

ENGLISH/SOUTHERN STUDIES 236: SOUTHERN JUSTICE

In the South, the justice system has historically been racist, retributive, and violent. This course will examine the historical, social, and cultural context of southern justice.

We will consider the antebellum southern code of honor and the practice of dueling, and we will study the origins of the southern penal system, including the practice of convict leasing and the use of chain gangs. We will also

analyze lynching as a form of extralegal retribution. At the end of the semester, we will discuss the contemporary penal system and the death penalty.



A guard watches a chain gang in Oglethorpe County, Georgia, 1941

Professor

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Course Objectives

- To study the social, historical, and cultural aspects of the South's legal and extralegal justice system by discussing scholarly, literary, and experiential sources.
- To cultivate essential skills in reading comprehension, analysis, and critical thinking.
- To practice oral and written communication.

Course Requirements & Grading Policies

English 236 is a discussion-based course that uses a modified seminar format. Your success in this course depends upon attending every session fully prepared to contribute to our mutual

understanding of the topic. Attendance constitutes 19% of your course grade. Attendance grades are computed according to the following scale:

Absence	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Grade	100	97	93	85	75	60	40	20	0	failure

Entering class after attendance has been taken will count as a tardy, and three tardies will count as an absence. Missing class for a verifiable family emergency, participation in a university-sanctioned athletic event, or religious holidays will not result in a deduction from your final grade, but it is your responsibility to inform me of your absence.

During the semester I will administer seven unannounced quizzes that will cover the reading assigned for the day of the quiz. Quizzes constitute 21% of your course grade. You may replace up to two quizzes by writing replacement assignments. The replacement assignment requires that you write a seven hundred word synopsis of the reading assignment due the day of the missed quiz. Replacement assignments should be submitted on the day of the second class meeting after the missed quiz. Any missed quizzes beyond the two replacement assignments will factor into your quiz grade as a zero.

Your other assignments will allow you to practice research skills and to develop a significant level of expertise on the topic. You will deliver an eight-minute presentation on a topic directly relevant to the day's reading assignment. The presentation will constitute 10% of your course grade. One week after the presentation, you will submit an eight-hundred word encyclopedia entry on your topic. The entry will constitute 10% of your course grade. You will also write a brief analytic paper, which will constitute 10% of your course grade. At midterm, you will complete a take-home exam, which will constitute 12% of your course grade, and at the end of the semester you will complete a take-home final exam, which will constitute 18% of your grade.

Papers and exams will be submitted to my email, davis_da@mercer.edu, by 6:00 pm on the due date. I will grade the paper electronically in Microsoft Word and return it with embedded comments. Papers will be returned to the initiating address, so be sure to send the paper from your own email account.

You may rewrite and resubmit written assignments—the encyclopedia entry and the paper—after they have been graded. Revised papers should be submitted at the beginning of the class meeting immediately after original papers have been returned. Revised papers should be accompanied by a self-critical analysis that explains how the paper has been improved. In cases

of revision, the revised grade will be added to the original grade and averaged into the overall paper grade. Keep in mind that revising means more than correcting minor errors. In fact, a cursory revision could result in a lower grade. Papers submitted after the due date will automatically receive an F, but they may be revised to improve the final grade. The midterm and final exams are not eligible for revision.

The students of Mercer University have a proud tradition of honorable conduct, and I expect all students in this class to continue that tradition. Cheating, plagiarism, or other acts of academic misconduct will result in prosecution from the honor court, who may censure, suspend, or expel a guilty student. If you ever have any concerns about plagiarism, please consult me, and I will be happy to discuss your situation confidentially.

Students with a documented disability should inform the instructor at the close of the first class meeting or as soon as possible. If you are not registered with Disability Services, the instructor will refer you to the Student Support Services office for consultation regarding documentation of your disability and eligibility for accommodations under the ADA/504. In order to receive accommodations, eligible students must provide each instructor with a Faculty Accommodation Form from Disability Services. Students must return the completed and signed form to the Disability Services office on the 3rd floor of the Connell Student Center. Students with a documented disability who do not wish to use accommodations are strongly encouraged to register with Disability Services and complete a Faculty Accommodation Form each semester. For further information please contact Disability Services at 301-2778 or visit the website at http://www.mercer.edu/stu_support/swd.htm.

