Objectives:

- We will learn the expansion of short-staple cotton throughout the South, and the role it played in shaping the "Southern way of life".
- We will learn the workings of trade and industry under the Southern agricultural system.
- We will learn the structure and founding myths of Southern plantation society, and the role enslaved people played in that society.
- We will learn the cultural and political practices and beliefs of the non-elite, non-slaveholding white population.
Verse of the Day:

- Lev_25:17  Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am the LORD your God.
The Rise of King Cotton:

- Much of the upper South continued in the nineteenth century to rely on the cultivation of tobacco.
- But the market for that crop was notoriously unstable.
- Tobacco prices were subject to frequent depressions.
- Tobacco also rapidly exhausted the land on which it grew; it was difficult for most growers to remain in business in the same place for very long.
The Rise of King Cotton:

- Many farmers in the old tobacco growing regions of Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina were shifting to other crops, notably wheat.
- The center of tobacco cultivation was moving westward.
- Southern regions of the costal South, South Carolina, Georgia, and parts of Florida continued to rely on cultivation of rice, a more stable and lucrative crop.
The Rise of King Cotton:

- Rice demanded substantial irrigation and needed an exceptionally long growing season (nine months).
- Cultivation of that staple remained restricted to a relatively small area.
- Sugar growers along the Gulf Coast, enjoyed a reasonably profitable market for their crop.
- Sugar cultivation required debilitating labor and a long growing time.
- Only relatively wealthy planters could afford to engage in it.
The Rise of King Cotton:

- They faced major competition from the great sugar plantations of the Caribbean.
- Sugar cultivation, had not spread beyond a small area in Southern Louisiana and eastern Texas.
- The decline of tobacco economy in the upper South.
The Rise of King Cotton:

- And the limits of sugar, rice, and long staple cotton economies farther south might have forced the region to shift its attention in the nineteenth century to other nonagricultural pursuits.

- Had it not been for the growing importance of the soon dominant cash crop: short stapled cotton.
The Rise of King Cotton:

- This breed of cotton was a hardier and coarser strain of cotton that could grow successfully in a variety of climates and in a variety of soils.
- It was harder to process than long-staple variety.
- Its seeds were more difficult to remove from the fiber.
- But the 1793 invention of cotton gin had largely solved the problem.
- Demand for cotton was growing rapidly.
- The growth of the Textile industry in Britain and in New England created a great demand for Cotton.
The Rise of King Cotton:

- As a result, ambitious people rapidly moved to previously uncultivated lands.
- Many of them newly open to planter settlements after the relocation of the tribes to established new cotton growing regions.
- Beginning in the 1820s, cotton production spread rapidly in the South.
- By the 1850s, Cotton had become the linchpin of the southern economy.
The Rise of King Cotton:

- The cotton economy grew.
- By the time of the Civil War, cotton constituted two-thirds of the total export trade of the United States and was bringing nearly $200 million a year.
- The annual value of rice crop in contrast was $2 million.
- Cotton production dominated the more recently settled areas of what came to be known as the “lower South or Deep South.”
The Rise of King Cotton:

- Many people began to call this region “Cotton Kingdom.”
- The prospect of tremendous profits for cotton drew white settlers to the lower South by the thousands.
- Some were wealthy planters from the older states who transferred their assets and slaves to a cotton plantation.
- Most were small slaveholders or slave-less farmers who hoped to move into the planter class.
The Rise of King Cotton:

- A similar shift, and an involuntary one, occurred in the slave population.
- Between 1820 and 1860, the number of slaves in Alabama leaped from 41,000 to 435,000 and in Mississippi from 32,000 to 436,000.
- In the same period, the increase in Virginia was only from 425,000 to 490,000.
The Rise of King Cotton:

- Between 1840 to 1860, according to some estimates, 410,000 slaves moved from the upper South to the cotton states.
- Either accompanying masters who were themselves migrating to the Southwest or (more often) sold to planters already there.
- The sale of slaves to the Southwest became an important economic activity in the upper south and helped the trouble planters of that region compensate for the declining value of their crops.
Southern Trade and Industry:

