

University of Maryland, Baltimore County
History Department, <http://history.umbc.edu>

History 408:
Mischief, Murder and Mayhem:
Women and Crime in American Historical Memory

Instructor: Dr. Michelle R. Scott

Office: 507 Administration, **E-mail:** msscott@umbc.edu, **Office Phone:** (410) 455-2035

Class meetings: TBD

Office Hours: TBD

Course Description:

This course is an advanced history seminar that explores how gender norms influence the ways popular media and historical scholarship have portrayed female criminals and the female victims of crime in American history between the early 19th and late 20th centuries. Throughout much of aforementioned era the absence of recognized female political and economic power reinforced clear definitions of “respectable” womanhood. Gender stratifications, class divisions, and racial identity all influenced what was considered a crime in the American judicial system and how that crime was discussed in the media and everyday society. Where a woman was placed on the respectability scale determined whether a middle class socialite would be exonerated for robbery or whether an enslaved woman could be considered a victim of rape. We will examine how many of the “crimes of the century” are remembered in the American historical past and how those memories are altered through the lens of gender and racial analysis. This course will focus well-known court cases such as the Patty Hearst kidnapping of the 1970s, but also analyze readings on female slaves tried for murder in the 1850’s and “New Women” figures who made the headlines in Chicago and New York in the 1920’s and 30s.

Course Readings:

1) Carlson, Cheree A. *The Crimes of Womanhood: Defining Femininity in a Court of Law* University of Illinois Press. 2008.

2) Duncombe, Stephen and Andrew Mattson. *The Bobbed Haired Bandit: A Story of Crime and Celebrity in 1920s New York*, Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2007.

3) Evans, Tammy D. *The Silencing of Ruby McCollum: Race, Class, and Gender in the South*, University Press of Florida, 2016.

4) McLaurin, Melton. *Celia, A Slave*, Avon, 1999.

5) Morantz-Sanchez, Regina. *Conduct Unbecoming a Woman: Medicine on Trial in Turn-of-the-Century Brooklyn*, Oxford University Press, 2000.

6) Stevenson, Brenda, *The Contested Murder of Latasha Harlins: Justice, Gender, and the Origins of the LA Riots*, 2015.

Excerpts Available on Blackboard from:

Raymond, Barbara Bisantz, *The Baby Thief: The True Story of the Woman Who Sold Over Five Thousand Abuses and Stolen Babies in the 1950s*, 2007.

Toobin, Jeffrey American Heiress: *The Wild Saga of the Kidnapping, Crimes and Trial of Patty Hearst*, 2017.

All the common texts are available in the Campus Bookstore, but do check Amazon for used copies.

Course Format:

The primary goal of this course to complete advanced close readings of critical material in American women's and social history regarding issues of kidnapping, theft, violence, murder, etc. This is a seminar/lecture course in which there will be a brief contextual lecture and interactive discussion of the key course texts, films, trial summaries, etc. each week. There will be 2 brief primary source papers, an in class midterm examination, and a final research paper.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation

Discussion of the text readings and multimedia sources are fundamental to progressing in the course and will be factored into your overall grade. Readings are to be completed by the date by which they appear. Readings are to be completed by the date by which they appear. You will be expected to post 2 discussion questions or observations for each day in which we discuss texts. You will post these questions on an assigned Discussion Board forum by 1pm, starting with the readings for the 2nd week of classes. I will select small groups of students to give a brief summary of the readings and initiate some questions for discussion at selected class meetings. **Participation requires that students be present in class, on time. More than three missed sessions without prior consent, or obvious inattention (texting, talking, use of social media, etc.) during class will jeopardize your chances of passing this course.**

Writing Assignments

Each student is required to write two (5-6 page) analytical papers that address the primary source material in the course. Prompts and rubrics for these papers will be distributed 2 weeks before the papers are due. Students will also be asked to complete 2 assignments that will serve as pre-writing stages for the final paper including a formal paper topic proposal and a rough draft introduction to the final paper. Students will complete a (15-20 page) *final research paper* in order to strengthen independent research skills. Each student will present the findings of their research project at the last class session in a graded oral presentation

Blackboard:

This class will use several features of the UMBC Blackboard system, particularly the Discussion Board. You must be formerly enrolled in the course before being enrolled in Blackboard. Detailed instructions and a tutorial are available at <http://blackboard.umbc.edu>. Any changes to the syllabus, handouts, writing assignments and general announcements will be uploaded to the Blackboard site. If Blackboard is new for you then it would be best to use it for the first time in a campus lab where assistance is available.

