

**CIVIL RIGHTS: TWENTIETH CENTURY UNITED STATES**  
**Spring 2010, Skidmore College**

Professor: Winston Grady-Willis  
Times: W/F 12:20-1:40pm  
Location: Tisch 303  
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Office: Tisch 328  
Hours: M 12:00-2:00pm  
W 4:00-6:00pm  
Phone: 580-8022

**Course Description and Objectives**

This course will chart and examine twentieth century struggles to attain full democratic citizenship rights within the United States. The primary focus of the course is on African American freedom struggles against institutionalized forms of white male supremacy, such as segregation, disfranchisement and terrorism. A key theme in this regard is the often-contested interplay between grassroots on-the-ground activism and the formulation of groundbreaking formal public policy. The course will also shed light on less-discussed protest struggles, such as those waged by indigenous peoples of the American Indian Movement and Mexican Americans of the Chicano/a Movement. The course culminates by treating key struggles waged by gay and lesbian activists. Through lecture-discussions, readings, documentary films and an extended research essay project, students will meet the following objectives: (1) gain knowledge about twentieth century US society; (2) understand the concepts of civil rights, coalition building, heterosexism, human rights, institutional racism, public policy, self-determination and state political repression; (3) examine ways in which groups have responded to mainstream social institutions; (4) underscore the centrality of women to such struggles, both as established and grassroots activists; (5) amplify our understanding of key figures, particularly Ella Baker and Martin Luther King, Jr.; (6) and develop research and writing skills utilizing primary sources. Throughout the course students will be placed at the center of the learning experience and attempts will be made to establish meaningful dialogue.

**Required Texts**

Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*  
Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*  
Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power*  
Enriqueta Vasquez, *Enriqueta Vasquez and the Chicano Movement: Writings from El Grito Del Norte*

Each book should be available for purchase at the Skidmore Shop. Every effort also will be made to have the texts available on reserve in the Lucy Scribner Library. Students can expect occasional handouts and other supplementary assignments throughout the semester.

### **Evaluation**

- 1) Class preparation, discussion, performance on quizzes, and attendance at specific outside-class events of relevance to the course, will constitute **20** percent of each student's grade.
- 2) Performance on the midterm and final examinations will constitute a combined **45** percent of the grade, with the midterm comprising 20 percent and the final 25 percent. Each exam will be a combination of short answer and extended essay questions.
- 3) A fifteen-page semester-long research essay project will constitute **35** percent of the class grade.

### **Attendance**

Although attendance is extremely important, there may be instances when absences are unavoidable. Nevertheless, students with more than two unexcused absences from class sessions will receive a *one-half letter-grade* deduction for the course. An effort will be made to conduct roll at the beginning of each class session. A student not present 10 minutes after class has begun will be considered late. Being late three times constitutes one absence.

### **Class Meetings**

Most classes will be conducted according to a lecture-discussion format. For that reason, it is very important that students prepare themselves by reading the necessary material before coming to a given class session. Stimulating class discussions result from informed participation. Food is not permitted during class time. Cellular telephones should be turned off or silenced prior to the start of each class session. (If this poses a problem, however, please notify the professor prior to a given class.) Text messaging during class time is unacceptable. Students using laptop computers to take notes should not engage in other computer related activities, such as Web-surfing, instant messaging or email. Any student considered to be disrespectful or disruptive during a given class session will forfeit their right to remain in class that day. In turn, however, it is the obligation of the professor to be respectful, prepared, organized, and punctual. If a student has concerns about the conduct or performance of the professor, they should express those concerns to Professor Daniel Nathan, Chair of the Department of American Studies.

### **Research Essay Project**

This assignment is designed to acquaint students with one of the most important tasks performed by scholars: using both primary and secondary sources to interpret a specific event, person's life, or trend. The essay will also serve as a three-phase project that underscores that good writing involves a process of revision.

**(1)** Early in the semester students will comb through library archives and microfilm collections in search of primary sources, those documents that record the actual words of a participant in or witness to a given historical occurrence. Such sources include

autobiographies, court transcripts and decisions, municipal records, and newspapers. Once a topic has been approved, students will write a 3-page summary-analysis of the primary source.

