

## **Jim Crow and Its Challengers, 1880 to the Present**

**Professor Nikki Brown**

**Fall 2025**

### **Course Description**

While Reconstruction policies attempted to bring Black people (free and formerly enslaved) into the American fold, the abrupt end of Reconstruction brought the end of the promise of full American citizenship for all African Americans. Following the codification of the Jim Crow laws with the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision, there was an emergence of African American activism across the political spectrum that carried into the Civil Rights Movement and its many forms—legal, educational, political, and grassroots. In this course, Professor Brown addresses the rise, institutionalization, fall, and lasting impact of racial segregation laws in the United States. Students will examine the growth and popularity of Jim Crow laws and spend particular time exploring the ways African Americans mitigated, or tried to moderate, the worst excesses of these laws.

### **Course Readings**

1. Anderson, Carol. *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2016.
2. Clayborne, Carson. *The Eyes on the Prize: Civil Rights Reader*. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.
3. Delmont, Matthew. *Half-American: The Epic Story of African Americans Fighting World War II at Home and Abroad*. New York: Viking, 2022.
4. Foner, Eric. *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2010.
5. Litwack, Leon. *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow*. New York: Knopf, 1998.
6. Wall, Cheryl. *The Harlem Renaissance: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

### **Course Requirements**

- Watch all course lectures
- Complete all course readings
- Submit five short papers (500 words each)
- Contribute to five discussion boards
- Participate in at least three Q&As
- Complete a 15-page (~3,750 words) research paper or project of appropriate rigor

- Complete a course evaluation (A survey link will be sent to your Gettysburg email during Week Five of the semester.)

## Learning Objectives

On completion of this course, students will

1. Possess a working knowledge of the African American Civil Rights struggles, including the rise and fall of Jim Crow, from 1865 to 2010.
2. Understand the framework for the post-1865 portion African American activism resisting racial oppressions.
3. Recognize the roles race, class, and gender played in the formation of Jim Crow and in African American resistance.
4. Develop speaking, discussion-leading, and writing skills for clear transmission of information and ideas, inside and outside the academy.

## Class Schedule

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**Week One:** September 18: Reconstruction and the Nadir, 1865–1900

### Readings

#### *Primary*

- W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Propaganda of History" (chapter 17) in *Black Reconstruction in America*, 635–652.

#### *Secondary*

- Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 290–336.
- Kidada Williams, "The Special Object of Hatred and Persecution" in *They Left Great Marks on Me: African American Testimonies of Racial Violence from Emancipation to World War I*, 17–55. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

### Assignments

- Discussion Board One
    - o First post due: Sunday, September 21
    - o Second post due: Wednesday, September 24
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**Week Two:** September 25: Why Homer Plessy Matters; *Plessy v. Ferguson* and the Structure of Twentieth-Century Racial Segregation

Readings

*Secondary*

- Edward Ayers, "In Black and White," in *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*, 132–159. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))
- C. Vann Woodward, "Plessy v. Ferguson: The Birth of Jim Crow," *American Heritage* 15, no. 3 (April 1964). ([A link to this reading is available in the Week Two module.](#))
- John Hope Franklin, "Mirror for Americans: A Century of Reconstruction History," *American Historical Review* 85, no. 1 (1980): 1–14. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

Assignments

- Discussion Board Two
    - First post due: Sunday, September 28
    - Second post due: Wednesday, October 1
  - Short Paper One due: Wednesday, October 1
    - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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**Week Three:** October 2: Early Decades of the Long Civil Rights Movement: Lynching and Racial Violence

Readings

*Primary*

- Ida B. Wells, "Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases." ([A link to this reading is available in the Week Three module.](#))

*Secondary*

- Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, Chapter 6.
- Amy Kate Bailey and Stewart E. Tolnay, *Lynched: The Victims of Southern Mob Violence* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 1–60. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

