Students will develop a rich understanding of the US South from the early nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. The course covers key historical events that shaped Southern ideological developments. We will give particular attention to the images, narratives, and experiences that critically formed both the popular imagination and the day-to-day realities of Southern life. The students will work both independently and collaboratively to develop informed observations, critiques and analyses of the material discussed.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- To sharpen critical reading, communication, and writing skills through a close and careful reading of canonical scholarship
- To develop an understanding of the methodologies and editorial strategies for strong historical writing
- To learn the art of curating, the craft of public and digital history
- To demystify popular misconceptions and personal assumptions about the US South
- To craft written critiques that demonstrate a grasp of the intellectual interventions, scholarly debates, and primary themes and problems in the history of the US South
- To engage in a series of rigorous cogitations and concise writing exercises that position students to curate a digital exhibition about the US South

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**Participation** (30%) Students are expected to complete all reading assignments and to form thoughtful and informed points of discussion, questions of inquiry, and ideas to share with fellow classmates. Each student will be asked to write a one-page weekly response to the readings. These will be collected at the beginning of each class. In addition to discussions about the readings, we will begin class with a brief small group discussion once production on the Digital Exhibit commences. Student contributions
towards the collaborative process of building the content of the website will be included in the final participation score.

Book Review (10%) In this assignment, students will review a scholarly book written about the US South from any time period. The review should be 1-2 pages in length and must demonstrate the student’s ability to identify the author’s major intervention and argument, critical themes discussed, methodological approach, and a concluding critique and assessment of the book.

Annotated Bibliography for Digital Exhibit (10%) The annotated bibliography will be based upon the theme selected by each student for the Digital Exhibit (see Digital Exhibit assignment). The annotated bibliography should include a list of primary sources (visual and textual), books, articles and commentaries of relevance to the proposed exhibit. Each citation should include an annotation: a brief (150 words), descriptive, and evaluative paragraph.

Digital Exhibit (30%) The final project will consist of a small set of images and themes to be displayed and curated on our course Omeka website titled “HIST 488: A Scholarly Retrospective of the US South”. Students will be asked to consider a theme discussed in the course about the US South and build an exhibit for the course site. In this exhibit, students will draw upon knowledge from the literature covered in the course as well as resources and information discovered through additional primary and secondary research conducted by the student. While the writing will not be as extensive in length as a typical research paper, the exhibit will require concision and advanced editing.

Exhibit Review (20%) Students will be asked to write a peer review of an exhibit. The review (2-3 pages in length) should offer a thoughtful critique of the exhibit by considering the effectiveness of the thesis, selected visual components, textual composition, as well as broader contributions to the overall site. This assignment will be due on Friday, May 6th.

COURSE POLICIES

Students are expected to attend every class meeting and to arrive on time. If an absence is absolutely unavoidable please contact the professor.

All electronic devices (computers, tablets, cell phones) must be turned off or silenced for the duration of the class unless they are used to refer to assignments related to the Digital Exhibit. Out of respect for the privacy of the students speaking in class, video recording and audio recording are not permitted during any class sessions without permission from the instructor and the consent of fellow classmates. If you read course materials electronically, you are advised to print out the readings, or take notes on a separate document or notebook that you bring to class. Browsing the Internet is not conducive to sustained focus and participation in the brief amount of time we have to cover course material. As one professor has noted, “In-class note-taking is an art of
intellectual engagement, not an exercise in mechanical transcription. Come to class prepared to take notes by hand.”

Accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities documented at the Office of Disability Services. Students should notify the Office of Disability Services located in Peters G-27/G-28 (440-774-5588) and the Professor of any disability related needs.

If you are unable to complete the requirements of this course for any reason, the College does allow two categories of incompletes, educational and emergency. To further understand your options, consult the Dean of Studies website at: http://new.oberlin.edu/office/dean-of-studies/policies/incompletes.dot

All work submitted for this course must be done in compliance with the Oberlin Honor Code and include a signed honor pledge (“I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in the assignment”). Any written work submitted must include citation or attribution of sources you consulted whether as a direct quote or paraphrase. Failure to adhere to the Honor Code will result in a grade penalty, withholding of a grade, failing grade, and/or reporting to the Student Honor Committee. Please consult a reference librarian or myself if you have questions about how to properly cite sources or ideas in your work.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia; Edward Ayers, “What We Talk About When We Talk About the South”


  • Book Review Due

  • Topic and Item Selection

Week 5: Deborah Gray White, Ar’n’t I A Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South (1985)
  • Annotated Bibliography Due
  • Omeka Workshop with Megan Mitchell


Week 8: Spring Break—No Classes


  - Final Exhibits Submitted-Project Presentation


  - Exhibit Review due May 6th