

AML 4933-601
Studies in American Literature and Culture:
Civil Rights and Sites of Memory
Fall 2014
Thursdays 2:00-4:55 pm
DAV 251 and Online

Description:

This course examines the intersections between literature, history, and memory via representations of the U.S. civil rights movement. We will consider how literature acts as a form of primary evidence; infuses data with emotional and cognitive value; and challenges a consensus narrative of civil rights historical memory. Using representations of a particular site – Birmingham, 1963 – as a model, students will develop independent research projects that employ various forms of evidence (from history, literature, visual art, music, popular culture, family memory, etc.) to tell a story about a significant civil rights event, place, or person. In the same way that the assignment blurs disciplinary boundaries, it encourages blurring the lines between academic discourses: developing new modes of academic writing that are creative, narrative, hybrid, and/or multimodal.

Required Texts:

Howard Cruse, *Stuck Rubber Baby*. New York: DC Comics, 2010. Print.

Anthony Grooms, *Bombingham*. New York: The Free Press, 2001. Print.

Other required reading linked below and/or on Canvas:

- Leigh Raiford and Renee C. Romano, Introduction to *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*
- Geneviève Fabre and Robert O’Meally, Introduction to *History and Memory in African American Culture*
- Renee C. Romano, “Narratives of Redemption: The Birmingham Church Bombing Trials and the Construction of Civil Rights Memory”
- Christopher Metress, “Making Civil Rights Harder: Literature, Memory, and the Black Freedom Struggle”
- Rebecca Mark, “Mourning Emmett: One Long Expansive Moment”
- Clive Webb, “Counterblast: How the Atlanta Temple Bombing Strengthened the Civil Rights Cause”
- Charles Reagan Wilson, “Routes of Reconciliation”: Visiting Sites of Cultural Trauma in the US South, Northern Ireland, and South Africa

Recommended Texts (on reserve/available as e-book):

Julie Armstrong, ed., *The Civil Rights Reader: American Literature from Jim Crow to Reconciliation*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009.

Jeffrey Lamar Coleman, ed., *Words of Protest, Words of Freedom: Poetry of the American Civil Rights Movement*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Assignments:

Online Discussion Journal. 50% (10, 5% each). Students will write 1-2 pp. responses to assigned course readings. Responses should summarize the author’s (or multiple authors’ if more than one is assigned) key ideas and discuss the student’s perspective on those ideas. There are no right or wrong perspectives: they can be critical, personal, connected to other courses or texts. Possibilities are open, and the goal is to engage intellectually with course ideas and with peers. Responses will be posted to the Discussions section of Canvas and require peer commentary of 150 words minimum (i.e., post your own 1-2 pp. response then comment on the response of at least one other student in class). For specific grading information, see the grading rubric attached to the assignment on Canvas.

Research Project. 50%. Students will research and write about a significant event, person, or place related to civil rights, broadly defined, using various forms of evidence: history, literature, visual art, music, popular culture, family memory, etc. This project has seven parts:

