

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS  
Department of History

HIST 3992 – The History of White Supremacy, 1880 to 2017  
3 Credit Hours  
Spring 2018  
Monday and Wednesday, 2pm to 3:15pm  
Room: Liberal Arts 370

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Office Hours:  
Monday and Wednesday: 10am to 1130am  
Tuesday, 11am to 1pm  
Friday, 11am to 12pm

### **Texts and Video**

Articles – Available on Moodle  
Films for final paper

### **Course Content**

The Charlottesville March of 2017, which was organized for the purpose of “protecting” the Robert E. Lee statue, attracted Confederate sympathizers, Neo Nazis, white nationalists, and other groups. But, these groups were less interested in protecting the statues than they were in seeking to defend “white history.” As we know, the march ended tragically the next day when James Alex Fields Jr. ran over Heather Heyer with his car and killed her. Though Confederate statues continue to attract protests and counter-protests (as we saw this summer in New Orleans), the march in Charlottesville appeared to be much more than a demonstration to preserve of “whiteness.” It was about making white supremacy visible, and, for some members of the population, relatable. As I watched the conflagrations in New Orleans and Charlottesville, I began to ask these questions: what are some of the key elements of white supremacy as an idea, and what is the continual attraction of white supremacy in America, particularly around monuments to the Confederacy?

The course will explore the evolution of white supremacy in the United States since the end of the Civil War. We’re going to examine the rise of white supremacy, as an ideology and a practice beginning with the year 1880 and ending in 2017. When African Americans exercised their exercised their rights as citizens in the period of Reconstruction, we’ll look at the rise of white supremacy as a reaction to Reconstruction. As we move through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we’ll study how white supremacy has been used to isolate and discriminate against other groups, like Native and Indigenous peoples, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, Jewish Americans, Muslim Americans, and African Americans.

Here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. It is not intended, nor will I tolerate, an indictment of “white” Americans. Physically, all humans share 99.4% of the same DNA.
2. We’ll treat white supremacy as an “idea virus” that wound its way through American history. Many viruses pop up seemingly out of nowhere, and do considerable damage before their final retreat (like the bubonic plague). Cultural viruses, including sexism, homo and trans-phobia, classism, racism, and hostility toward the differently abled, don’t simply disappear. They lie in wait for the next right moment to emerge again and do more damage.

3. The bulk of this course will be conducted by you, collaborating with each other on dark topics in American history.
4. Much of our work will be in the prediction business. We'll sort out what happened at the time in American culture that allowed this moment of white supremacy to emerge. Then we'll discuss how the moment failed and if the moment will emerge again.

In this course, you will learn the important elements the role white supremacy plays in the formation of some social policies in the United States since the 1880s. Specifically, we will learn:

- to think critically, that is, to think with clarity, accuracy, and perspective about the nature of white supremacy as an idea and as a theory. We take great pains, however, to separate actions from ideas.
- to analyze documents, that is, to consider documents with logic and fairness. Documents are snapshots of people's thoughts at the time. What changes is our perspectives on these documents.
- to identify key events, figures, and eras that form white supremacy as both an ideology and as a policy.

### REQUIRED WORK

Mandatory paper - 1 reading at the beginning of the course that everyone must complete, 10%  
 Response papers - 4 readings of your choice, 2 OF THEM TURNED IN BEFORE MIDTERMS – 10% each, a total of 40%  
 Film response - 1 final paper on a film, your choice of the film but everyone must complete – 10%  
 Class Participation - Presentations – 30%  
 Class Participation - In class discussions and attendance – 10%

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

**This course has a total of six graded assignments and two class participation grades.**

#### 1. Mandatory paper – to be completed by everyone

Read the following, "The History of White Supremacy in America." It was written shortly after the Charlottesville march, when James Alex Fields ran over and killed Heather Heyer. Write a one-page paper, single-spaced, answering the following questions:

How does the article place Charlottesville in historical context?

What is white supremacy, according to this article?

Does the article offer solutions?

Extra credit bonus – Read Ta'Neahi Coates, "Donald Trump is the First White President." Write a one-page summary of Coates argument by answering these questions: how does Coates define white supremacy? Is this definition sufficient, in your opinion? Do you think Trump is a white supremacist? Or, are there black, Latino, Native, and Asian-American versions of Donald Trump, waiting in the wings to be pumped up by Steve Bannon and take their turn in office? That is, can a person of color do what Trump has done and achieve the same results? Complete this assignment and I will add up to one full letter grade to this assignment's grade. Example –Suppose you wrote only the mandatory assignment, and your grade is 85 or B. If you complete this assignment, your grade may be boosted up to 95 or A. You will receive extra credit points for this assignment alone.

**The "History of White Supremacy" must be completed by everyone.** The second assignment is entirely voluntary. Both assignments are due on January 25, 2018, 2pm. Failure to turn in this assignment will result in an F for the assignment and a likely F for the course.

## 2. Response papers – your choice

FOUR (4) one-page response papers, TWO (2) of them turned in before Midterms. Check the week for the readings. Turn in your response via Moodle by 2pm of THURSDAY of the week it is assigned.

