



# Teaching Resources for Instructors and Students

2012



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Dear Instructor:

Members of the University's Civil Rights subcommittee constructed these sample assignments using resources available online, in the University's First-Year Experience Text *The Ole Miss Experience*, and in Archives and Special Collections. You are encouraged to modify these assignments to respond to a variety of student learners in different types of courses. In addition, writing prompts can be used as discussion prompts; assignments directed to individuals may be used with small groups. Also, a list of secondary sources with embedded links for ease of location within the J.D. Williams Library is included.

As collection of Mississippi civil rights materials is a focus of Special Collections, you are encouraged to explore the depth of materials available. Please visit Special Collections or search online subject guides to learn more. (For example, see [http://www.library.olemiss.edu/guides/archives\\_subject\\_guide/civil-rights](http://www.library.olemiss.edu/guides/archives_subject_guide/civil-rights))

**Respectfully,**

**Members of the Civil Rights subcommittee**



### **Meredith & Me: Video Assignment**

Step 1: Watch the video:

“The Legacy of James Meredith” on the 50 Years website (7min. 55 sec):

<http://50years.olemiss.edu/video-gallery/>

Step 2: Write a brief paper in which you respond to the following questions:

1. How familiar was this story to you before you viewed the video? What aspects of the video did you find particularly interesting?
2. Do you feel that the University of Mississippi should make efforts to “keep this story alive” in our memory? Why or why not?
3. At the end of the video, Nic Lott says, “We are who we are because of those people who came before us and paved the better way.” What is your opinion of this statement in light of what James Meredith accomplished?
4. Meredith & Me: How are you “who you are” because of people like James Meredith? What does the legacy of James Meredith mean to you personally?
5. How is Ole Miss “what it is” because of this legacy? How does it shape the University you now attend? How does it remind us of the challenges that remain? What are those challenges?



## **Meredith & Me: Walk the Map Exercise For EDHE 105**

**Activity 1: Read the excerpt from Curtis Wilkie’s “Dixie: A Personal Odyssey Through Events that Shaped the Modern South” (from the “*The Ole Miss Experience: First-Year Experience Text*” used for the course, EDHE 105.)**

Assignment: Think about what you read and answer the question: Is the University of Mississippi still a “southern” university today? What aspects of campus life give it a “southern feel”? What aspects of campus or campus life feel less “southern”? Identify some of the pros and cons of these changes over time.

**Activity 2: Walk the Lyceum Circle, comparing it with the map drawn by Curtis Wilkie in 1962 (featured in “*The Ole Miss Experience: First-Year Experience Text*”). Consider the following questions:**

1. How familiar to you is the area of campus depicted in the map? How has campus grown and changed since the map was drawn in 1962? How do you think it has stayed the same?
2. How important is this area of campus to the history of the university? To what extent should this area be preserved? How should the history of the University’s integration be shared with future UM students?

### **Additional activities:**

1. Draw a map of the campus and community places and spaces most familiar to you in your everyday activities. What would be the center point of your campus and community map? What buildings, markers, natural and landscaped features, streets or places of commerce would be included?
2. Think about the people who are a part of your daily activities or everyday campus and community map. How might you alter or expand your everyday map of campus and community to bring in new spaces and places for interactions with new and diverse people?



## **Meredith & Me: James W. Silver Collection Assignment**

**Step 1: Read or become familiar with James Silver's *Mississippi: The Closed Society* (1964).**

**Step 2: Consider this background information on James Silver:**

James Wesley Silver was born on June 28, 1907, in Rochester, New York, and his family moved to Southern Pines, North Carolina, when he was twelve years old. He studied at the University of North Carolina, Peabody College, and Vanderbilt University, where he earned his doctorate. He began teaching at The University of Mississippi in 1936 and served as chairman of the department of history from 1946 to 1957.

