *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot*, pp. 595-651 on blackboard

## **Week 6 (February 23, 25) Politics of Protest** **\*First Book Review due February 25 (grad students only)**

Readings: Marcus Garvey, “What We Believe” and “The Principles of the Universal Negro Improvement Association” on blackboard; Charles S. Johnson, “After Garvey – What?” on blackboard; Cyril Briggs, “What the African Blood Brotherhood Stands For” on blackboard

## **Week 7 (March 2, 4) The Harlem Renaissance**

Readings: Nella Larson, *Passing/Quicksand*; Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” on blackboard; George Schuyler, “The Negro-Art Hokum” on blackboard; Countee Cullen, “Heritage” on blackboard

## **Week 8 (March 9, 11) Spring Break – No Class**

## **Week 9 (March 16, 18) Black Life in the Jazz Age**

Reading: Claude McKay, *Harlem: Negro Metropolis*, pp. 86-120 on blackboard

**Week 10 (March 23, 25) Great Depression**

**\*Second Book Review due March 25 (grad students only)**

Readings: Hosea Hudson, *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson: His Life as a Negro Communist in the South*, pp. 53-109 on blackboard; Ella Baker and Marvel Cooke, "The Bronx Slave Market" on blackboard; Claude McKay, *Harlem: Negro Metropolis*, pp. 32-72 on blackboard

**Week 11 (March 30, April 1) Studying the "Negro"**

**\*Second Paper due March 30**

Reading: Excerpts from Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, on blackboard

Class Canceled on April 1

**Week 12 (April 6, 8) World War II: The Fight Overseas**

Readings: Mary Penick Motley, ed., *The Invisible Soldier: The Experience of the Black Soldiers, World War II*, pp. 149-93 on blackboard; Herbert Aptheker, ed. *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States, Volume 4*, pp. 425-39, 487-507 on blackboard

**Week 13 (April 13, 15) World War II: The Struggle at Home**

Readings: Excerpts from Earl Brown, *Why Race Riots: Lessons from Detroit* on blackboard

**Week 14 (April 20, 22) Diagnosing and Addressing the "Negro Problem"**

Readings: Excerpts from Gunmar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* on blackboard; *To Secure These Rights* on blackboard

**Week 15 (April 27, 29) Dawn of a New Day?**

**\*Third Paper due April 29**

Reading: Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

**\*Historiographical Paper due May 6 (grad students only)**