(2) Students will then begin researching secondary sources, those books and essays that are interpretations written by scholars and journalists who have investigated earlier primary sources. These books should compliment the primary source research already begun. Students will hand in a first draft of the essay (10-12 pages), due after the midterm. While no draft will be graded, students will receive comments regarding research, analysis, and writing.

(3) The final phase of the project will be a polished essay (approximately 15 pages) that integrates primary and secondary sources and demonstrates a clear command of prose style. Students are encouraged to consult *The Chicago Manual of Style* as they write their papers.

### **Disability and Accessibility Accommodations**

Students with disabilities should provide their semester memorandum of accommodations to me as soon as possible. Those students who do not have accommodations, but who believe that they may be in need of them, should arrange a meeting with Ms. Meg Hegener, Coordinator for Students with Disabilities, in the Office of Student Academic Services, located in the Starbuck Center (580-8150).

Students should speak with the professor one week prior to any given exam date to ensure full use of testing accommodations.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students should uphold the Skidmore Honor System and the policies outlined in the *Student Handbook* and *Student Academic Handbook* regarding academic integrity. As noted in the 2009-2010 Skidmore Course Catalog: "Skidmore not only promotes intellectual honesty vigorously but responds severely to such offenses as plagiarism and cheating on exams. Any Honor Code violation may affect the student's graduate school or transfer recommendations and the student's eligibility for academic prizes and awards, for Dean's List or graduation honors, and for membership in Skidmore or national honor societies." Students should also consult the Office of Academic Advising Website (<http://cms.skidmore.edu/advising/integrity/index.cfm>).

## **COURSE SCHEDULE (Always Subject to Revision!)**

January 27 - **Introducing the Course and Syllabus**

### **CONTEXT**

January 29 - **Domestic Apartheid Structures**

Ransby, Introduction, Chapter 1

- February 3 - **Rural Grassroots**  
 Documentary: "Awakenings," from *Eyes on the Prize I*  
 Moody, Part 1  
 Ransby, Chapter 2
- February 5 - **A Coming of Age**  
 Moody, Part 2
- February 10 - **Those Northern Roots**  
 Ransby, Chapters 3-5

### NONVIOLENT DIRECT ACTION

- February 12 - **Montgomery Bus Boycott: Special Guest, Barbara Love**
- February 17 - **Sit-in Movement [Primary Source Summary-Analyses Due!]**  
 Documentary: "Ain't Scared of Your Jails," from *Eyes on the Prize I*  
 Moody, Part 4
- February 19 - **Ella Baker and the Emergence of SNCC**  
 Ransby, Chapter 6 and Chapter 8
- February 24 - **Birmingham**
- February 26 - **March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom**  
 Martin Luther King, Jr. Speech: "I Have a Dream"  
 Malcolm X Speech: Message to the Grassroots
- March 3 - **Southern Critique: Robert F. Williams**  
 Tyson, Prologue-Chapter 5
- March 5 - **Mississippi Freedom Summer**  
 Ransby, Chapters 9-10
- March 10 - **Midterm Examination**
- March 24 - **The Selma March**

### BLACK POWER ERA

- March 26 - **Black Power**

Tyson, Chapter 6-Conclusion  
 Grady-Willis, "Neighborhood Protest and the Voices of the Black Working Poor," in *Challenging U.S. Apartheid*: 114-140

March 31 - **Vietnam War**  
 Sermon: "My Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam"

April 2 - **Poor People's Campaign and Memphis Sanitation Strike**  
 Documentary: "The Promised Land," from *Eyes on the Prize II*  
 Ransby, Chapter 11

## REDEFINITIONS

April 7 - **American Indian Movement [First Drafts of Research Essay Due!]**

April 9 - **State Repression of AIM**  
 Documentary: *Incident at Oglala*

April 14 - **Chicano/a Movement**  
 Vasquez, ix-Part IV

April 16 - **Grassroots Labor Organizing [Final Drafts of Research Essays Due!]**  
 Vasquez, Part V

April 21 - **Early LGBTQ Activism**

April 23 - **ACT-UP**  
 Begin Documentary: *For the Bible Tells Me So*

April 28 - **Struggle for Same-Sex Marriage**  
 Finish *For the Bible Tells Me So*

April 30 - **Reflections**

May 11 - **Final Examination**  
 9:00am-12:00pm