He is the author of many books, including *Edmund Pendleton Gaines: Frontier General* (1949), *A Life for the Confederacy* (1959), *A Surgeon's Recollections* (1960), *Mississippi in the Confederacy* (1961), and *Confederate Morale and Church Propaganda* (1967). His most well-known book, however, is the bestselling *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, published in 1964. In this work, Silver critiqued Mississippi's racial policies and described it as closed to freedom of inquiry. He called Mississippi's failure to accept the "inevitability of change" a "social felony" and compared contemporary attitudes in the state to those of the Civil War period. When *Mississippi: The Closed Society* was released, Silver cited James Meredith, the first African American student at The University of Mississippi, author William Faulkner, and civil rights leader Aaron Henry as significant influences on his ideas about Mississippi. In 1962, Silver had served as a friend and advisor to Meredith when he enrolled at the University amidst great controversy.

Silver first publicly presented this material in a presidential address before the Southern Historical Association on November 7, 1963. His speech touched off a storm of both praise and criticism around the country, particularly in Mississippi. The Mississippi legislature, as well as some members of the University's Board of Trustees, explored the possibility of dismissing Silver. After twenty-eight years on the faculty, however, Silver's position was secure, and a violation of his tenure rights could have jeopardized the University's accreditation status.

Although Silver initially hoped to outlast the controversy caused by his book, he took a leave of absence from The University of Mississippi in 1964 to teach at the University of Notre Dame. He eventually accepted a regular teaching position there, and later taught at the University of South Florida.

**Step 3: Discuss the following:**

**Note: Much of this collection has been digitized and can be found at <http://clio.lib.olemiss.edu/archives/silver.php>**

1. Think about James Silver's work, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, and imagine what it must have been like to take a stand for integration as a professor on the University of Mississippi campus in 1962. Imagine yourself as this professor and write about your feelings.
2. What do you think about James Silver's being pressured to leave the University of Mississippi in the wake of his publication?
3. What issues might be controversial for a professor at the University of Mississippi today?



## **Meredith & Me: Visit the Archives and View the Marjorie Rushing Baroni Collection**

### **Step 1: Consider this background information on Marjorie Rushing Baroni:**

Marjorie Rushing Baroni was born on August 16, 1924 to the sharecropping couple Percy and Clementine Loften Rushing. "Marge" was the oldest of five children. Eventually, the family moved into town in Natchez, Mississippi, where her father made a living as an automobile mechanic. She left high school at 17 before graduating, marrying Louis Baroni, the nineteen-year-old son of an Italian sharecropping family from Adams County. The first of their six children arrived within a year, and Baroni converted to Catholicism.

Marge Baroni read voraciously during her childhood, and her habit continued as an adult. Upon completing Dorothy Day's *The Long Loneliness*, she wrote the author and began a life-long correspondence and friendship that ended only with Day's death in 1980. Day was a leading activist in the Catholic Worker Movement that advocated peace and social justice while sponsoring soup kitchens and housing for the poor and homeless.

Baroni became the first editor of the women's page at the *Natchez Democrat*, contributing reviews of books and covering local concerts and theatre events. By 1962, however, her conscience would no longer permit her to continue working at the white-owned newspaper that "purposely overlooked one-half the population, unless there was a murder, rape or robbery implicating a member of that community." As the Civil Rights Movement heated up in Mississippi, Baroni developed ties with local activists and organizations. In 1964, she took supplies to the area Freedom School, helped to integrate the public library, attended the Civil Rights Commission hearings in Natchez, and joined the Mississippi Council on Human Relations. The white society of Natchez, in turn, took notice of her stand, and began a campaign of ostracism against the entire Baroni family. The KKK made mention of her in their bulletins, and for a period the family lived in fear of violent reprisals.

Beginning in 1965, Baroni participated in the formation of the Adams-Jefferson Improvement Corporation, a community action group created to conform with Title

II of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Its initiatives included Head Start, adult literacy and job placement programs, and a credit union. In 1969, Baroni began a ten year association with Charles Evers, elected that year as the first black mayor of a biracial Mississippi town since Reconstruction.

