Honors 240
Reading the Past

“For All the World To See”: Race and Visual Culture in Modern America

Fall 2016

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Course Time and Place:
TR, 1:30-2:45 pm, West Building, Room 1004

Office Hours:
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00-4:00 pm, and by appointment.

Course Description:
This course traces modern African American history (1865-present) through visual culture and public art. Beginning with emancipation from slavery after the Civil War and concluding with the grand opening of the new National Museum of African American History and Culture, the course explores how race relations in the United States were reflected in visual and artistic forms including: sculpture, public memorials, painting, and photography. Moreover, the class will examine how popular cultural forms including vaudeville, film, advertising, and television played a critical role in constructing ideas about race through the mass distribution of visual images of African Americans. Most significantly, the course examines how visual and public art act as critical agents in the formation of collective memory about race in modern American culture.
Grading and Assignments:
In this course you will be graded in three major areas:

1) **Class participation:** (20%)
2) **Written assignments:**
   - Weekly discussion board postings (20%)
   - Two Extended Response Papers (20%)
3) **Exams:**
   - Midterm Field Work Project (20%)
   - Take-home Final Exam (20%)

Grade Assessment:

- **Class participation:** Class participation is crucial to one's overall grade and will be assessed by attendance and *active* participation in class discussions. Evidence of preparation (i.e. having completed and thought about the reading), quality of discussion, engagement with other students’ ideas, and appropriate behavior all factor into the class participation grade.

- **Written Assignments:**
  - **Weekly discussion board postings:** For each set of weekly readings, please prepare a discussion board post and upload it to Blackboard by **10:00 am on Thursdays**. Discussion posts should be approximately 3-4 healthy paragraphs (or 400-500 words). Each week I will offer a suggested discussion question for you to explore, but you can write about whatever you found most provocative or surprising in the readings.
  - **Two Extended Response Papers:** Students in this class will be divided into work groups. The first objective of the work groups is to identify when you are responsible for your two extended response papers, which are *individual* assignments. The first paper is 3-4 pages in length; the second paper is 4-6 pages in length. Specific information about each paper assignment is posted on Blackboard.

On the week your second paper is due, your work group is also responsible for **leading class discussion on the readings for that particular week.** Your group will work together to brainstorm discussion ideas and compile any other additional materials that might spark discussion for the class.

- **Exams:**
  - You will have midterm fieldwork project and a take-home final exam. In these assignments, you will be responsible for all material covered in course readings, lectures, and any additional course materials.
Class Policies:

1) **Punctuality**: Please make every effort to arrive in class on time; arriving late to class is disruptive.

2) **Cell phones**: Turn off or silence cell phones before class begins and please refrain from any texting.

3) **Laptop Free Zone**: Laptops and other electronic devices may not be used except by special arrangement. For my reasons, see Jennifer Senior, “The Case Against Laptops in the Classroom,” *Science of Us*, July 9, 2015. Please bring a notebook and pen or pencil with which to take notes on class discussions. If you wish to refer to readings during class, please bring a hard copy.

4) **Honor Code**: All of George Mason University's academic policies and honor code apply to this course. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving proper credit. Self-plagiarism involves recycling papers from previous coursework. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me. Violators will be brought before the University's Honor Committee for disciplinary action. For details, see the Undergraduate Catalog.

5) **Disability Accommodations**: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations are arranged through that office.

6) **Add and Drop Deadlines**:
   - Last Day to Add or Drop: Sept. 6, 2016
   - Drop Deadline with Penalty: Sept. 20, 2016 (33% Tuition penalty)
   - Final Drop Deadline: Sept. 30, 2016 (67% Tuition penalty)

Required Reading:

- Maurice Berger, *For All The World To See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights*
- James Oliver Horton and Lois Horton, *Hard Road to Freedom, Vol. 2*
- Langston Hughes, *The Ways of White Folks*
- Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*
- Selected articles and book chapters available on Blackboard

Class Schedule:

Week 1 (Aug. 29-Sept. 2):

- **Introduction: Race and Visual Culture**
- **Readings**:
  - *For All The World To See*, pp. xi-33

