The region we live in is far more complex and interesting than many people realize. In the minds of some people, “the South” consists only of white residents of this region, but in reality, this region has for centuries been home to nonwhites from multiple ethnic groups and faith traditions. Some people also assume that studying this region means praising it uncritically. In this course, however, we’ll encounter much to admire (vibrant cultural traditions, beautiful landscapes, stories of endurance and courage) and much to critique (systematic oppression of people on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, social class; resistance to innovation; generations of poor and uneducated residents; etc.). We’ll also explore how all these aspects of the South have persisted or are changing in the twenty-first century.

**Course description:** This course introduces students to major trends and transformations in the U.S. south and to multiple interpretations of the region’s distinctiveness and significance. In addition to learning how experts have interpreted the region, students will “do southern studies” by analyzing a cultural artifact or practice, using their knowledge of the region’s history and culture, theorists’ views of the region, and independent research. This course will also prepare students for a variety of opportunities for studying the region that are available at the College and in the surrounding community.

**Southern Studies 200 Student Learning Outcomes**

I. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the region’s history & culture
II. Students will demonstrate that they can apply some of this core knowledge in a research project analyzing and interpreting a historical or cultural phenomenon from the region.

The first outcome will be assessed in an exam at week 8 and the second outcome will be assessed in the final research project due at the end of the semester.

**Texts:** Custom reader available at bookstore
- *Literature of the American South: A Norton Anthology*
- Films: *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*
- *Beasts of the Southern Wild*
- *America’s Amazon: The Mobile-Tensaw Delta*

Students will be responsible for printing some assigned essays that are available online

**Course Requirements**

**Quizzes, homework, and attendance/participation: 40%**

Attendance is required; part of your grade will come from the percentage of class meetings you attend. Quizzes and homework assignments will test your knowledge of the reading and will invite you to begin responding to the topics we’ll discuss in class. Students will notes on assigned reading before class and share some of their ideas during class discussion.

Class participation is required; this means bringing your copy of the assigned readings and your notes, not coming late or leaving early, and remaining engaged with the discussion throughout class. Your attention should be reserved for those of us in the classroom; no texting, web-surfing, or doing other work during the class is allowed.
Exam (week 7): 30%
This will cover all material discussed in the first 6 weeks of class and will include a short take-home essay. A review session will be held before this exam is given in class.

Final project (due at end of course): 30%
Students will research a topic of their choice, culminating in an analytical essay or some other intellectual/creative exercise they’ve discussed with me. These should be around 5-7 pages of writing or the equivalent in a website or creative work and should include several academic sources that provide information and interpretive insight on their topic.

Structure of the Course
The first half of the course will cover some of the major trends and transformations that have occurred in the region. Assigned readings and mini-lectures will provide information that we can use to analyze historical documents, literature, and other artifacts from the time period. We’ll discuss what we can learn from a given artifact, what circumstances brought it into being, what makes it interesting from an artistic or cultural standpoint, and what “southern” tropes it may be expressing. Through this discussion and the assigned readings, the class will become familiar with the broad outlines of the history of the region and how it has changed (or resisted change) over time, as well as some of the recurring concerns, beliefs, and themes that we consider “southern.” At the end of this portion of the course, students will take an exam that will be worth 30% of their course grade.

For the remainder of the course, students will work on their own research projects while the class explores differing interpretations of the region. We’ll view, read, and listen to interpretations by filmmakers and other artists, C of C faculty, and several experts whose business is interpreting the South (as civic leaders, journalists, entrepreneurs, etc.) Students will complete homework and take quizzes on this material. Students will receive guidance on conducting academic research on their topic and will submit an annotated bibliography for graded feedback. Students will share portions of their research with the class and will revise and complete their projects using feedback from classmates and the instructor.

Class Schedule

1) Introduction to course: how should we define the region? Why should we study it?
In-class analysis: recipes and visual art. View portion of film America’s Amazon: The Mobile-Tensaw Delta

2) Pre-colonial and Colonial Southerners
Readings [to be completed before class]:
Native American origin stories (in Literature of the American South anthology)
North Carolina Historic Sites pages on Town Creek Indian Mound: “Overview” and “Southeastern Indian Cultural Synopsis”
“Rice in The Lowcountry,” from Lowcountry Digital History Initiative’s exhibit African Passages, Lowcountry Adaptations
Eliza Lucas Pinckney letters
In-class analysis: Native American origin stories, Pinckney letters, James Poyas Daybook (LDHI exhibit)
3) **Late 1700s through mid-1800s**

**Readings:** Crevecoeur, “A Visit to Charles Towne”
Geechee and Gullah Culture (New Georgia Encyclopedia)
Cotton (New Georgia Encyclopedia)
Revivals and Camp Meetings (New Georgia Encyclopedia)
Andrew Jackson’s 1830 Inaugural address, letter from Evan Jones (Indian Removal)