- Topic. 5%. Due 9.18. 1-2 pp. description of the Research Project. What person, place, or event will you investigate? Briefly summarize key facts about the topic and discuss its significance. Why does this subject interest you? What historical, literary/artistic, and/or other resources do you plan to investigate? Does the subject matter lend itself to any particular style of writing or presentation? What questions do you have? (You may change or modify topics after turning this one in.)
- Research Plan. 5%. Due 10.9 (end of day -- after the library discussion). 1-2 pp. discussion of how you plan to conduct your research. What do you already know about the topic? What do you need to find out? What types of resources will best help you discover what you need to know (i.e., books, journal articles, archival material, etc.)? Where do you plan to look? How will you manage your time (i.e., what will you do when)?
- Annotated List of Historical Resources. 5%. Due 10.23. At least 5-7 sources in MLA (or another instructor-approved) format that deal with the historical aspect of your topic. You do not have to use all of these in the essay; pick 10 that you think will be helpful. Follow each citation with a 1-3 sentence/phrase description. See below for an example.
- Annotated List of Literary/Artistic Resources. 5%. Due 10.30. At least 5-7 sources in MLA (or another instructor-approved) format that deal with the literary/artistic aspect of your topic. You do not have to use all of these in the essay; pick 10 that you think will be helpful. Follow each citation with a 1-3 sentence/phrase description. For example:
Julie Armstrong, ed., *The Civil Rights Reader: American Literature from Jim Crow to Reconciliation*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009. Anthology of literary responses to the civil rights movement, broadly defined, from Reconstruction to the present. Includes poetry, fiction, drama, and memoir.
- Essay Draft/Participation in Peer Review Workshop. 5%. Due 11.13. Turn in online a complete draft of the Research Essay, and participate in an online peer review workshop. Instructions found on Canvas.
- Presentation. 5%. Due 12.4 (or 12.11 if necessary). Summarize your research for peers and, if we decide, invited guests in a 5-10 minute oral presentation on the last day of class. Presentations should be "formal," meaning that students should dress and speak professionally, but the goal here is really to celebrate hard work and get some additional practice talking in front of a group.
- Research Essay. 20%. Due 12.11. The amount of writing should be substantial: 10-12 pages minimum. That said, the assignment lends itself to modes of writing that push the boundaries of traditional academic scholarship, and students are encouraged, under consultation with the instructor, to try something other than the usual critical essay. No penalties for the usual, but students who want to experiment have an opportunity to do so here.

Policies and Procedures:

Contacting Your Instructor. The most appropriate way to contact me outside of class or office hours is via email: jba@mail.usf.edu. I will try my best to respond within 24-48 hours, not including evenings and weekends.

Academic Integrity. The university's policy on academic integrity will be fully enforced. Cheating or plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Please read the university's [policies on academic dishonesty](#) (PDF). For more information and a full list of the university policies visit this link: [Undergraduate Catalog](#).

Grading. Plus/minus and S/U grades are not given in this class. Incompletes are given only in the case of extreme emergency at the semester's end and when the student has completed at least 75% of the course work at a C or above. The grading scale is as follows: A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, F=0-59.

Attendance, Participation, and Manners. This is an active-learning classroom. Points will be deducted from your final grade for a pattern (more than two instances) of missing class, coming in late, leaving early, being unprepared, or behaving in ways (in class or on line) that disrupt the instructor or other students. You do not need to let me know if you will miss class, be late, or discreetly leave early unless there is an issue about which you need to make me aware, such as your participation in a religious observance.

Laptops, Cellphones, and Other Electronic Devices. Laptops, iPods, and similar electronic devices can be useful educational tools. When used for non-class related reasons, they can distract from the learning environment. This class will employ laptops, I-Pads, and other such electronic devices for pedagogical purposes only. Using them for other purposes counts as a class disruption and can lead to point deductions on the final grade.

Student Disability Services. Students in need of academic accommodations for a disability may arrange appropriate accommodations with [Student Disability Services](#). Students are required to give reasonable notice prior to requesting an accommodation.

Tutoring Resources. Students needing help with writing or other academic skills should contact the [Academic Success Center](#) in DAV 107.

Recommendations. Students frequently ask me about letters of reference and other such recommendations. I am happy to provide them if you have taken at least two classes with me, if you have performed well in those classes, and if I can honestly say that I know/remember you and your work.

Course Calendar:

R 8.28	<p>Topic: Course introduction Watch: <i>Eyes on The Prize</i>, “No Easy Walk” (Birmingham, 1963) Discuss: How and why did this particular place get represented as an iconic civil rights city? (Begin conversation in class and continue online. Counts as Discussion Journal 1. Due M 9.1.)</p>
R 9.4	<p>Topic: Critical frameworks – consensus memory and sites of memory Read (before class): Leigh Raiford and Renee C. Romano, Introduction to <i>The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory</i>; Geneviève Fabre and Robert O’Meally, Introduction to <i>History and Memory in African American Culture</i> Discuss: How do terms such as “consensus memory” and “sites of memory” help you understand what you know about the past, what you need to know, and how your knowledge gets constructed? (Begin conversation in class and continue online. Counts as Discussion Journal 2. Due M 9.8.) Sign up: with instructor for conference before 9.18</p>
R 9.11	<p>Topic: Trauma and healing, pt. 1 – the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing View (in class): Spike Lee’s <i>4 Little Girls</i> Read (before class): Renee C. Romano, “Narratives of Redemption: The Birmingham Church Bombing Trials and the Construction of Civil Rights Memory” Discuss: What is the consensus memory of this incident and how has it been represented as a site of memory in documentary texts? (Begin conversation in class and continue online. Counts as Discussion Journal 3. Due M 9.15.)</p>
R 9.18	<p>Topic: Trauma and healing, pt. 2 – the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing Read (before class): Introduction and poetry selections on pp. 57-69 of Coleman, <i>Words of Protest, Words of Freedom</i> (linked on Canvas) Discuss: What is the consensus memory of this incident and how has it been represented as a site of memory in creative texts? (Begin conversation in class and continue online. Counts as Discussion Journal 4. Due M 9.22.) Turn in: Research topic</p>
R 9.25	<p>Topic: Local people, pt. 1 Read (before class): Howard Cruse, <i>Stuck Rubber Baby</i> Discuss: How does Cruse’s book complicate the consensus memory of Birmingham, 1963 and represent it as a different site of memory? (Begin conversation in class and continue online. Counts as Discussion Journal 5. Due M 9.29.)</p>
R 10.2	<p>Topic: Local people, pt. 2 Read (before class): Anthony Grooms, <i>Bombingham</i> Discuss: How does Grooms’s book complicate the consensus memory of Birmingham, 1963 and represent it as a different site of memory? (Begin conversation in class and continue online. Counts as Discussion Journal 6. Due M 10.6.)</p>
R 10.9	<p>Topic: Using library resources Guest instructor: TBA to discuss finding appropriate resources for civil rights literary study Turn in: Research plan (end of day -- after this library presentation)</p>

R 10.16 Online Dr. A in China	Topic: Anthony Grooms, <i>Bombingham</i> , cont'd. Read (before class): Christopher Metress, "Making Civil Rights Harder: Literature, Memory, and the Black Freedom Struggle" Discuss (on line): Briefly summarize Metress's main ideas in this essay. How can you apply what he says about <i>Bombingham</i> to other civil rights stories or literary texts? How can you use them to tell a civil rights story of your own? (Counts as Discussion Journal 7. Due R 10.16.)
R 10.23 Online Dr. A in China	Topic: Historical research Turn in: Annotated list of historical resources using for Research Project. Discuss (on line): Write down 3-4 questions that you are currently exploring in your research. How will your historical resources help you explore these questions? (Counts as Discussion Journal 8. Due R 10.23)
R 10.30 Online Dr. A in China	Topic: Literary/artistic research Turn in: Annotated list of literary/artistic resources using for Research Project. Discuss (on line): If necessary, refine your questions from last week. How will your literary/artistic resources help you explore these questions? (Counts as Discussion Journal 9. Due R 10.30)
R 11.6 Online Dr. A in China	Topic: Ways of writing Read (before class): Rebecca Mark, "Mourning Emmett," <i>Southern Literary Journal</i> ; Clive Webb, "Counterblast..." , <i>Southern Spaces</i> ; Charles Reagan Wilson, "Routes of Reconciliation" , <i>Southern Spaces</i> Discuss (on line): Briefly summarize each reading. How can you apply what you have learned from these different forms of writing to craft your own essay? (Counts as Discussion Journal 10. Due 11.6)
R 11.13 Online Dr. A in China	Topic: Peer review of Research Essay draft Turn in (on line): Drafts of Research Essays for peer review and instructor feedback. Sign up: with instructor for conference before 11.26.
R 11.20 Dr. A returns	Topic: Research essay status reports Bring in: Any project material or questions that you struggle with -- large or small. Discuss (in class): What will essays look like? What will presentations look like? What questions do people have?
R 11.27	Thanksgiving
R 12.4	Topic: Research Project presentations (last class day)
R 12.11	Topic: (Scheduled Final Exam Date) -- Class will meet if necessary to continue Research Project presentations Due: Research Essay (turn in to Canvas link by end of day)