## Assignments

- Discussion Board Three
    - First post due: Sunday, October 5
    - Second post due: Wednesday, October 8
  - Final Project/Paper Question due: Wednesday, October 8
    - In roughly 1–2 pages, outline the question your final project or paper will attempt to answer. This should include a description of the paper or project you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic, a brief description of your research plan, and a justification for why your particular project or paper is worth pursuing.
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**Week Four:** October 9: Early Decades of the Long Civil Rights Movement, 1890–1930: Black Resistance to Segregation in the Early Twentieth Century

## Readings

### *Primary*

- W. E. B. Du Bois, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others." ([A link to this reading is available in the Week Four module.](#))
- Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Exposition Address." ([A link to this reading is available in the Week Four module.](#))

### *Secondary*

- Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, Chapter 8.
- Rayford Whittingham Logan, *The Negro in American Life and Thought* (New York: The Dial Press, 1954), 3–11.

## Assignments

- Discussion Board Four
    - First post due: Sunday, October 12
    - Second post due: Wednesday, October 15
  - Short Paper Two due: Wednesday, October 15
    - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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**Week Five:** October 16: The New Negro and the Resurgence of the Lost Cause in the 1920s and 1930s

### Readings

#### *Primary*

- Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," accessed via Project Gutenberg. ([A link to this reading is available in the Week Five module.](#))
- *The Birth of a Nation* (film, 1915). ([This film can be accessed on Kanopy with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

#### *Secondary*

- Wall, *The Harlem Renaissance*, 1–43.
- Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Use of the Past," *Journal of American History*, 91 no. 4 (March 2005): 1233–1263. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

### Assignments

- Discussion Board Five
  - First post due: Sunday, October 19
  - Second post due: Wednesday, October 22
- Revised Question and Proposed Bibliography due: Wednesday, October 22
  - Revise your initial proposal to incorporate your section professor's feedback AND
  - Create an annotated bibliography containing at least five sources. Each of these sources should be followed by a short paragraph describing the source and what it will contribute to your final project/paper.

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**Week Six:** October 23: New Deal and Progressive Revolution, 1932–1950: Party Affiliation and National Politics

### Readings

#### *Primary*

- Charles S. Johnson, "The Negro," *American Journal of Sociology* 47, no. 6 (1942): 854–864. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

### *Secondary*

- Harvard Sitkoff, "The Impact of the New Deal on Black Southerners" in Julian Bond and Andrew Lewis, *Gonna Sit At The Welcome Table* (Thomson Learning Custom, 2002), 113–125.
- Patricia Sullivan, Chapters 1–3, in *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000). ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

### Assignments

- Discussion Board Six
    - First post due: Sunday, October 26
    - Second post due: Wednesday, October 29
  - Short Paper Three due: Wednesday, October 29
    - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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**Week Seven:** October 30: New Deal and Progressive Revolution, 1932–1950: World War II

### Readings

#### *Primary*

- Richard Wright, *12 Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States* (New York: Viking Press, 1941). ([A link to this reading is available in the Week Seven module.](#))

#### *Secondary*

- Delmont, *Half-American*, Chapters 2, 3, 6, 12, and 18.

### Assignments

- Discussion Board Seven
    - First post due: Sunday, November 2
    - Second post due: Wednesday, November 5
  - Short Paper Four due: Wednesday, November 5
    - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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**Week Eight:** November 6: Civil Rights and Black Power, 1955–1980: Education and Public Transportation

### Readings

#### *Primary*

- Rosa Parks, "Tired of Giving In," in Bettye Collier-Thomas and V. P. Franklin (eds.), *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 61–75. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

#### *Secondary*

- Vincent Harding, "We The People: The Long Journey Toward a More Perfect Union" in Clayborne, *The Eyes on the Prize*.

### Assignments

- Project/Paper Preview due Wednesday, November 12
    - Project: Submissions of the project preview will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.
    - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first five pages of your final paper
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**Week Nine:** November 13: Civil Rights and Black Power, 1955–1980: Economics, Jobs, and Citizenship

### Readings

#### *Primary*

- Interview with Franklin McCain. ([A link to this interview is available in the Week Nine module.](#))
- Ella Baker, "Bigger Than A Hamburger," in Clayborne, *The Eyes on the Prize*.