Grading Distribution:

Papers 20%, (50 pts each)	100 pts	Discussion Postings (40pts)	
Pre-Writing Assignments 10%		Presentation (10pts)	
Topic (20 pts)		Class Discussion (50 pts)	
Draft Introduction (30pts)	50 pts	<i>Participation Total</i>	100pts
Midterm 20%	100 pts	Final 30%	150pts
Participation 20%		Overall Total	500 pts total

Academic Integrity:

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UMBC's scholarly community in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. For this course in particular this means that all written work you submit must *be your own*. If you include facts or concepts from another scholar's work to further elaborate on your own argument it must be appropriately referenced. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct. Academic misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include, but is not limited to, suspension or dismissal. To read the full Student Academic Conduct Policy consult the UMBC Student Handbook.

IN ADDITION, PLEASE NOTE:

Please be advised that the penalty for academic dishonesty –including plagiarism and other forms of cheating-- **in any UMBC History Department course is an "F" for the course.** In addition, cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Conduct Committee. For further definitions on what academic misconduct is and how to avoid it at all costs please take the tutorial at <http://library.acadiau.ca/tutorials/plagiarism/>

Your continued enrollment in this course past the ADD/DROP date is confirmation that you understand these definitions and consequences of academic misconduct.

I reserve the right to make adjustments to the requirements or schedule as the semester progresses and you will be informed of any changes before their implementation

Weekly Schedule:

Week 1 Overview of the Course

Brief in class writing assignment on potential final paper topics

Week 2:, Defining Womanhood in the Courtroom and Memory in History

Carlson 1-84

Week 3: Defining Womanhood Continued

Carlson 85-166

David Thelen, "Memory and American History," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (Mar., 1989), pp. 1117-1129

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1908632>

Week 4: Sexual Violence and Racial Identity in Early and Antebellum America

Wendy Anne Warren, "The Cause of Her Grief": The Rape of a Slave in Early New England," *The Journal of American History* (2007) 93(4): 1031-1049

Week 5: Enslaved Women and the Crime of Rape

McLaurin (whole text)

Week 6 Medicine, the Progressive Era and the Female Body

Morantz-Sanchez, 3-87

[PAPER 1 DUE: See Bb for Rubric]

Week 7 The Body and the Progressive Era Continued

Morantz-Sanchez , 88-214

[Final Paper Topic Due]

Shirley J. Burton, "Obscene, Lewd, and Lascivious: Ida Craddock and the Criminally Obscene Women of Chicago, 1873-1913" *Michigan Historical Review*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Spring, 1993), pp. 1-16

<http://www.jstor.org/pss/20173370>

Week 8 : The Roaring 20s, The New Woman, and Tabloid Press

November 1 Duncome & Mattson, Preface-156

[MIDTERM]

Earl Lewis and Heidi Ardizzone, "A Modern Cinderella: Race, Sexuality, and Social Class in the Rhinelander Case", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 51, Workers in Racially-Stratified Societies (Spring, 1997), pp. 129-147

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27672357>

Week 9 New Woman Continued

Duncome & Mattson, 156-302

Week 10 In Search of Motherhood: The 1950s and Crimes Surrounding the "Traditional Family"

Raymond Readings on Blackboard

Week 11: Race, Gender, and Murder in the New South

Evans, chapters 1-3

McGuire, Danielle, "It Was Like All of Us Had Been Raped:" Sexual Violence, Community Mobilization, and the African American Freedom Struggle, *Journal of American History*, Vol. 91, No. 3 (Dec., 2004), pp. 906-931

Week 12: The New South and the Civil Rights Era

Evans, , chapters 4-6

Week 13 Political Protest and 1970s

Toobin Readings on Blackboard

[PAPER 2 Due: SEE Bb for Rubric]

Week 14: The City Afire: A Multicultural Murder

Stevenson, 1-131

[Rough Draft of Final Paper Introduction Due]

Week 15: The City Afire: The Harlins Trial

Stevenson, 133-315

Week 16: Final Presentations

Paper Discussions

FINAL PAPER DUE: TBD