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Targeted course: AMST 385, SPECIAL TOPICS IN AMERICAN STUDIES

Piedmont Project Summer Research Report July 15, 2011

### Intro paragraph

My experience of the Piedmont Project of Summer 2011 in terms of the content of the materials we were exposed to and the nature of our interactions as a group of diverse faculty have affected my plans for teaching in several ways. In particular, in terms of the course I will revise and teach as an undergraduate AMST course in the spring semester of 2011, it has affected: a) the content and requirements of the course; b) the way in which I will be teaching the course; c) the way I find myself thinking differently about sustainability issues on college campuses throughout Atlanta.

### Campus walking tours

Perhaps the most surprising result of my association with the Piedmont Project was the way it changed the way I was thinking about comparing Emory to Spelman College in terms of sustainability efforts on the part of the students.

In a rather vague way, I had planned to include a Emory – Spelman student project that would involve students assessing ecology efforts at their respective campuses.

From our very first walk in EmoryWoods, I began to think about this venture differently because I didn't want my students to find themselves unfavorable comparing a lush suburban campus of Emory University with the vibrant West End campus of Spelman College.

I revised my plan, by revising the course requirements to include one walking tour of Emory and one walking tour of any other campus in Atlanta that they could get to fairly easily.

This opens up the discussion to include accessibility, impressions (are Downtown Atlanta (GA State and GA Tech and the West End “dangerous” places to visit when compared with Agnes Scott for example?

This revision also insists upon a more focused comparative approach that should result in some meaningful and exciting conversations.

Emory University

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Office hours:

Mondays 2-3pm

Tuesdays 1-2pm and by appointment

### AMST 385 Special Topics in American Studies

#### Course description:

This course is designed to deepen students' understanding of the unique cultural history of the American South primarily through visual culture (film, television, commercial advertising, , etc.) and material culture (the study of objects, artifacts, memorabilia, ephemera, etc.)

Much of the reading will help us to contend with the overwhelming racist and sexist mythology and stereotypes of the Old Southern plantation that continue to haunt and influence contemporary culture. No critical study of southern culture can afford to dismiss

the mythology and imagery that have been so tightly entwined with reality throughout the Southern experience. by using the well-known character- types: ‘ Black Mammy,’ ‘Jezebel,’ “Southern Belle,” and “Plantation Mistress.” These stereotypes serve as cultural barometers reflecting on-going fluctuations in attitudes about women and about the American south.

Current scholarships about the impact of race and gender in visual culture often privilege one identity over another; when in fact additional factors – religion, class, age and issues of “honor” – for example are all intertwined in very particular ways in Southern culture.

This course is designed to compliment courses in American History, American Literature, Women’s History and Literature and Southern Studies using material culture and visual culture as focal points of inquiry and discussion.

### **Course Requirements**

1. **Lead one visual walking tour on campus.** Use your imagination, there are several galleries on campus, plenty of art work in the hallways and in many ways Emory is one big advertisement for a certain kind of education. Our goal here is to get out of the classroom and find ways to connect the world around us to our scholarship. We will schedule these tours in the next week or so. 30%
2. **Take a walking tour on another campus.** 30%  
**Use the directions above on a another Atlanta campus with two additions:** pay careful attention to the use/misuse or absence of green space on the campus and take careful notes on the efforts towards sustainability.
3. Lead two-class discussions on the reading. You will sign up for these sessions in advance and be responsible for emailing the class to tell them what you want them to focus on. Consider what makes the text valuable, what insights did you get from the reading – what questions did it help you to engage? I encourage you to use handouts, film clips, and any visual material that will assist you in your presentation. You will have 40-45 minutes; you must present a coherent summary of the reading and then lead discussion. 30%
4. Design one undergraduate syllabus based upon your research with “visual or visual culture in the title. This course should be one that you could use during your job search; it must have at least one module – three-four weeks dedicated to any aspect of visual culture. Due date to be determined, mid October. 10%

## Discussion Guidelines

The first and most fundamental principle for participating in class discussions is **RESPECT**. I promise to do my best to treat everyone in the class with respect, and I expect everyone else in class to do the same. From this principle, I suggest following guidelines for class discussion:

The "participation in class discussion" portion of the grade will be based on your ability to listen to and respond to others, as well as your ability to contribute relevant thoughts and insights to the discussions. If you feel a personal anecdote is appropriate, be sure to tie it directly to the reading or discussion. Anecdotes are most useful when the details are limited (you don't need to tell us that your mother's cousin's sister's neighbor's hairdresser said something that you think provides some insight to the reading; just make your point.)

Ask yourself once in a while whether you are taking more than your fair share of speaking time if you know yourself to be a talker. Ask yourself if you are taking less than your fair share of speaking time if you tend to give way to others. If you are unsure, ask some other students or the professor to tell you honestly whether you are talking more or less than your fair share.

For most of us, it is a struggle to recognize our false assumptions and our hurtful behavior. Most people occasionally say something that assumes that everyone else is like them or will agree with their ideas. Learning to be more inclusive and/or more modest in our statements is a process. Therefore, although we all try to avoid stereotyping or prejudiced behavior, I don't expect moral and political perfection. I expect this to be a place where people will make mistakes and be forgiven because we all have the best intentions and because this is a learning environment.