In an ongoing effort to improve the quality of instruction, each student enrolled in this course is required to complete an end-of-semester course evaluation, to be administered on blackboard during the last week of class. Students failing to submit the evaluation by December 11 will be assigned the grade of "Incomplete," which will automatically turn into an "F" if the evaluation is not submitted by the midterm of the very next semester.

As a final note, I realize that you are busy and that unexpected crises sometimes arise, but as a general rule I do not give extensions on any assignments. I also do not excuse absences. If you have a major emergency or extended illness, you should contact Associate Dean Ed Weintraut to intervene on your behalf. I do not ever give extra credit assignments.

Course Schedule

January 13	Course introduction: Retributive, Punitive, Deterrent, and Distributive Justice
January 15	Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Honor, Shame, and Justice in a Slavocracy"

January 18	King Holiday
January 20	Wyatt-Brown, excerpt on dueling, and John Lyde Wilson's code duello
January 22	Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, "The Fight"
January 25	Edward Ayers, <i>Vengeance and Justice</i> 3-72
January 27	Ayers, 73-140
January 29	Ayers, 141-222
February 1	Ayers, 223-276
February 3	David Blackmon, <i>Slavery by another Name</i> , 1-57
February 5	No Class
February 8	Blackmon, 58-115
February 10	Blackmon, 117-180
February 12	Blackmon, 181-245
February 15	Blackmon, 246-298
February 17	Blackmon, 299-337
February 19	Blackmon, 338-403
February 22	John L. Spivak, <i>Georgia Nigger</i> , 1-77
February 24	Spivak, 78-164
February 26	Spivak, 165-241
March 1	Film: <i>I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang</i>
March 3	David Oshinsky, <i>Worse than Slavery</i> , 1-54
March 5	Oshinsky, 55-108
March 8-12	Spring Break
March 15	Oshinsky, 109-178
March 17	Oshinsky, 179-260
March 19	Fitz Brundage, <i>Lynching in the New South</i> , 1-48
March 22	Brundage, 49-102
March 24	Tolnay and Beck, <i>Festival of Violence</i> , 86-118
March 26	Brundage, 103-139
March 29	Ida B. Wells, "Southern Horrors"
March 31	Brundage, 191-260
April 2	Good Friday
April 5	James Baldwin, "Going to Meet the Man"
April 7	William Faulkner, "Dry September"
April 9	No Class
April 12	Angela Davis, <i>Are Prisons Obsolete?</i> , 5-59
April 14	Prison Field Trip
April 16	Davis, 60-115
April 19	Ernest Gaines, <i>A Lesson before Dying</i> , 3-58
April 21	Gaines, 59-124
April 23	Gaines, 125-186
April 26	Gaines, 187-256
April 28	Guest lecture: Sarah Gerwig-Moore, The Habeas Project
April 30	Film: <i>Monster's Ball</i>

Assignments

Presentation

You will sign up at the beginning of the semester to give an eight-minute presentation on an assigned topic related to a day's class discussion. After class on the day of your presentation, I will give you a brief critique on the four key criteria of a presentation: structure, content, delivery, and interest. A good presentation has a clear structure with a discernible beginning, middle, and end, and it demonstrates a significant depth of research far beyond a mere Wikipedia entry. You should deliver your presentation effectively with a clear voice, direct eye contact, and confident body language. Most importantly, your presentation should be interesting, since your classmates have to listen to it—whether they want to or not.

Encyclopedia Entry

Seven days after your presentation, you will submit an eight hundred word entry on your presentation topic for *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Your entry should demonstrate significant research, it should cite sources in MLA style, and it should include a list of about five sources for further information. Keep in mind for the entry that you are an expert writing for a general audience. Exemplary entries will be published online.

Paper

Atlanta Journal Constitution is running a retrospective series on the development of the justice system in Georgia. You have been assigned a time period or form of incarceration to describe. In a 1,000 word article, explain the aspect of the system your editor assigned in a way that the paper's readership can understand. Remember that good newspaper articles usually tell stories from the perspective of a specific individual and that they strive to consider as many different opinions as possible.

Midterm

At the midpoint of the semester you will complete a take-home exam. I will invite you to write interpretive discussion questions for the exam, and I will tweak these questions and give you a set to answer in short essays. The midterm is due March 5.

Final

At the end of the semester, you will complete another, slightly longer, take-home exam. I will again invite you to write interpretive discussion questions for the exam, and I will tweak these questions and set to answer in short essays. The final is due May 3.