**In-class analysis:** Oil portraits of wealthy Southerners; African American spirituals; shape note hymns from *The Sacred Harp*

4) **Life in the Region Before and After 1865**

**Readings:** James Hammond, “Letter to an English Abolitionist”
Selection from *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War* (diary/memoir)
Emett, “Dixie’s Land”
Douglass, selections from Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, A Slave, Told By Himself
David Blight, “Forgetting Why We Remember”

**In-class analysis:** Mary Chesnut selections, photographs of Civil War casualties, artifacts from Nat Fuller’s Feast (LDHI exhibit), advertisements for slave sales

5) **Reconstruction Era**

**Readings:** Howe, “Growth of the Timber Industry”
“Black Codes” and interactive maps of Cainhoy and Bamburg massacres—LDHI exhibit *After Slavery*
Chesnutt, “The Goophered Grapevine”
Folktales (from anthology and handouts)

**In-class analysis:** “Goophered Grapevine,” folktales, images of historic markers and monuments to leaders or events from Reconstruction era

6) **Southerners Approaching Modernity**

**Readings:** “Charleston’s Cotton Factory” from LDHI
“Sahara of the Bozart,” H. L. Mencken

**In-class analysis:** Hurston and Faulkner stories; ballads “Old 97,” “Boll Weevil,” “Cotton Mill Colic”

7) **The “Backward South”**

**Readings:** Southern Agrarians, “I’ll Take My Stand”
Franklin D. Roosevelt, Message to the Conference on Economic Conditions of the South, 1938
“He,” Katherine Anne Porter
Gospel and blues selections in LAS anthology, along with introductory material

**In-class analysis:** Images from photo essays *You Have Seen Their Faces* and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*; blues and gospel selections; opening scene and trailer for film *Gone With the Wind*

8) **Civil Rights Struggles**

**Readings:** “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow, An Autobiographical Sketch” Richard Wright
Interviews from *Remembering Jim Crow*
News articles from *Reporting the Civil Rights Movement*
“I Have a Dream,” Martin Luther King

**In-class analysis:** News reports on the Emmett Till murder and Freedom Summer; items from Esau Jenkins collection (scanned in Lowcountry Digital Library)
9) **The Midcentury South**
**Readings:** Entries on “The New Deal” and “Dixiecrats” in *New Georgia Encyclopedia*
Entries on “Y’all” and on Appalachian dialect in New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture
“Why I Live at the P. O.,” Eudora Welty
Selections from *Charleston Receipts*
**In-class analysis:** Welty’s story; recipes; selections from *Mississippi Market Bulletin*

10) **Interpretations of Gender and Sexuality**
**Readings:** 1920s News Features by Margaret Mitchell
“Go Carolina,” David Sedaris
**In-class Analysis:** Mitchell’s and Sedaris’s essays; scenes from film version of *Streetcar Named Desire*;
“The Real Rainbow Row: Charleston’s Queer History” (Lowcountry Digital Library)

11) **“The Land”—Southerners and Their Landscapes**
**Readings:** Alice Walker, “In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens”
R. T. Smith, “Beneath the Mound”
Josephine Humphreys, opening chapter of *Rich in Love*
Janisse Ray, selection from *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*
**In-class analysis:** Selections from *Southern Living, Garden and Gun, Coastal Conservation League, Southeastern Wildlife Expo*

12) **Twenty-first Century Southerners**
**Readings:** “The Mississippi Delta Hot Tamale Trail,” Amy Evans
“The South Got Something to Say”: Atlanta's Dirty South and the Southernization of Hip-Hop America.”
*Southern Cultures* 12.4.

**In-class analysis:** Video interview of Mississippi tamale makers; hip-hop lyrics; scenes from series *Friday Night Lights*

13) Review for exam

14) Exam [Includes take-home essay as well as in-class short essays and factual questions]

15) **Cinematic Interpretations:** Scenes from *Gone With the Wind* and *O Brother, Where Art Thou*
**Readings:** view *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* before class

16) **Cinematic and Video Interpretations:** discussion of scenes from *Beasts of the Southern Wild* and videos published in webzines *South Writ Large* and *The Bitter Southerner*
**Readings:** view *Beasts of the Southern Wild* before class
17) **Theories of Southern Identity**


Natasha Tretheway’s poem, “Pastoral.” Selections from *The Bitter Southerner* and *Garden and Gun*


19) **C of C Professors Interpreting the Region** (Panel discussion with professors of history, political science, arts management)

**Readings:** Brief excerpts of work by each professor will be available on OAKS.

18) **What the Region Means to Journalists and Entrepreneurs**

Guest appearances (in person or Skype): chef known for southern cuisine, expert in southern foodways, writer for southern-focused publication (such as *Garden and Gun, The Bitter Southerner, The Oxford American*).