Receiving a high school equivalency diploma in 1968, Baroni decided to pursue further education in the late 1970s, first attending the local Copiah-Lincoln Junior College and then the University of Southern Mississippi where she completed her B.A. in 1982. In remission from colon cancer, she returned to USM to work on a master's degree. Before she could complete her thesis, the cancer returned. Baroni died at the age of 61 on March 3, 1986.

**Assignment: Write a brief paper in which you respond in depth to one of the following questions:**

1. Marge Baroni received a number of bomb threats due to her stance on race relations in Mississippi. Write about the thoughts behind her stand and her willingness to put herself and her family in danger.
2. Marge Baroni served as the secretary to Charles Evers, the brother of slain Civil Rights leader Medgar Evers. Charles served as the first African-American mayor of a biracial Mississippi town since Reconstruction. Look at her notes on Evers' autobiography and outline her work with him.
3. Marge Baroni's collection contains a prospectus on Mississippi's Freedom Summer in 1964. Look at the document and write about what it meant for her to participate in such an event.





## **Meredith & Me: View The Sidna Brower Mitchell Collection**

### **Step 1: Read Sidna Brower's editorial on non-violence**

**([http://clio.lib.olemiss.edu/cdm4/item\\_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/JWS\\_race&CISOBOX=166&CISOBX=1&REC=1](http://clio.lib.olemiss.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/JWS_race&CISOBOX=166&CISOBX=1&REC=1) )**

### **Step 2: Consider this background information on Sidna Brower:**

In 1962 Sidna Brower became the editor of the *Mississippian*, the University of Mississippi's student newspaper. During her time as editor, James Meredith became the first African-American to enroll in the University of Mississippi, and on 30 September and 1 October 1962 riots occurred in Oxford. In response to the riots, Brower wrote several editorials condemning the violence. As a result of her editorials, Brower received hundreds of letters both supporting and condemning her and/or integration. She received multiple awards and was even nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

The Sidna Brower Mitchell Collection documents the reaction of many different people in the United States and abroad to the integration of the University of Mississippi and Sidna's editorials.

Several of the most significant letters include:

Letter to Ole Miss Students from James Meredith discussing his reasons for attending the University of Mississippi – 30 April 1963 – Box 5

Letter to Sidna from Martin Luther King Jr. asking for a donation – March 1963 – Box 5

James Meredith's statement about enrolling in the Spring of 1963 – 7 Jan 1963 – Box 6

**Suggested activity:** Look at Sidna Brower's editorial regarding non-violence. Imagine yourself in her position as editor of the student newspaper and write your own editorial about the events of September 30<sup>th</sup>/October 1<sup>st</sup> 1962.

**Suggested activity:** Look at Sidna Brower's scrapbook, which is digitized and can be found at [http://clio.lib.olemiss.edu/archives/sbm\\_photos.php](http://clio.lib.olemiss.edu/archives/sbm_photos.php) Pick out one newspaper clipping and write about its perspective.



### **Meredith & Me: James H. Meredith Collection**

**Note: much of this collection has been digitized and can be found at <http://clio.lib.olemiss.edu/archives/integration.php>**

**Step 1: Read or become familiar with James Meredith's *Three Years in Mississippi (1966)*.**

**Step 2: Consider this background information on James H. Meredith:**

James Howard Meredith was born on 25 June 1933, in Kosciusko, Mississippi, and raised on his family's eighty-four-acre farm in Attala County. After graduation from St. Petersburg (Florida) High School in 1951, he served in the U.S. Air Force from 1951 to 1960, including a three-year tour of duty at Tackikawa Airforce Base in Japan.

