

ARTH 399-005/ HIST 389-003

Fall 2013

## Virginia Plantations

### Course Description

This course focuses on the history and current museum interpretations of plantations in early Virginia. Through study of art, architecture, and material artifacts it uncovers the physical reality of plantation life from the 17th to the 19th centuries for both elite planters and plantation mistresses, as well as the men and women they enslaved. The course includes a field trip to a local plantation and paper based on the visit.

### Instructor

Professor Jennifer Van Horn

**Course Meeting:** T and R 12:00-1:15 Planetary Hall 212

Instructor's Office: 369 Robinson Hall B

Instructor's Office Hours: T 1:30-2:30 PM; W 3:00-4:00 PM, and by appointment

E-mail: [jvanhorn@gmu.edu](mailto:jvanhorn@gmu.edu) (email is the easiest way to get in touch with me)

### E-mail policy

I check my email throughout the day. I will always respond within 24 hours during the work week. On the weekends, I will respond within 48 hours. One warning: I tend not to check my email after 9:00 PM at night. So, if you email after that, you definitely will not hear from me until the morning.

### Course website/Blackboard

Access through Blackboard

Assignments and important announcements will be posted on Blackboard and sent via email. It is imperative, therefore, that you check your GMU email account AND the course website via Blackboard. You will also be required to submit assignments via Blackboard. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with Blackboard and to submit assignments via Blackboard. An inability to use Blackboard, or experiencing technical issues with Blackboard, are not excuses for failing to complete reading assignments or for submitting assignments late.

Blackboard is available in the myMason Portal. After logging into <http://mymason.gmu.edu>, you will see a Courses Tab at the top right. From there you will see a Course List. You should select our course.

If you can not log in to myMason please contact the [ITU Support Center](#) at (703) 993-8870 or reset your Mason NetID password at <http://password.gmu.edu>

For tutorials on how to use Blackboard visit:

<http://ondemand.blackboard.com/students.htm>

If you have difficulty with Blackboard you should consult the "Courses Support: Help for Blackboard and Additional Course Tools" website:

[https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab\\_tab\\_group\\_id=230\\_1](https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab_tab_group_id=230_1)

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**If you repeatedly get “error” messages or are unable to access course content you should contact Mason through the Contact Us form at:**

[https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab\\_tab\\_group\\_id= 230\\_1](https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab_tab_group_id= 230_1)

**Required Books/ Tools** (available at the Bookstore, the books are also on reserve in the Library)

Bushman, Richard. *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*, 1992.

ISBN: 978-0679744146

Eichstedt, Jennifer and Stephen Small. *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*, 2002. ISBN: 978-1588340962

### **Recommended Book**

Trimble, John. *Writing with Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing*, 2010. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition ISBN: 978-0205028801

**Required Articles** (available through Blackboard)

### **Course Approach**

The plantation has become the iconic image of the early South, from the dome of Monticello to the piazza at Mount Vernon. This course focuses on the plantations of Virginia and the larger Chesapeake from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. It investigates complexes of planters' houses and slave quarters to uncover the material reality of plantation life, for those in the elite planter class as well as those who were enslaved. Its primary approach is historical, but it also employs perspectives and approaches drawn from the disciplines of material culture, art history, architectural history, gender studies, anthropology, and museum studies. A primary component of the course will be analysis of museums' interpretation of plantations to the general public. A trip to Gunston Hall will allow students to consider museums' decisions about what to preserve and how to interpret the lives of masters, mistresses, and slaves. Students will be expected to read critically, participate in class discussions of readings, films, and historic sites, and be willing to work interactively and collaboratively. Topics covered include slavery, southern architecture, women's history, rising levels of consumption, the making of historical memory, and public history.

### **Course Objectives and Outcomes**

Upon completing the course students will be able to:

- analyze the history and development of slavery and the plantation in Virginia and the wider Chesapeake between 1650 and 1860.
- critically examine the objects used by plantation inhabitants (slaves and slave-owners) in Virginia and the wider Chesapeake between 1650 and 1860.
- analyze the ways that plantation museums shape the public's understanding about the role of slavery in Virginia and Chesapeake history.
- Be able to see American history from the perspectives of multiple participants.
- Understand how patterns of consumption have changed between 1600 and today and the reasons for those changes.
- Understand race and gender as critical and analytical concepts that scholars use to study the past.
- Understand how to read and critically interpret: primary historical documents, visual and material artifacts, films, and scholars' interpretations of the past.
- Understand how to identify chronological and geographical patterns, identify issues and problems in the past, formulate historical questions, interrogate historical data and

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sources, support interpretations with visual and material evidence, and evaluate major debates among scholars.

- understand and appreciate social and cultural differences among individuals, groups, and societies with regard to their attitudes towards the history of slaves and slave-owners.