#### *Secondary*

- Tahir Butt, "You are Running a De Facto Segregated University," in Brian Purnell, ed., *The Strange Careers of the Jim Crow North* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 187–211. ([This reading can be accessed through Musselman Library with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

### Assignments

- Discussion Board Eight

- First post due: Sunday, November 16
  - Second post due: Wednesday, November 19
  - Short Paper Five due: Wednesday, November 19
    - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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**Week Ten:** November 20: Civil Rights and Black Power: Inspired by Malcolm X

Readings

*Primary*

- Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet" in Clayborne, *The Eyes on the Prize*.

*Secondary*

- Peniel Joseph, *Waiting Till the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*, 95–131.

Assignments

- Rough Draft due: Wednesday, November 26
    - Project: Submissions of the project rough draft will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.
    - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first ten pages (at minimum) of your final paper.
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**Week Eleven:** November 27: Black Power and Gender after Martin Luther King, Jr.

Readings

*Primary*

- Martin Luther King Jr., "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence." ([A link to this reading is available in the Week Eleven module.](#))
- James Baldwin, Raoul Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro* (film, 2016). ([This film can be accessed on Kanopy with your Gettysburg College credentials.](#))

*Secondary*

- Danielle McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to Black Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), Chapters 7 and 8.



## Assignments

- Discussion Board Nine
    - First post due: Sunday, November 30
    - Second post due: Wednesday, December 3
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**Week Twelve:** December 4: African American Activism, 1990–2016

## Readings

### *Secondary*

- Anderson, Chapters 4 and 5, *White Rage*.
- Ta’Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations” in *The Atlantic* (June 2014). ([A link to this reading is available in the Week Twelve module.](#))

## Assignments

- Final Paper/Project due: Wednesday, December 10
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## **Course and Program Policies**

It is the responsibility of students to know, understand, and abide by course and program policies.

For a full overview of program policies, review the Gettysburg College–Gilder Lehrman Institute Student Handbook.

### Course correspondence

Correspondence with faculty and administrators should be formal. Include a subject line, addressee, and closing. Put the name and number of your course in the subject line.

### Plagiarism and AI

This program uses Turnitin to check for instances of plagiarism and AI. Plagiarism and papers composed fully or in part by AI will not be tolerated. This includes self-plagiarism. A student caught plagiarizing or composing papers with AI for the first time may receive a zero on the assignment. A student caught plagiarizing or composing with AI for a second time may be permanently removed from the program.

Your section professor will set the policies for use of AI for research or purposes other than composing your papers.

### Late work

Assignments should be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time on the due date unless otherwise specified by your section professor. If you think you will be unable to submit an assignment on time, it is your responsibility to contact your section professor to ask for an extension before the assignment's due date. Late assignments will be docked 5% if less than a week late, 10% if one week late, and an additional 10% for each subsequent week.

### Grading scale

Letter Grade	Number Grade	Grade Points
A	95%–100%	4
A-	90%–94%	3.67
B+	87%–89%	3.33
B	84%–86%	3
B-	80%–83%	2.67
C+	77%–79%	2.33
C	74%–76%	2
C-	70%–73%	1.67
D+	67%–69%	1.33
D	64%–66%	1
D-	60%–63%	.67
F	0%–59%	0

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### **Assignment Descriptions**

#### Short Papers (25% of grade – 5% per short paper)

Students will complete five short papers. Each should be approximately 500 words long. The purpose of these papers is not to merely summarize weekly readings but to demonstrate that you have read them analytically and contextually. Students have the option of responding to a prompt created by their section professor or to one of their own design.

Prompts should reflect the themes discussed in course readings. If you need help getting started, you can complete one of the options listed below.

Complete a thesis identification - Select one of your assigned readings and focus on identifying the thesis as well as the evidence the authors use to support that thesis.