He returned to his home state determined to become the first African American to attend The University of Mississippi. He attended Jackson State College from 1960 to 1961, and applied for admission to The University of Mississippi in January 1961. The state took several measures to prevent his admission. In February, the University sent Meredith a telegram denying his admission. When Meredith's responses to this telegram went unanswered, he filed suit with the assistance of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense Fund. After a protracted court battle, the United States Supreme Court ruled on 10 September 1962, that Meredith was to be admitted to the University. Governor Ross Barnett tried to prevent Meredith's enrollment by assuming the position of registrar and blocking his admission. On 30 September 1962, when a deal was reached between Governor Barnett and U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy to allow Meredith to enroll, a riot broke out on campus. A mob of angry whites confronted U. S. marshals stationed on campus to protect Meredith. The crowd assaulted the marshals with bricks and bullets outside the Lyceum, the university's administration building, until the arrival of federal troops quelled the violence in the early morning hours. Two bystanders died in the confrontation, 206 marshals and soldiers were wounded, and two hundred individuals were arrested. James Meredith was finally allowed to register for courses in October 1962.

Messages of support for Meredith arrived from all over the world, including letters from Rosa Parks, Josephine Baker, and Langston Hughes. However, Meredith was

ostracized by most of his fellow students at the University and needed twenty-four-hour protection from marshals. The broadside "Rebel Resistance" was created by students, in collaboration with the Citizens' Council, to urge students to avoid any association with Meredith. Federal troops remained on campus for over a year to ensure his safety. In spite of these challenges, Meredith graduated with a bachelor's degree in August 1963. He went on to earn his LL.B in 1968 from Columbia University Law School.

A civil rights activist, businessman, politician, and author, Meredith has dedicated his life to supporting individual rights. Aside from being the first African American to attend The University of Mississippi, Meredith is noted for leading the 1966 "March Against Fear" from Memphis to Jackson in protest of the physical violence that African Americans faced while exercising their right to vote. When Meredith was shot on the second day of the march, civil rights leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr., stepped in to complete the march. Meredith campaigned on behalf of a number of black politicians in several states, and in 1972 ran unsuccessfully for a congressional seat. In 1989, he joined the staff of North Carolina's arch-conservative Senator Jesse Helms. In 1996, he led the "Black Man's March to the Library." He is the author of numerous publications, including *Three Years in Mississippi*, which describes his experience integrating The University of Mississippi, and *Mississippi: A Volume of Eleven Books*.

The James H. Meredith Collection documents the family, educational, and professional life of James Meredith, the first African American student to attend The University of Mississippi. The collection is housed in 146 archival boxes and is approximately 86 linear feet in extent. It spans the years from 1950 through 1997 but focuses primarily on the years from 1960 through 1990.

**Suggested activity:** James H. Meredith received a considerable amount of correspondence during his time as a student at the University of Mississippi. Much of this correspondence has been digitized and can be found at <http://clio.lib.olemiss.edu/archives/integration.php> Pick two letters with opposing perspectives about the University's integration (i.e. one negative letter and one positive letter) from this online collection and compare and contrast the two views of Mr. Meredith.

**Suggested activity:** Come to the archives and look at the drafts of Mr. Meredith's book *Three Years in Mississippi*. Write about your experiences looking over the historic drafts of this important work.



## **Meredith & Me: Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission Files**

**Step 1: Read about the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission available online.**

[http://mdah.state.ms.us/arrec/digital\\_archives/sovcom/scagencycasehistory.php](http://mdah.state.ms.us/arrec/digital_archives/sovcom/scagencycasehistory.php)

**Step 2: Look up the files for James Meredith/JH Meredith available online.**

[http://mdah.state.ms.us/arrec/digital\\_archives/sovcom/](http://mdah.state.ms.us/arrec/digital_archives/sovcom/)

**Suggested activity:** After reviewing the files, answer the following questions.

1. What did government reports and newspaper reports say about James Meredith in 1962?
2. What did they say about his motives for applying to the University of Mississippi?
3. How did they characterize his methods for gaining entrance to the university and his demeanor once he reached Oxford?

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