**Readings:** menu or preface to cookbook by chef, essay about the south by journalist; advertisements and brands that invoke some form of southern identity

20) **Southern Studies on Bull Street** [Walking tour of Bull Street sites and Avery Institute]

No readings. **Blog posts are due** at the end of the day, documenting each student’s analysis of site or interview with someone on Bull Street who represents a facet of 21st century “southernness.”

21) **Discuss research project**—possible topics, methods of research, how students will receive and give feedback on work in progress, etc.

**Readings:** all blog posts submitted by class.

22) **Educating the Public About the Region:** Panel Discussion with C of C faculty who interpret the region’s history and culture both for scholars and the general public

**Readings:** Brief excerpts from recent work by visiting panelists

23) **Meet with reference librarian** for overview of available sources and an introduction to Special Collections.

**Readings:** No new assignment; students bring 2 pages of their own writing discussing the topic or topics they are considering and why they are interested in topic(s)

24) **Writers interpret the region**: visit or skype interview with one or more Charleston authors.

**Readings:** Josephine Humphreys’s 2009 essay “My Kind of Town”; fiction by visiting author [e.g., Humphreys’s *Rich In Love*; Harlan Greene’s *Why We Never Danced the Charleston*]

Discuss: items posted to a Facebook group started by Humphreys, “Charleston History Before 1945”

25, 26) **No all-class meetings. Students meet in small groups** with professor to discuss work in progress. Work must be uploaded to Google Drive folder 3 hours before student’s workshop meeting.
**Student presentations** based on research project. Students provide immediate written feedback at the end of each presentation; if time permits, students also offer oral suggestions to their classmates.

**Final Project: due by end of exam period.**

**Description of SOST 200 Mid-semester Exam**

**Objective and short essay questions** will test your knowledge of the content of our readings and the ideas discussed in class. Worth 50% of exam.

**Essay written during the exam** will also count 50%. You’ll receive a list of topics before the exam and may prepare a 3 x 5 notecard with information and ideas that you may consult while writing your essay.

**PROMPT:** Choose one item we’ve analyzed in class from the list below. Write an essay of 4-5 well-developed paragraphs, demonstrating your knowledge of the region and applying that knowledge to an analysis and interpretation of this item.

I. Using your knowledge of the region, explain how this item reflects the time period in which it was produced. *Cover in first 1-2 paragraphs; no introduction needed*
   --List several specific details from the item that reflect specific events and trends during the era that the item was produced.
   --Discuss one or two important changes in the region that show us that this item could not have been produced much earlier or much later.

II. Using your knowledge of the region, analyze and interpret the item. *Cover in remaining 2-3 paragraphs; your final paragraph is also your conclusion.*
   --Discuss some beliefs and values prevalent in the region that this item reflects. Connect specific details in this item to specific beliefs and values we studied in class.
   --Explain why you think this item is affirming these beliefs and values, analyzing them, and/or critiquing them. Offer specific evidence for your point of view.
   --In your final paragraph, compare and contrast your own interpretation of this item with an interpretation that differs from yours, because of the interpreter’s perspective, social identity, and/or the era in which the interpreter lived.

**Description of SOST 200 Final Project**

All students will “do southern studies” through an analysis of an event, organization, cultural practice, or artifact of interest to them. The final product will be a 5-7 page analysis supported by research--at least four relevant sources. The analysis and preliminary research tasks will be worth 30% of your grade.

You may choose to research an **event** (the Charleston hospital strike of 1968, the 1939 premiere of *Gone With the Wind* in Atlanta, the construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway), an organization (a particular church or synagogue, the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, Southerners on New Ground, the Junior League), or a **cultural expression, tradition, or recurring phenomenon** (cornbread, gospel music, Southern accents, debutantes, kudzu). You may also choose to research a **particular artifact such as a poem, short story, film, advertisement, song, or a work of visual art or architecture**. I must approve all topics. When you propose your topic to me, I will give you advice on how you might narrow it down so that it will work for
this assignment. If you start working on your topic and realize you’d like to change, let me know immediately so I can help you get restarted.

Stages of the project:
   Use lectures and class readings to place your topic in its historical context
   Locate credible research materials that are clearly relevant to your topic
   Prior to small-group workshop, submit an annotated bibliography of several sources relevant to this artifact (these can include field work)
   Begin to develop your own interpretation of the topic’s significance; discuss a portion of your analysis with classmates during your workshop
   Present the main ideas of your analysis to class
   Revise your work and submit final version by the exam period--5-7 page analysis of the topic and its significance, incorporating at least four sources.