



The Field of Honor: Essays on Southern Character and American Identity

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For more than thirty years, the study of honor has been fundamental to understanding southern culture and history. Defined chiefly as reputation or public esteem, honor penetrated virtually every aspect of southern ethics and behavior, including race, gender, law, education, religion, and violence. In *The Field of Honor: Essays on Southern Character and American Identity*, editors John Mayfield and Todd Hagstette bring together new research by twenty emerging and established scholars who study the varied practices and principles of honor in its American context, across an array of academic disciplines.

Following pathbreaking works by Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Dickson D. Bruce, and Edward L. Ayers, this collection notes that honor became a distinctive mark of southern culture and something that—alongside slavery—set the South distinctly off from the rest of the United States. This anthology brings together the work of a variety of writers who collectively explore both honor's range and its limitations, revealing a South largely divided between the demands of honor and the challenges of an emerging market culture—one common to the United States at large. They do so by methodologically examining legal studies, market behaviors, gender, violence, and religious and literary expressions.

Honor emerges here as a tool used to negotiate modernity's challenges rather than as a rigid tradition and set of assumptions codified in unyielding rules and rhetoric. Some topics are traditional for the study of honor, some are new, but all explore the question: how different really is the South from America writ large? *The Field of Honor* builds an essential bridge between two distinct definitions of southern—and, by extension, American—character and identity.

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