

History 4990 (Special Topics in History)

Black History Before "The Movement"

Fall 2006

Thursdays, 4:30-7 p.m.
Library 421
<http://webct.usu.edu>

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And by appointment



Course Description:

In this course, students will develop their own perspectives on an important period of transition in African-American history: the 1930s and 1940s. Working individually and with partners, you will explore a variety of primary sources including a contemporary black newspaper, oral history interviews, and the records of the NAACP. You will also have opportunities to present your findings to your classmates, improving your oral communication as well as your research and writing skills.

Course Objectives:

Your main objective in this course is to write a clear and compelling historical interpretation based on primary sources. Your research paper should demonstrate your ability to select and analyze historical evidence related to a specific topic that you have chosen from within the larger framework of the course. Your essay should also reflect your efforts to think critically, write cogently, and revise carefully in order to produce your best work.

Papers should be **15-20 pages** in length, not including the endnotes or the bibliography, all of which should follow the Chicago style as explained in class.

Evaluation:

Class Contribution	30 points (15%)
Research and Prewriting Exercises	50 points (25%)
Peer Review	20 points (10%)
Final Paper	100 points (50%)

Class Contribution (15%)

The success of this seminar depends on the active and thoughtful participation of every student as well as the instructor. Come to class prepared to present ideas, ask questions, and discuss problems that you and your classmates have encountered in completing the

reading, writing, and research assignments. The quality of your final presentation on December 7 will also determine part of your class contribution grade.

Attendance: Attendance is vital. Students who miss a class or fail to show up for a prescheduled appointment will lose 10 points (5%) from their course grade for each instance. If you must miss class or cancel an appointment for a valid reason, please talk with me **in advance, if at all possible**. I may not be able to honor explanations given after the fact.

Research and Prewriting Exercises (25%)

The assignments in this course are designed:

- to introduce you to the variety of primary sources available to historians
- to encourage you to take an analytical approach to sources
- to guide you through the research process as you work toward a final product.

For the class to function effectively, **you must turn in all assignments promptly on the days they are due**. Specific instructions for each assignment will be provided as the semester unfolds, but the following is a list of the assignments that count toward this part of your grade. Each assignment is worth **10 points**.

1. Newspaper exercise (due on Sept. 14)
2. NAACP exercise (due on Sept. 21)
3. Oral History exercise (due on Sept. 28)
4. Topic description and research plan (due on Oct. 5)
5. Outline and draft paragraph (due on Oct. 19)

Peer Review (10%)

Each student will serve as a peer reviewer for two other students. Peer review groups will be able to share their work electronically through the course website. On Oct. 5, you will share your preliminary topic descriptions and research plans. Peer reviewers' notes will be due on Oct. 12. I will evaluate these notes with an eye to how fully each student has engaged with his or her two partners' work. This assignment counts **5 points**.

On Nov. 2, you will submit your rough drafts to your peer review partners at the same time you turn them in to me. Peer reviews are due Nov. 9 and will count **15 points**. Remember, the goal is constructive criticism that will help your partners improve their final papers.

Final paper (50%)

Rough drafts are required but not graded. Final papers should present an argument based on your research in primary sources and put that argument into historiographical context to the fullest extent that your reading of secondary sources will allow. On the same day you turn in your final paper, December 7, you will give a brief presentation of your research findings in class.

Two words of warning

Plagiarism: Students should read the University's rules concerning academic honesty, which can be found online at <http://www.usu.edu/policies/PDF/Acad-Integrity.pdf>. Any cheating, falsification, or presentation of another's work as your own will result in a failing grade in the course and might lead to even more serious consequences, such as suspension or expulsion. If you have *any questions* about whether something constitutes plagiarism, ASK ME. If you are contemplating plagiarism out of desperation, particularly over a deadline, TALK TO ME. I would much rather grant you an extension or help you with your work than fail you for cheating. However, be aware that I have failed students for plagiarism almost every semester that I have taught at USU.

Incompletes: University policy states that students can receive an "I" for the course only in the case of a verifiable serious illness or family emergency and only when a small amount of the coursework remains to be done. An incomplete cannot be used to avoid a poor grade.

Course Schedule:

August 31	Introduction; watch "The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow," parts 1 & 2
September 7	No class
September 14	Watch "The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow," parts 3 & 4 Newspaper exercise due in class
September 21	NAACP exercise due in class
September 28	Oral history exercise due in class. Schedule individual meetings for Oct. 12
October 5	No class. Submit topic description and research plan to instructor and peer reviewers through course website
October 12	No class. Individual meetings this week. Submit peer reviews to instructor and peers through course website
October 19	Outline and draft paragraph due to instructor in class. Schedule individual meetings for Oct. 26
October 26	No class. Individual meetings this week. Schedule individual meetings for Nov. 9
November 2	No class. Rough draft due to instructor and peer reviewers through course website

November 9	No class. Individual meetings this week. Submit peer reviews to instructor and peers through course website.
November 16	No class
November 23	Thanksgiving
November 30	No class
December 7	In-class presentations. FINAL PAPER DUE