

English 3260 (The US South: Black, White, and Beyond)

Honor's Seminar Proposal

Syllabus

Professor E. J. West

Course Description

Is the US South and notions of southernness a product of black and white historical fissures? Is the iconic white male southerner the quintessential metaphor for all that is southern? And does all flow from this as the foundation of southernness? Whether it entails racial identity, food, music, culture, or lifestyle there is an enigmatic notion of the south that persists. In this class we will build a critical framework to explore the history, myth making and conflicts of southern as discourse and southern as reality. We will examine the literary texts for what they reveal or portend about the complicated mix of faces and ways that play out in the 21st Century as southern. With equal emphasis we will consider how these texts reflect popular perceptions of who is southern and what constitutes southernness. We will draw these connections through readings of other communication forms: this includes, but is not limited to film, television, music, and news. Given Atlanta's own identity as a southern city but also as a city of newcomers, this course leads naturally to queries into the question of how we have come to understand this city's identity as a southern entity. The course readings will conclude with Monique Truong's novel, *Bitter in the Mouth*, as a segway to contemplations of a "New South" in our own contemporary moment. The final project for the class will call on students to critically examine the south of the 21st century as a world emanating from the historic black-white boundary that has shaped notions of the south and southern identity.

Resources:

Texts:

William Faulkner, *Absalom Absalom*

Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina*.

Raymond Andrews, *Appalachee Red*

Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones*

Monique Truong, *Bitter in the Mouth*

Natasha Trethewey, *Native Guard*

Film:

DW Griffith, *Birth of A Nation* 1915

Margaret Mitchell, *Gone With the Wind* 1939

Julie Dash, *Daughters of the Dust* 1991

Maha Marouan, *Voices of Muslim Women from the US South* 2014

Music:

"Dixie"

"Tennessee," Arrested Development

"Mississippi Girl," Faith Hill

"Georgia," Ludacris and Field Mob

"Sweet Home Alabama," Lynyrd Skynyrd

"Southern State of Mind," Darius Rucker

"Carolina on My Mind," James Taylor

"Southern Man," Neil Young

"Country Boy Will Survive," Hank Williams Jr.

"Stand By Your Man," Tammy Wynette

"Cowboy Take Me Away," Dixie Chicks

"Hit 'Em Up Style," The Carolina Chocolate Drops

"Georgia," Ray Charles

"Why I Sing the Blues," BB King

"Go Down, Moses" Black Spiritual

Visual Art: Selections: TBD

Local Archives: TBD, including AARL, ATL Civil Rights Museum

Grading:

Weekly Reaction Papers (30%)

Pre and Post-Class Discussion Prompts (30%)

Final Project: Documentary Narrative as Critical Argument (40%)

The final project will require students to select mixed platforms such as the conventional research paper, creative fiction, creative nonfiction, short film or visual narrative, and musical narrative to present their critical research and argument on the "New and/or Future South." Students will meet with the instructor in individual conference sessions to propose their projects and map out a design for content and a timeline to completion. The final product may be submitted completely through media or a combination of media/electronic version and written text. The submission format could for example be a YouTube narrative with a series of images and audio arranged and presented to exemplify and make the case for the student's central argument. A mixed format of written text and electronic media might include a traditional research paper infused with online links that are integrated into the text. Students interested in the visual arts might construct a narrative of the new racialized south through an electronic art exhibit that they build. The open project format is offered to provide students the opportunity to engage the topic and materials through interdisciplinary avenues.

Course Guidelines and Policies:

--Grading Scale: A (96-100), A- (91-95); B+ (86-90); B (82-85); B- (80-81); C+ (76-79); C (72-75); C- (70-71); D (61-70), F(0-60)

--Out-of-class work (hardcopy) must be electronically printed, double-spaced with 12 pt. font and 1 inch margins. A grade of F will be awarded for handwritten submissions. Documentation must follow MLA Style. Your work must show logical argumentative development, critical analysis, scholarly prose, style and organization, and use of formal grammar.

-- Unless I specify otherwise, hardcopy assignments must be submitted in class when due. Students must make prior arrangement with me to submit an assignment outside class. Only medical emergencies involving student or immediate family are circumstances that warrant consideration for excused absences. Students who fail to contact me within a week of a missed assignment, will be awarded a grade of "F," i.e. numerical grade 0, for the missed work.

--Acts of academic dishonesty will be addressed as outlined in the current university catalog: see "Policy on Academic Honesty."

-- Unless I am notified during the first week of the semester and agree that you have viable reason to miss more than seven classes, eight or more recorded absences will result in a grade of "F" in the course. Eight or more tardies will result in a 10 point reduction of the final grade.

--In-class use of electronic devices (this includes lap tops, ipads, cell phones) is restricted to class related purposes.

Schedule:

Week 1 Music and Visual Images of the US South

Week 2 Music and Visual Images of the US South

Week 3 DW Griffith, *Birth of A Nation*

Week 4 Margaret Mitchell, *Gone With the Wind*

Week 5 Faulkner, *Absalom Absalom*

Week 6 William Andrews, *Appalachee Red*

Week 7 Julie Dash, *Daughters of the Dust*

Week 8 Maha Marouan, *Muslim Women in the US South*

Week 9 Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina*.

Week 10 Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones*

Week 11 Natasha Trethewey, *Native Guard*

Project Abstracts Due

Week 12 Monique Troung *Bitter in the Mouth*

Week 13 Class Workshops/Peer Reviews

Week 14 Class Workshops/Peer Reviews

Week 15 Class Workshops/Peer Reviews

Week 16 Final Project Due