- Other forms of economic activity grew slowly in the South.
- There was growing activity in flour milling and in textile and iron manufacturing, particularly in the upper South.
- The Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond, for example, compared favorably with the best iron mills in the Northeast.
- But industry remained insignificant to agriculture.
Southern Trade and Industry:

- Southern nonfarm commerce was largely to serve the needs of the plantation economy.
- Particularly important were the brokers or “factors who marketed the planter crops.
- They worked to find buyers for cotton and other crops and where they purchased goods for the planters they served.
Southern Trade and Industry:

- The South only had a very basic financial system, and the factors often also served the planters as bankers, providing them with easy credit.

- Planters frequently accumulated substantial debts particularly during periods when cotton prices were in decline; and the southern merchant bankers were of considerable importance.
Southern Trade and Industry:

- However they were relatively unimportant in comparison with the manufacturers, merchants, and professionals of the North on whom southerners were coming more and more to depend on.

- The primitive character of the regions banking system matched a lack of development in other basic services and structures necessary for industrial development.
Southern Trade and Industry:

- The South had an inadequate transportation system.
- The South did not invest in roads, canals, and railroads that knit together into an integrated market like the North.
Southern Trade and Industry:

- Canals were almost nonexistent, and most roads were crude and unsuitable for heavy transport; and railroads were not connected to a national railroad system.
- Most of the lines in the region were short and local and only the major cities in the South were connected by the Virginia Central.
- The principal means of transportation was water.
- Planters generally shipped their crops to market along rivers or by the sea; most manufacturing was in or near port towns.
Southern Trade and Industry:

- James B.D. De Bow, a resident of New Orleans, published a magazine advocating southern commercial and agricultural expansion.

- De Bow’s Review was a strong proponent of Southern economic independence from the North.

- Ironically, because New Orleans did not have printers and facilities adequate to the task, it was printed in New York and filled with advertisement from Northern manufacturing firms.
Sources of Southern Difference:

- Why was the South so different from the North?
- Why did the region do so little to develop a larger industrial and commercial economy of its own?
Sources of Southern Difference:

- Part of the reason was the great profitability of the regions agricultural system, particularly of cotton production.
- In the Northeast, many people had turned to manufacturing as the agricultural economy of the region declined.
Sources of Southern Difference:

- In the South, the agricultural economy was booming and ambitious people eager to profit from the emerging capitalist economy had little incentive to look beyond it.

- Another reason was that wealthy southerners had so much capital invested in their land and particularly their slaves that they had little left for other investments.
Sources of Southern Difference:

- Some historians suggested that the southern climate of long hot humid summers.
- It was less suitable for industrial developments and it appeared that Southern Whites did not share the industrial work ethic of northerners based on the climate.
Sources of Southern Difference:

- But the failure to create a flourishing commercial or industrial economy was also in part the result of set values distinctive to the South that discouraged the growing of cities and industry.
- Many White Southerners liked to think of themselves as representatives of a special way of life.
Sources of Southern Difference:

- One based on traditional values of chivalry, leisure, and elegance.
- Southern White people were more concerned with a refined and gracious way of life than with rapid growth and development.
WHITE SOCIETY IN THE SOUTH:

- Only a small minority of Southern Whites owned slaves.
- In 1850 when the total white population of the South was over 6 million, the number of slave holders was only 347,525.
- In 1860, when the White population was just over 8 million, the number of slaveholders had risen to only 383,637.
- It amounted to no more than one-quarter of the White population.
The Planter Class:

- How was the South seen as a society dominated by great plantations and wealthy land owning planters?
- In large part, it was because the planter aristocracy, the cotton magnates, the sugar, rice, and tobacco nabobs, the whites who owned at least forty or fifty slaves and 800 or more acres-exercised power and influence far in excess of their numbers.
- They stood at the apex of society, determining the political, economic, and even social life of their region.
The Planter Class:

- Enriched by vast annual incomes, dwelling in palatial homes, surrounded by broad acres and many black servants, they became a class to which all other Southerners deferred.
- The Wealthiest planters also maintained homes in towns or cities and spent several months of the year there, engaged in a glittering social life.
- Others traveled to Europe to get away from the isolation of plantation life and many used their plantations to host opulent social events.
The Planter Class:

- White Southerners thought themselves comparable to the upper classes of England and Europe: True aristocracies, long entrenched.
- In fact, however, the southern upper class was in most cases not all similar to the aristocracies of the old world.
The Planter Class:

- With the exception of the Tidewater region in Virginia, the aristocracy image was largely a myth.
- Many were new to their wealth and power.
- As late in the 1850s, many of the great landowners in the lower South were still first-generation settlers who had arrived with only modest resources.
- They struggled for years to clear land and develop a plantation in what was a first a rugged wilderness and only relatively recently had started to live in the comfort and luxury for which they became famous.
The Planter Class:

- Large areas of the Old South which Americans later called the South of the pre-Civil War era.
- Had been settled and cultivated for less than two decades at the time of the Civil War.
The Planter Class:

- The plantation that is one of leisure was a myth.
- Planters had to supervise their operations carefully if they hoped to make a profit.
- They were in many respects just as much competitive capitalists as with the North.
The Planter Class:

- Many affluent planters lived rather modestly, their wealth so heavily invested in land and slaves that there was little left for personal comfort.

- And white planters even some substantial ones, tended to move frequently as new and presumably more productive areas opened up to cultivation.
The Planter Class:

- Having struggled so hard to reach and maintain their positions, they were all more determined to defend them.
- Perhaps that was why the defense of slavery and of the South’s rights was stronger in the new, booming regions of the lower South and weaker in the more established and less flourishing areas of the Tidewater.
The Planter Class:

- Wealthy Southern whites sustained their image of themselves as aristocrats in many ways.
- They avoided coarse occupations as trade and commerce, those who did not become planters gravitated toward the military a suitable career for men raised in the culture which medieval knights were a popular and powerful image.
The Planter Class:

- The aristocratic ideal also found reflection in the definition of a specific role for southern White women.
Honor:

- Above all, white males adopted an elaborate code of chivalry, which obligated them to defend their honor.
- Southern White males took enormous stock in conventional forms of courtesy and respect in their dealings with one another.
- Perhaps as a way of distancing themselves from the cruelty and disrespect that were so fundamental to the slave system they controlled.
- Violations of such forms brought what seemed to outsiders a disproportionately heated and even violent response.
Honor:

- The idea of honor in the South was only partly connected to ethical behavior and bravery.
- It was also tied to the importance among white males of the public appearance of dignity and authority of saving face in the presence of others.
- Anything that seemed to challenge the dignity, social status or manhood of a white southern male might be the occasion for a challenge to duel.
Honor:

- When congressmen of South Carolina Preston Brooks savagely beat Senator Charles Sumner with a cane to retaliate for what he considered an insult to a relative, he was acting wholly in accord with the idea of southern honor.
- In the North he was reviled as savage.
- In the South he was considered a hero.
Honor:

- Avenging insults to white Southern women was perhaps the most important obligation of a white southern gentleman.
The Southern Lady:

- In some ways they lived similar lives to those of middle class white women in the North.
- Their lives generally centered in the home where they served as companions to and hostesses for their husbands and as nurturing mothers for their children.
The Southern Lady:

- Southern women were rarely seen doing public activities or finding income-producing employment.
- But Southern women were also very different:
  - The Cult of Honor in the region meant in theory that Southern white men gave particular importance to the “defense” of women.
  - In practice this meant generally that white men were even more dominant and white women were subordinate in Southern culture than they were in the North.
The Southern Lady:

- “The right to protection involves the obligation to obey.”
- The vast majority of Southern women lived on farms, relatively isolated from people outside their own families with virtually no access to the public world.
- There were few opportunities to look beyond their roles as wives and mothers.
The Southern Lady:

- Because family was the principal economic unit on most farms, the dominance of husbands and fathers over wives and children was even greater than in those northern families.

- In the North, income-producing activities had moved out of the home and into the factory or office.
The Southern Lady:

- They engaged in spinning, weaving and other production; they participated in agricultural tasks; they helped supervise the slave workforce.