Complete a primary source evaluation - Evaluate a primary source from the Gilder Lehrman Collection or elsewhere. Primary sources must be relevant to that week's readings. Keep the following questions in mind:

- Who is the author of this document?
- Who was their intended audience?
- How might both author and audience impact the content of the document?
- For what reason was this document created?

Complete a book review - Focus on one of the secondary sources assigned in this course and critique it. Keep the following questions in mind:

- What is the author's argument?
- Does the author adequately support their argument?
- Are you convinced of their argument? If not, why not?
- How does this source fit into the larger discussion of its topic?

Discussion Board Posts (18% of grade – 2% per discussion board)

Students will interact in nine discussion boards in this course. Discussion boards are led by section professors, who will provide specific instructions for participation in their section. You are required to make at least one post to each discussion board and respond to **at least two other students**.

Question-and-Answer Sessions (15% of grade – 5% per reaction)

Throughout the semester the lead professor of each course will conduct five Q&As. Students **MUST** attend at least three of these sessions for each course they are taking. **In order to receive credit for attending each Q&A, you must complete a 1–2-paragraph Q&A Reaction within 24 hours of participation.** Note: If you cannot attend three of the five Q&As, you may receive credit by viewing archived Q&As and completing a 500-word review of topics covered for each missed Q&A. **Makeup assignments must be completed within two weeks of the missed Q&A.**

Final Project/Paper (42% of grade)

For the final assignment of each course, you will choose to complete either a research project or 15-page research paper. Research projects are a public-education tool designed for the general population, teachers, and/or students of varying ages. Sample projects include (but are not limited to) vodcasts and podcasts, documentary editing and transcription, websites, annotated readers, walking tours, or museum exhibits. Lesson plans

*will not* be accepted. A 5-page paper narrative must accompany the project. Your section professor must approve research projects.

The research paper can be a traditional position paper that uses original research to prove a thesis statement or a historiography paper that critically examines how American historians have interpreted the same event differently and why shifts in historical debates may have occurred.

Both final assignment options require you to ask an open-ended historical question (something that does not have an easy yes or no answer) that you do not yet know the answer to. You will then use the research process (pulling from a variety of resources, mostly primary source documents) to explore that question and create a thesis-driven answer. Regardless of whether you choose to pursue a project or paper, finals are scaffolded throughout the semester. This method breaks up a large grade into smaller constituent grades and allows time to incorporate instructor feedback into assignments.

### Scaffolded Assignments

- Final Project/Paper Proposal (2%)

In roughly 1–2 pages, you should outline the main question, topic, or purpose of your final project or paper. This should include a description of the project or paper you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic (answer the questions who, what, where, and when), a brief description of your research plan (this does not need to be super specific, but should outline how many weeks you plan to research, if you need to schedule research trips or if your sources are published or available digitally, and when you plan to begin writing) and a justification for why your particular project or paper is worth pursuing (what is the significance of this topic? What does it add to our historical knowledge? Are you filling a gap that other historians have overlooked such as considering race, ethnicity, or gender?)

- Revised Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (3.5%)

This assignment will give you the opportunity to incorporate the feedback you received on the first draft of your proposal. In addition to incorporating your section professor's comments, you will also submit a proposed bibliography listing five sources you plan on utilizing in your research for your final product. Each of these sources should be followed by a brief summary (3–5 sentences) of the source and what it will contribute to your research process.

- Project or Paper Preview (5%)

This will give you the opportunity to show the progress you have made on your final project or paper and get some early-stage feedback from your section professor. For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your

final submission to turn in. For a final paper, this should be roughly the first five pages of what will ultimately be your final submission.

- Rough Draft (10.5%):

For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final submission to turn in. For a final paper, this should be, at minimum, the first ten pages of what will ultimately be your final submission.

- Final Product (21%):

Final Project: Much like the final paper option, a final project is meant to prove that you have mastered the content covered by this course. We encourage you to be creative in your approach to this project, though it should be equivalent in rigor and workload to a final paper.

Final Paper: Final papers should be at least fifteen pages in length. These can take the form of research papers or historiography papers.