HISTORY 138 - SEMINAR IN AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY
Black Urban Communities 1800-2000
W 1:15-4:00 Trotter 215

This course examines the history of black community in America from the era of slavery to the present. The course investigates both the strengths and the limits of community solidarity – specifically the way culture, class and gender build and disrupt group cohesiveness. Over the course of the term, students will create a working definition of community and analyze the role racial identification has played in community formation. Readings for this course are designed to allow students to examine the experiences of African Americans as they worked to create institutions and networks of social support and expose students to the considerable historiography of black urban history. Required articles, also part of the required reading have been placed on Blackboard. In addition, students are strongly encouraged to investigate the suggested readings. Students should remember that completion of the required readings prior to class generates informed discussion that will facilitate learning.

Grades for this course are based on the quality of classroom discussion and written work. Every student is expected to participate in discussion - both by asking and responding to questions. Written assignments include a weekly set of questions for discussion, book reviews and seminar papers on assigned topics. Seminar papers are due and should be posted on Blackboard by 6:00 pm. Wednesday evenings before our Thursday afternoon meeting. Discussion questions should be emailed to my address by 9:00 am. Thursday mornings. Book reviews will be collected in class on Thursday afternoons. The standard History Department notice: **Students are required to attend all classes for successful completion of the course. Unexcused absences will result in a lower grade** is especially important when applied to once per week Honors Seminars.

The following texts are required reading and available in the bookstore. Several articles, also required reading, can be found on Blackboard or as part of volumes on reserve for the course.

1. Charles E. Coulter, “Take up the Black Man’s Burden”
2. Randal Jelks, African Americans in the Furniture City
3. Wilbert Jenkins, Seizing the New Day
4. Whittington B. Johnson, Black Savannah
5. Thomas Sugrue, Origins of Urban Crises
6. Nikki Taylor, Frontiers of Freedom
8. Andrew Wiese, Places of Their Own
9. Lillian S. Williams, Strangers in the Land of the Paradise

In addition students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with academic journals relevant to the subject matter of the course. These include but are not limited to: The Journal of Urban History, Journal of American History, American Historical Review, Journal of Black Studies, Journal of African American History, Urban Affairs Annual Review, and Journal of Southern History. Seminar students are encouraged to make the best use of Swarthmore’s access to abundant online and electronic resources as well as to interlibrary loan services.
MEETING SCHEDULE

January 25 - Introduction: What is community?
Changing Community, “The Last Best Place: How Hardship and Limits Build Community” (Blackboard)
Journal of Urban History: (Blackboard)

February 1
The early study of black community:
Black Metropolis, Introduction, Chapters 6-8, Chapter 23 (On reserve)
African American Urban Experience: “Race and Class in Chicago-School Sociology”

February 8
Community in Slavery
Black Savannah
Black and white cultural interaction in the antebellum South: “Work Culture and Society in the Slave South, 1790-1861” (On Reserve)
African American Urban Experience:
“Industrial Slavery: Linking the Periphery and the Core,”
Suggested Readings:
Slavery in the Cities
Down By the Riverside
Slaves without masters
Black Southerners
The Slave Community
Life in Black and White

February 15
Community in Slavery
Frontiers of Freedom
African American Urban Experience:
“The ‘Brotherly Love’ for Which This City is Proverbial Should Extend to All,”
“Urban Alliances: The Emergence of Race-Based Populism in the Age of Jackson”
Suggested Readings
In the Shadow of Slavery
North of Slavery
Somewhat More independent
Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North

SOUTHERN DISTINCTIONS

February 22
What difference does freedom make?
Seizing the New Day
Journal of Urban History: “Unhidden” Transcripts: Memphis and African American Agency,” 372-393. (Blackboard)
Journal of Urban History: “We lift our voices in Thunder Tones,” 740-758 (Blackboard)
Suggested readings
‘To Joy My Freedom’ (available as an electronic resource)

March 1
Community in the Nation’s Capitol
Alley Life in Washington, (On Reserve)
Journal of Urban History: “Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond,” 296-346. (Blackboard)
Women, Culture and Community, Part 1 & 2 (On Reserve)
March 8  Community and class formation
   “Take up the Black Man’s Burden”
   **Suggested Readings**
   In their Own Interests (On Reserve)

**INDUSTRIAL CENTERS**

March 22  Working the line
   African Americans in the Furniture City
   Black Milwaukee (On Reserve)
   Life for us is what we make it (On Reserve)
   African American Urban Experience:
   “Race Class and Space”
   “The Black Community Building Process in Post-Urban Disorder Detroit”

March 29  Migrants creating community
   Strangers in the Land of Paradise
   **Suggested Readings**
   Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks’ Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930 (On Reserve)

**SEX (& VIOLENCE & POLITICS) IN THE CITY**

April 5  Riot
   Origins of the Urban Crises
   Stirrings in the Jug: “A Critique of Neo-progressivism in Theorizing about Local Development Policy” (On Reserve)
   Public Housing, Race and Renewal, Part 1 & 2 (On Reserve)
   Interzones, Chapters 3 & 6 (On General Reserve)
   Changing Community, “Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop: The education of a Crip Warlord” (Blackboard)
   **Suggested Readings**
   Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s
   Carnival of Fury: Robert Charles and the New Orleans Race Riot of 1900

**WAY OUT WEST**

April 12  Cities by the bay
   Black San Francisco (On Reserve)
   African American Urban Experience:
   “Urban Black Labor in the West, 1849-1949”
   **Suggested Readings**
   Pioneer Urbanites (On Reserve)
   Abiding Courage: Migrant Women and the East Bay Community (On Reserve)
   The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle’s Central District (On Reserve)

April 19  Negotiating class difference in the black community.
   Black Corona (On Reserve)
   African Americans in the City since World War II
   Journal of Urban History:
   “Race and Community in Postwar Brooklyn”
   “Containment on the Home Front: Race and Federal Housing Policy from the New Deal to the Cold War

April 26  The New Black Middle Class Community
   Place of Their Own
   Changing Community: “Politics, Morality and Civility,” “Community and Personal Duty”
**Suggested Readings**
Black Picket Fences (On General Reserve)

**May 3**
“Redefining” Community