**Assignment**: Discussion Board post due by **10:00 am on Thursday**.
Week 2 (Sept. 5-9): Race and the Politics of Memory

Readings:


**Assignment:** Discussion Board post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Week 3 (Sept. 12-16): Exposing Slavery

Readings:
- *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, Chps. 1-2
- *Hard Road to Freedom*, Chp. 1

**Assignment:**
- **Group 1:** Response Paper #1
- **All other students:** Discussion Board post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Week 4 (Sept. 19-23): Emancipation and Reconstruction

Readings:
- *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, Chps. 3-4
- *Hard Road to Freedom*, Chp. 2

**Assignment:**
- **Group 2:** Response Paper #1
- **All other students:** Discussion Board post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Week 5 (Sept. 26-30): “Slave in a Box”: Marketing Jim Crow

Readings:
- M.M. Manning, “The Old South, the Absent Mistress, and the Slave in a Box,” from *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima* (Available on Blackboard)

- *Hard Road to Freedom*, Chp. 3

**Assignment:**
- **Group 3:** Response Paper #1
- **All other students:** Discussion Board post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

**Class Field Trip on Friday, Sept. 30**
Week 6 (Oct. 3-7): Remembering Common and Uncommon Soldiers

Readings:
- Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves, Chps. 5- Epilogue

Assignment: Group 4: Response Paper #1
All other students: Discussion Board post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Week 7 (Oct. 10-14): Midterm Field Work Project
NOTE: No class on Tuesday (Columbus Day Holiday)

Assignment: Your Midterm Field Work Project is due on Blackboard by 10:00 am on Thursday, October 13.

Week 8 (Oct. 17-21): “Midnight Ramble”: Race and the Film Industry

Readings:
- For All The World To See, pp. 33-63

Assignment: Discussion Board post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Week 9 (Oct. 24-28): The Harlem Renaissance and the “New Negro”

Readings:
- Langston Hughes, The Ways of White Folks
- Hard Road to Freedom, Chp. 4

Assignment: Discussion Board post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Week 10 (Oct. 31-Nov. 4): The Great Depression and the Great Migration

Readings:

• Hard Road to Freedom, Chp. 5

**Assignment:** Discussion Board post due by **10:00 am on Thursday.**

Week 11 (Nov. 7-11):

**The Cold War and the Dawn of the Civil Rights Era**

**Readings:**
• Adam Green, “Selling the Race,” from Selling the Race: Race, Culture, Community, and Black Chicago, 1940-1955 (Available on Blackboard)

• Hard Road To Freedom, Chp. 6

**Assignment:** **Group 1:** Response Paper #2 and Class Discussion  
**All other students:** Discussion Board post due by **10:00 am on Thursday.**

Week 12 (Nov. 14-18):

**The Black Revolution**

**Readings:**
• For All The World To See, pp. 100-137


• Hard Road to Freedom, Chp. 7

**Assignment:** **Group 2:** Response Paper #3 and Class Discussion  
**All other students:** Discussion Board post due by **10:00 am on Thursday.**

Week 13 (Nov. 21-25):

**The Fire Next Time: Black Power**

**Readings:**
For All The World To See, pp. 140-179

**Thanksgiving**
Week 14 (Nov. 28-Dec. 2): Color Adjustment: Race and Television
Readings:
• Christine Acham, Chapters 1 and 5 from Revolution Televised: Primetime and the Struggle for Black Power (Available on Blackboard)
• Hard Road to Freedom, Chp. 8

Assignment: Group 3: Response Paper #3 and Class Discussion
All other students: Discussion Board post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Week 15 (Dec. 5-9): Race and Commemoration in the 21st Century
Readings:
• Erika Doss, “Anger: Contesting American Identity in Contemporary Memorial Culture,” from Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America (Available on Blackboard)
• Hard Road to Freedom, Chp. 9

Assignment: Group 4: Response Paper #2 and Class Discussion
All other students: Discussion Board post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Take-Home Final Exam: Due on Blackboard on Tuesday, Dec. 13 by 4:00pm.
(Late exams will NOT be accepted under any circumstances.)