**Response papers should follow this format: Single spaced, 11 point font in Times New Roman or Calibri, usual margins.**

Answer these questions:

Which time period is the focus of this reading, e.g. Reconstruction, World War II, 1967, removal of native peoples in the West in the 1880s?

What was going on in American history *at the time* that produced these white supremacist responses?

What were the actions taken to reinforce white supremacy?

How does this reading define white supremacy?

Who were the targets of the actions?

If you could go back in time and correct this situation with a specific policy, what would correction would you propose?

## 3. Film response paper – choose your film

Write one paper on one of the following films. **You must cite and quote at least one of your readings in your response paper.**

*American History X*

*Higher Learning*

*Gentlemen's Agreement*

*The Birth of a Nation*

*In the Heat of the Night*

*Blood in the Face* (documentary)

*The Murder of Emmett Till* (documentary)

Answer these questions:

- If the film is a work of fiction, is it historically accurate? Did the film represent a “truthful” perspective? If the film is a documentary, did it engage you? Did it tell the truth?
- How does white supremacy motivate the characters?
- What is the film’s premise, i.e. its reason for being made? Are there any important lessons the film seeks to teach?
- Which insights does the reading bring to the film?
- And finally, identify a question that you had about the film that the reading answered. You must identify a question. You can say, “The question I had about this film was \_\_\_\_\_. The reading answered this question about the film by explaining that \_\_\_\_\_.”

Due on **Friday, May 11 2018 NOON**

## 4. Class Presentations

This segment is the most important part of the class, regarding your grade. Students will form groups of two or three students (at most three group members) to make a presentation to the class. Each student must make TWO PRESENTATIONS in the semester. The presentations will be made for the weekly reading assignments. In other words, I will teach the first three weeks of the class. But the remainder of the class will be taught by student groups.

Your presentation must do the following:

- **Meet with me before at least A WEEK BEFORE the first presentation to talk about expectations.**
- Be ready for presentation on the Monday of the assigned week.
- Have a collaborative powerpoint, like Prezi or Google Slides.
- Have a prepared activity – lecture, debate, legal case discussion, movie, role play, etc. Your activity must include the context. Your presentation should explain what was going on in American history that produced this act of white supremacy.
- Have a set of questions for group discussion for the following Wednesday.
- Take a leadership role in the class for Wednesday group discussion.

Wednesday group discussions will talk about what we learned on Monday. Bring your questions, your readings, or something you saw that relates to class for open discussion.

**For all assignments, NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. Not for the mandatory assignment, the reading responses, or the final film essay. None.**

### **Grading Specifications**

- A, 90-100 points = Exceptional Accomplishment. Thoughtful, innovative, used evidence to support claims. Did the reading, thought about it, and came up with an inquisitive BIG IDEA.
- B, 80-89 points = Superior. Thoughtful, presented an argument. The paper fell short, did more summary than analysis. Still, the reading was done and cited.
- C, 70-79 points = Satisfactory. Did the reading. Summarized. Added nothing new.
- D, 60-69 = Inferior but passing. Might have done the reading, but not obvious. Made wild claims to fill space. Didn't follow the format of single space in a reasonable font.
- F, 59 and below = Failed. Plagiarized. Didn't follow format. Didn't do the reading. Didn't show any interest in the reading or the subject. Provided no correct answers and/or plagiarized the correct answers of another student or from a site online.

### **General classroom guidelines**

#### **Laptop policy**

After long discussions with my colleagues, I have decided to prohibit the use of laptops in my classroom. In other words, NO LAPTOPS OR TABLET COMPUTERS. Laptops were once an innovative part of the classroom. Unfortunately, with the introduction of wireless internet throughout the campus, laptops are too often used for purposes other than note-taking.

If you open your laptop, you will be asked to close it. If you insist on using on using it, you will be asked to produce a note from the Office of Disability Service explaining why you need it. Then you must relocate to the front of the room and sit in the first row. You will be asked only once. After that I will deduct one letter grade from your final grade for each offense. The same goes for tablet computers.

#### **Interruptions and Tardiness**

Please turn off all cell phones before entering class. They are disruptive and they interrupt the concentration of other students and the professor. If your cell phone goes off for any reason during class time, OR if you are found to be using your cell phone to text or to talk during class, there will be an automatic deduction of one letter grade from your final grade. No exceptions. The grading assistant can and will enforce this policy.

The same is true for tardiness. Enter the classroom no later than 10 minutes after the beginning of class.

### **Attendance Policy**

You must sign in on a sign-in sheet passed around during class. If you miss four classes, which is two weeks of study, your final grade will be reduced by 50 points (that is, a full letter grade). If your attendance for the class is less than 50% and you receive a D or F for the class, there's nothing I can do to change your grade.

It is shockingly disrespectful to sign the attendance sheet and leave class immediately afterward. If you are found signing the attendance sheet and then leaving, not only will you be counted absent for the day, but your entire attendance for the semester will be called into question as well.

### **Lectures**

Lectures are provided for instructional purposes only and remain the intellectual property of the professor. Lecture material is covered by copyright (Title 17 U.S. Code). Lectures may not be taped or recorded without my consent.