- In large plantations, the white woman was the “plantation mistress” more an ornament for her husband than an active part of the economy or the society.
The Southern Lady:

- Southern women had less access to education than their northern counterparts.
- Nearly a quarter of all white women over twenty were completely illiterate; relatively few women had more than a rudimentary exposure to schooling.
- Even wealthy planters were not for extensive schooling for their daughters.
- The few female academies” in the South trained women primarily to be suitable wives.
The Southern Lady:

- Southern white birth rate remained nearly 20 percent higher than that of the nation as a whole.
- Infant mortality in the region was higher than elsewhere.
- Male slave-owners had frequent sexual relationships with female slaves on their plantations.
- The children of the union was part of the plantation labor force.
- This was a reminder of husband’s unfaithfulness.
The Southern Lady:

- A few Southern white women rebelled against their roles and against prevailing assumptions in the region.
- Some became outspoken abolitionists and joined northern crusades.
- Some agitated for reforms in the South.
- But the upper-class white women in the South were particularly energetic in defending the class lines that separated them from poorer whites.
The Plain Folk:

- Others grew cotton or other crops for the market, but usually could not produce enough to allow them to expand their operations or even get out of debt.
- During the 1850s, the number of non-slave holding landowners increased and outnumbered slaveholding landowners.
- But plain folk farmers in most cases remained as is.
The Plain Folk:

- The typical white southerner was not a great planter and slaveholder, but a modest yeoman farmer.
- Some of these “plain folk,” as they have become known, owned a few slaves with whom they worked and lived far more closely than did the larger planters.
- Most, three-quarter of all white families owned no slaves.
- Some plain folk, most of whom owned their own land devoted themselves largely to subsistence farming.
The Plain Folk:

- One reason was the southern education system, which provided poor whites with few opportunities to learn and this limited their chances of advancement.
- Education was only accessible for the wealthy.
- Most of the South’s white population consisted of modest farmers largely excluded from the dominant plantation society.
- There was a small non-slave owning group that opposed the planter elite.
- They were called the “hill people who lived in the Appalachian ranges east of the Mississippi in the Ozarks.”
The Plain Folk:

- They were isolated from the rest of the South and practiced a simple form of sustenance agriculture.
- They owned practically no slaves and were proud of their seclusion.
- To them slavery was unattractive for many of the same reasons it was unappealing to workers and small farmers in the North.
- Because it threatened their own independence.
The Plain Folk:

- They also held to older political ideals, which for many included the ideal of fervent loyalty to the nation as a whole.
- In fact, some went so far as to fight for the Union.
- Far greater in number were non slave-owning whites who lived in the midst of the plantation system.
- Many perhaps most of them, accepted that system because they were tied to it in important ways.
The Plain Folk:

- Even though officeholders were more than in the North, they were almost always members of the elite.
- In the 1850s, the boom in the cotton economy allowed many farmers to improve their fortunes.
- Some bought more land, became slave owners, and moved to the fringes of plantation society.
The Plain Folk:

- Small farmers felt tied to the plantation society in other ways.
- For White men, at least the South was an unusually democratic society in the sense that participation in politics both through voting and through attending campaign meetings were even more widespread than in the North.
The Plain Folk:

- Small farmers, even more than great planters, were also committed to a traditional, male dominated family structure.

- Their household-centered economies required the participation of all family members and they believed a stable system of gender relations to ensure order and stability.
The Plain Folk:

- There was another class that was particularly a lower-class economically, numbering half a million who were demeaning called “crackers.”
- Many owned no land and supported themselves for foraging and hunting.
- They formed a true underclass.
The Plain Folk:

- Even African American slaves would look down on them.
- Yet even among these Southerners, the true outcasts of white society in the region there was no opposition.
- In part because they were benumbed by poverty and disease.
- But the single unifying factor among southern white population, the one force that was most responsible for reducing tensions among the various classes: the perception of race.
The Plain Folk:

- However poor and miserable these white southerners might have been, they could still consider themselves members of a ruling race.

- They could still look down on the black population of the region and feel a bond with their fellow whites born of a determination to maintain their racial supremacy.