I will grade your work for this course on the basis of your knowledge of the course material and your ability and willingness to work with the material, as described in the assignments. You can disagree with my views and still earn an excellent grade for the course.

**Please feel free to criticize points of view, beliefs, opinions, statements, behavior, institutions, and social patterns rather than your classmates.** For example, say, "I think what you just said could be interpreted as sexist, xenophobic or racist, because ----" and not: "You are sexist." or "You are racist." It's also best to say that you disagree or object to the point of view and explain why, before you label the remark.

During discussions, please give everyone in class 'the benefit of the doubt.' This means that if there is a more intelligent, interesting, or charitable interpretation you can give to what someone said, please do so. No one wants to be forever remembered for a poorly stated remark made during the first week of class. This makes discussion much more productive, since we can then discuss interesting ideas rather than people's mistakes/weaknesses in expressing themselves. This is the best principle to apply to the readings

also. If you look for the most interesting interpretation, you will learn more from what you read.

Lastly, remember that your classmates are at different places in their education. It's much more helpful to suggest an influential book or article to student who is struggling with an issue than to make them feel ignorant about a subject in which you are well versed.

I expect you to come to my class prepared to honor this opportunity to become a more interesting human being.

Required Books:

1. Mammy: A Century of Race Gender and Southern Memory by Kimberly Wallace-Sanders
2. WomenFolks by Shirley Abbott
3. Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe (Norton Critical edition)
4. Uncle Tom's cabin as visual culture by JoAnn Morgan
5. Unruly women by Victoria Bynum

Reserve Readings from: **Whitewashing America: Material Culture and Race in the Antebellum Imagination** by Bridget Haneghan and

**Ceramic Uncles and Celluloid Mammies** by Patricia Turner

(we'll read about two chapters from each book, you may want to buy these books)

Film Excerpts from: Gone with the Wind, Beloved, and CSA: Confederate States of America

Deadlines to keep in mind:

First Paper Due Friday October 23<sup>rd</sup> by 5pm (See Handout and Blackboard for details)

Midterm Review October 27<sup>th</sup>

Midterm EXAM October 29<sup>th</sup>

Midterm Presentations: 11/3 and 11/5

Final presentations and papers 12/01 , 12/03 and 12/11

Last day of class 12/08

Second Paper Due Friday December 11<sup>th</sup> at 5pm to my office

Course Requirements and Grades

Two 6-8 pages papers

40%

Midterm Presentation and Midterm Exam

40%

Class participation and Class preparation  
20%

See Grading Scale

## Course Schedule

Readings are DUE by the first day of the week unless otherwise indicated

Thursday 8/27

### Course Introduction

What does it mean to study objects? What does it mean to study Southern Culture?

And what in the world does it mean to study objects and Southern Culture???

Week One: Tuesday 9/1      Thursday 9/3

### WomenFolks : Chapters 1,2,3

**As you read, keep a running list of everything in the course material that can be considered either visual or material culture.**

In class presentation: Southern cooking and Southern food

Week Two                  Tuesday 9/8    Thursday 9/10

WomenFolks : Chapters 4,6,7

In class presentation: "The Servant Problem"

Week Three              Tuesday 9/15   Thursday 9/17

Uncle Tom's Cabin : Preface and chapters 1-8 for Tuesday

Chapters 8- 18 for Thursday

In class presentations: plantation artifacts and Gone with the Wind memorabilia part 1

Week Four                Tuesday 9/22   Thursday 9/24

Uncle Tom's Cabin: Chapters: 19 -30 for Tuesday

Complete novel for Thursday

In class presentation: Gone with the Wind memorabilia part 2

Week Five                Tuesday 9/29   Thursday 10/1

Uncle Tom's cabin as Visual Culture : Chapters Introduction and 1-2 for Tuesday

Chapters 3-4 for Thursday

In class presentation: "Introduction"



Week Six                      Tuesday 10/6    Thursday 10/8

Uncle Tom's cabin as visual culture

In class presentation: Illustrations in Southern Plantation Literature

Tuesday 10/13 Fall Break NO CLASS

Weeks Seven and Eight Thursday 10/15 -10/22

Mammy: A Century of Race Gender and Southern Memory

In class presentations: Southern Stereotypes

Paper #1 Due on Friday 10/23 at 5pm to my office

**Week Nine                      Tuesday 10/27**

Midterm Review

Thursday 10/29

MIDTERM EXAM

Week Ten                      Tuesday 11/3                      Thursday 11/5

Midterm Presentations

Week eleven                      11/10    11/12

Unruly Women and

Reserve Readings from: **Whitewashing America:  
Material Culture and Race in the Antebellum Imagination** by  
Bridget Haneghan and

**Ceramic Uncles and Celluloid Mammies** by Patricia Turner

Week Twelve and Thirteen 11/17/                      11/19                      11/24

Unruly Women and

Reserve Readings from: **Whitewashing America:  
Material Culture and Race in the Antebellum Imagination** by  
Bridget Haneghan and

**Ceramic Uncles and Celluloid Mammies** by Patricia Turner

No class 11/26 Thanksgiving Break

Week Fourteen      12/1              12/3

Final presentations

Week fifteen        12/8

course wrap up

Second Paper Due Friday December 11<sup>th</sup> at 5pm to my office