### **Students of Different Abilities**

Following university policy, if you require accommodations for this course, such as a sign language interpreter or wheel chair accessible room, please notify me as soon as possible, preferably at the beginning of the course. Students must verify their eligibility through the Office of Disability Services, 280-6222 or at the following website: <http://www.uno.edu/disability-services/>

### **Plagiarism and Cheating**

A definition of plagiarism: to copy, duplicate, mimic, or reproduce the work of someone or something else, for the purpose of passing it off as your own work.

The University of New Orleans believes that "Academic honesty and intellectual integrity are fundamental to the process of learning and to evaluating academic performance. Maintaining such integrity is the responsibility of all members of the University." Click on the following link for more information: For Student Accountability, <http://www.uno.edu/saa/> or for Academic dishonesty <http://www.uno.edu/student-affairs/documents/academic-dishonesty-policy-rev2014.pdf>

If a student is caught on his/her exams, presentations, or papers plagiarizing any part of the textbook, my lectures, or the Internet, the student will receive a zero and F for the exam, presentation, or paper. If caught again, I will contact the Office of Judicial Affairs, and the student will receive an F in the class.

### **Topics and Reading Assignments**

Week 1            January 17    Introductions, organizational meeting, discussion of syllabus and papers.  
No assignments due

Week 2            January 22 and 24  
Theme: White Supremacy after Reconstruction  
DUE THURSDAY, 2pm, FOR EVERYONE: Analysis of "The History of White Supremacy in America"

Week 3            January 29 and 31  
Theme: The Chinese Exclusion Act  
DUE THURSDAY, 2pm: Erika Lee, "The Chinese Exclusion Example: Race and American Gatekeeping"

Week 4 February 5 and 7 – GROUP PRESENTATIONS BEGIN IN THIS WEEK

Theme: The First Muslim Ban of 1917

DUE THURSDAY, 2pm: “The 1917 Immigration Act that Presaged Trump’s Muslim Ban”; Aziz Ansari, “Why Trump Makes Me Scared for My Family”

Week 5 February 14 (February 12, no class due to Mardi Gras Holidays)

Theme: Backlash to the Great Migration of the 1920s

DUE THURSDAY, 2pm: Victoria Wolcott, “Defending the Home: Ossian Sweet and Segregation in Detroit in 1920s”

**MIDTERM WEEK – TWO OF THE VOLUNTARY ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE TURNED IN BY FEBRUARY 21**

Week 6 February 19 and 21

Theme: Eugenics and the Backlash to Modernity in the 1920s

DUE THURSDAY, 2pm: Nell Painter, *A History of White People*, Chapters 18, 19 and 23

Week 7 February 26 and 28

Theme: American Antisemitism at the worst possible time

DUE THURSDAY, 2pm: “The U.S. government turned away thousands of Jewish refugees, fearing they were Nazi spies”; “Voyage of the U.S.S. St. Louis”

Week 8 March 5 and 7

Theme: Japanese internment at a very bad time for Asian Americans

DUE THURSDAY, 2pm: “Writing and Teaching Behind Barbed Wire: An Exiled Composition Class in a Japanese Internment Camp”

Week 9 March 12 and 14

Theme: When Mexican Americans were deported en masse

DUE THURSDAY, 2pm: Hernandez, “Crimes and Consequences of Illegal Immigration: A Cross Border Examination of Operation Wetback”

Week 10 March 19 and 21

Theme: Housing Discrimination and Redlining in the 1950s

DUE THURSDAY, 2pm: Ta’Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations”

Week 11 – March 26 (no class on March 28)

Theme: Massive resistance as a gendered crime against African American women

DUE THURSDAY, 2pm: “Recy Taylor, Who fought for Justice after a 1944 rape, Dies at 97”; “Meeting Mrs. Recy Taylor”; George Wallace, “Inauguration Speech, 1963”

**SPRING BREAK, March 28 through 31 – Get some sun**

Week 12 April 2 and 4

Theme: Draconian Drug Laws and the Attica Prison Riot

DUE: Heather Thompson, *Blood in the Water*, Ch 1 and Epilogue

Week 12 April 9 and 11

Theme: The consequences of broken promises to Native American peoples

DUE THURSDAY, 2pm: "The Little Known History of the Forced Sterilization of Native American Women" and "Remembering Wounded Knee at Standing Rock"

Week 13      April 16 and 18

Theme: Super-predators and Mass Incarceration

DUE THURSDAY, 2pm: "Donald Trump and the Central Park Five"; "The Hyper-Criminalization of Black and Latino Male Youth in the Era of Mass Incarceration"

Week 14      April 23 and 25

Theme: The attraction of neo-Nazism, especially to defile places of worship

DUE THURSDAY, 2pm: "A Most American Terrorist: The Making of Dylann Roof"

Week 15      April 30

Theme: The Charlottesville March and "Some good people on both sides"

Wednesday: Concluding thoughts on white supremacy the United States

DUE THURSDAY, 2pm: "Whose Heritage?" Southern Poverty Law Center on Confederate Monuments

Final Papers Due on **Friday, May 11 2018 2pm**