

The Problem South
English 188-02
T, Th 10:30-11:50, Voorhies 248

Dr. Riché Richardson

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Th 12-1

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Course Description:

In the United States, terms such as "myth" and "distinctive" have frequently been attached to the South. This seminar, through the engagement of a range of literary texts, examines the status of the South as a problem in the cultural history of this nation. Authors to be examined include Charles Chesnutt, Thomas Dixon, W.E.B. DuBois, William Faulkner, Toni Morrison, Mark Twain, Richard Wright, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. We will screen clippings from D.W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation and Oscar Micheaux's Within Our Gates. Of particular concern will be how race, class, gender, and sexuality shape ideologies relating to the South.

Required Texts:

Chesnutt, Charles. The Marrow of Tradition

Dixon, Thomas. The Clansman

DuBois, W.E.B. The Souls of Black Folk

Faulkner, William. The Sound and the Fury

Morrison, Toni. Song of Solomon

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. Uncle Tom's Cabin

Twain, Mark. Huckleberry Finn

Wright, Richard. Black Boy

Reading Tips and Expectations:

*I expect you to read carefully and thoughtfully the various primary texts that we will be examining and to bring carefully formulated questions to bear on them.

*The most reading intensive moment of the quarter will occur during the time that we engage Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. Therefore, you might want to begin reading this work in advance. I also encourage you to take up some of the secondary critical and theoretical selections relating to this work that are included in the Norton Critical Edition. In general, given that we will be engaging a range of novels, an inordinate amount of your readerly energies will be summoned this quarter. Pace yourself accordingly. Also, please don't ignore the prefaces and introductory essays that are included in the text editions that we are reading.

*It will be to your advantage to take up in addition to the primary readings on our itinerary the secondary selections by Michael Kreyling, Alice Walker, C.Vann Woodward, George Tindall, and W.J. Cash that will be made available on reserve at Shields Library over the course of the quarter. This material will be particularly useful to

draw on as you write your papers. Along these lines, also consult Appendix II, which consists of historical and critical sources relating to the South.

Course Format and Requirements:

Our sessions will be primarily organized around discussions. Therefore, the success of this seminar will have a lot to do with the focus, enthusiasm and dedication that its participants bring to it. Always come prepared to contribute to our conversations in class.

The major assignment is a paper that takes up one or several of the primary texts that we are reading, and in addition, selectively draws on critical and theoretical perspectives to frame an aspect of the problematic relating to the South that we are considering in this course (5-7 pages). This paper will count for 40% of your final grade. I encourage you to share your work in progress with me. Also feel free to dialogue with other members of the class. The final paper is due by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 16, in an envelope outside my office door.

You must submit a prospectus of no more than 100 words for this paper by Thursday, March 2. In this prospectus, you should provide a sketch of the kinds of issues that you plan to address in your paper, and a preliminary thesis statement. You should include with this prospectus a preliminary bibliography that lists at least three critical sources, along with annotations for them. Annotations are several lines that briefly indicate what a text is about. Your prospectus is not complete without these source annotations. The original copy of your prospectus that has been reviewed and commented on by the instructor of this course should be resubmitted with your paper. Please use the Modern Language Association of America style (MLA). See the [MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers](#), Fourth Edition, for format guidelines if you are not familiar with MLA.

Both the midterm and the final will be essay exams. We will talk about strategies for framing your responses to your exam questions. The midterm, which is scheduled on Thursday, February 17, counts for 20% of your grade. The final, which is scheduled on Wednesday, March 22, from 8-10 a.m. in our regular meeting room, counts for 30% of your grade. Please bring a blue book for both the midterm and the final.

Finally, you are responsible for leading the class in discussion during one of our sessions. You are not required to give a presentation per se, but you should come prepared to stimulate discussion. To this end, you should bring for distribution to the class a list of at least four questions relating to the text for which you are responsible. If you are working with a partner, you should each bring a list of four questions. These questions will build a valuable archive for our course over the weeks of the quarter that will be useful, for instance, as you formulate paper topics and study for exams. This component will count for 10% of your final grade. See Appendix I for sign-up.

Schedule of Readings:

- Th. Jan 6 Introduction
- T Jan 11 W.E.B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk
- Th Jan 13 DuBois continued
- T Jan 18 Mark Twain, Huckleberry Finn
- Th Jan 20 Twain continued
- T Jan 25 Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin
- Th Jan 27 Stowe continued
- T Feb 1 Stowe continued
- Th Feb 3 Charles Chesnutt, The Marrow of Tradition
- T Feb 8 Chesnutt continued
- Th Feb 10 Thomas Dixon, The Clansman
- T Feb 15 Dixon continued
- Th Feb 17 **Midterm**
- T Feb 22 Screening of Within our Gates and Birth of a Nation
- Th Feb 24 Richard Wright, Black Boy
- T Feb 29 Wright continued
- Th Mar 2 Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury
- T Mar 7 Faulkner continued
- Th Mar 9 Toni Morrison, Song of Solomon
- T Mar 14 Conclusion

Appendix II

Selected bibliography of historical and critical material relating to the South

- Blassingame, John. The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South
- Bryant, J.A. Twentieth-Century Southern Literature
- Clinton, Catherine. The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South
- . Tara Revisited: Women, War, and the Plantation Legend
- . The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South
- ed. Half Sisters of History: Southern Women and the American Past
- Cobbs, James The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity
- DuBois, W.E.B. Black Reconstruction
- Foner, Eric. Reconstruction
- Genovese, Eugene. Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made
- Gerster, Patrick and Nicholas Cords, eds. Myth and Southern History: The New South, Vol. 2
- Gossett, Thomas F. Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture
- Grantham, Dewey W. The South in Modern America: A Region At Odds
- Griffin, Farah Jasmine. Who Set You Flowin'?: The African American Migration Narrative
- Griffin, Larry J. and Don H. Doyle, eds. The South as An American Problem
- Grossman, James R. Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration
- Harris, Trudier. From Mammies to Militants
- Hunter, Tera. To 'Joy My Freedom
- Jones, Anne Goodwin, ed. Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts
- Kelley, Robin D.G. Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression
- Litwack, Leon F. Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow.
- . Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery
- Marks, Carole. Farewell, We're Good and Gone
- Rose, W.L. Race and Region in American Historical Fiction: Four Episodes in Popular Culture
- Tindall, George. The Ethnic Southerner: Beyond the Mainstream
- . The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945
- Woodward, C. Vann. The Burden of Southern History
(1992)
- . The Strange Career of Jim Crow
- . Origins of the New South, 1877-1913