

**HIS 511A**  
**Seminar in Historical Research and Writing**  
**T 3:30-6:20**  
**MHRA 3204**  
**Spring 2012**

**Dr. Mark Elliott**  
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**Office Hours:**  
**M 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.

### **Presentations:**

Each student will be assigned to a team of four or five students. Each team will be asked to do one in-class presentations 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.

**Quizzes:**

There will be in-class quizzes on the readings each week to encourage you to keep up with the readings and films. Quizzes will take place *at the beginning of class*. If you miss a quiz due to lateness or absence, you must do a short paper as a replacement or else receive a zero for the quiz. No more than two quizzes can be made up.

**Written Work:**

First, students will keep a research journal that will be updated weekly 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 (a chosen member of their peer review group).

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 **February 21**).

Finally, the major assignment this semester will be a term paper of 4500-60000 word essay (roughly 15-20 pages) based on their own primary research. After identifying a topic (no later than **February 7**), 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/>

**Final Grade:**

Your final grade will be based on the following formula:

- 15% Quizzes
- 15% Research Journal
- 15% Short Argument Paper
- 15% Oral presentations and class discussion.
- 40% Research Paper (first and second submission).

## 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 Books:

Fitzgerald, *Splendid Failure: Postwar Reconstruction in the American South*  
Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South*  
Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice: Albion W. Tourgée and the Quest for Racial Equality*  
Cecelski, David and Tyson, Timothy. *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy*

## Week 1. INTRODUCTION

**Jan. 17** Class Introduction

**Workshop:** Making scholarly arguments.

## Week 2. THE DUNNING SCHOOL AND POPULAR MEMORY

**Jan. 24** **Reading:** Du Bois, “The Propaganda of History” (1935); Kenneth Stampp, “The Tragic Legend of Reconstruction (1969); and Ron Briley, “Hollywood’s Reconstruction and the Persistence of Historical Mythmaking” (2008).

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

## Week 3. RECONSTRUCTION IN HISTORY

**Jan. 31** **Reading:** Fitzgerald, *Splendid Failure*, all.

**Workshop:** Writing a proposal.

## Week 4. THE HISTORY OF RECONSTRUCTION MEMORY

**Feb. 7** **Reading:** Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant*, all.

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

## Week 5. THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

**Feb. 14**      **Due:**            **Term Paper Proposal**

**Reading:**      Documents on The Kirk-Holden War on Blackboard.

**Workshop:** Researching Primary Sources

**Week 6.**                    **INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO RECONSTRUCTION**

**Reading:**      Martha Hodes, “The Sexualization of Reconstruction Politics: White Women and Black Men in the South after the Civil War” (1993); Scott Reynolds Nelson, “Who Was John Henry? Railroad Construction, Southern Folklore, and the Birth of Rock and Roll” (2005); Mary Niall Mitchell, “‘Rosebloom and Pure White,’ or So It Seemed” (2002); Elliott West, “Reconstructing Race” (2003).

**Feb. 21**      **Due:**            **Primary Source Analysis Paper**

**Week 7.**                    **FORGOTTEN HISTORY**

**Feb. 28**      **Reading:**      Cecelski and Tyson, *Democracy Betrayed*, 1-41, 73-141, 225-286.

**Week 8.**                    **NEW APPROACHES TO BIOGRAPHY**

**March 7**      **Reading:**      Elliott, *Color Blind Justice*, 1-192, 262-316.

**Workshop:** Creating an Annotated Bibliography

**SPRING BREAK MARCH 9-16**

**Week 9.**                    **ARCHIVAL RESEARCH**

**March 21**      **VISIT TO SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

**Due:**            **Annotated Bibliography**

**Workshop:** Plagiarism.

**Week 10.**                  **RESEARCH AND WRITING**

**March 28**      **Research and Writing on Project**

- Week 11. RESEARCH AND WRITING**  
**April 4** Research and Writing on Project
- Week 12. RESEARCH AND WRITING**  
**April 11 Due Thursday: First Paper Submission Due on Blackboard.**  
**Workshop:** Writing Center
- Week 13. DISCUSS DRAFTS**  
**April 18 Due:** Peer Review Responses  
**Reading:** Presnell, *The Information-Literate Historian*, 206-238.
- Week 14. ORAL PRESENTATIONS**  
**April 25** Paper Presentations  
**Due:** Final Research Paper
- Week 15 . FINAL EXAM PERIOD: ORAL PRESENTATIONS**  
**May 7 (Tues)** Paper Presentations