### **Course Requirements**

Being in class and being prepared for class are your first priorities; completing all of the readings and being prepared to discuss those readings are parts of your class attendance.

The course will be discussion-based, although I will offer lectures to supplement weekly reading. We will also be viewing a documentary in class. While the film should be entertaining, students are nevertheless expected to view it critically. Please have completed the assigned reading before class each day and be ready to discuss what you have read. Please bring any readings that have been assigned for that day to class.

Though there will be times when I offer lectures, you should feel free to interrupt in order to raise questions and points of discussion.

I am available during office hours and by appointment to discuss the course, any concerns you may have, or to talk in more depth about the material. Please see me BEFORE an assignment if you are confused, rather than afterwards when I cannot be of as much help.

### **Assignments/ Assessment**

The Assignments for the course include completing the reading assigned for each meeting. The reading assignment for the week is listed after the session topic; the reading is to be done BEFORE class.

### **Class Participation**

The most important aspect to success in this class is your presence and your active participation. The course will rely heavily upon discussion, so please have completed the assigned reading before class each day, bring any assigned readings to class, and be ready to critically talk about what you have read. I want us to benefit from the experience and perspectives that each brings to the discussion. **That is, I want to hear from each and every one of you, every class.** There are several small assignments that you will need to complete in order to participate in class discussions fully. These will also factor into your participation grade in the course. Attending class regularly by itself will not ensure you a high participation grade. So that you know the criteria by which I will judge your participation I will distribute a **Discussion Criteria sheet** which is also posted on Blackboard.

### **Reading Questions**

During the course of the semester you will complete 4 sets of *reading questions*. These will be questions posted on Blackboard about one-week before the reading is due. Your responses are to be submitted via Blackboard as well as handed in at our class meeting. Because discussion is an essential part of this class, these are designed to make sure that students complete and engage with the readings.

### **Probate Inventory Analysis**

This assignment asks students to use the Gunston Hall Plantation Probate Inventory Database “Probing the Past,” <http://chnm.gmu.edu/probateinventory/index.php>

Everyone will select one Virginia or Maryland plantation owner's probate inventory (a list of a deceased person's personal possessions) and compare it with: 1) another example in the database from the same county 2) George Washington's probate inventory (available through the Gunston Hall Database.) Solely from these documents (without outside research) the student will discern what social status the person had and their possible occupation. They will write a short paper (5 pages) in which they imagine what the house may have looked like (room by room) and consider the social structure of early Virginia as evidenced through material life. Additional directions will be posted on Blackboard closer to the due date.

### **Field Trip**

This class includes a required field trip to George Mason's Gunston Hall, admission price \$10.00. You will need to visit the site in order to complete an exhibition review paper (see below.)

Students may select to visit Gunston Hall on their own or with the class; you will need to provide your own transportation to the site. The trip is tentatively scheduled for **SATURDAY Nov. 2, 10:00 AM-12:30 PM**. For more details about the site as well as directions and hours see:

<http://www.gunstonhall.org/>



### **Exhibition Review**

After students visit Gunston Hall they will then write a short (1000 word) review of the site and its interpretation. Sample exhibition reviews can be found in *Winterthur Portfolio*. Additional directions will be posted on Blackboard closer to the due date.

### **Exams**

#### **Midterm Exam**

The exam will consist of essay questions that will allow students to demonstrate their knowledge acquired from course readings, lectures, and discussions. Part of the exam will consist of questions that ask students to identify and discuss a series of images. More directions as well as the images themselves will be posted on Blackboard closer to the exam date.

#### **Final Exam**

Overall the Final Exam will consist of essay questions that will allow students to demonstrate their knowledge acquired from course readings, lectures, and discussions. The Final Exam should

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show mastery of the analytical tools developed over the course. It will consist of two parts: The first will be a test similar to the previous exams with essay questions drawn from the materials covered since the midterm. The second portion of the exam will be cumulative and will ask students to identify and discuss selected images drawn from the entire course. They will also answer an essay question that draws on their knowledge from the entire course. More directions as well as the images themselves will be posted on Blackboard closer to the end of the semester.

### **Grading:**

This course will use a Plus/ Minus grading scale.

<b>A+</b>	100-97
<b>A</b>	96-93
<b>A-</b>	92-90
<b>B+</b>	89-88
<b>B</b>	87-83
<b>B-</b>	80-82
<b>C+</b>	79-78
<b>C</b>	73-77
<b>C-</b>	70-72
<b>D+</b>	69-68
<b>D</b>	60-67
<b>F</b>	59 and below

### **Your grade will be determined by the following:**

Reading Questions (four), 10%  
 Probate Inventory Analysis, 15%  
 Exhibition Review, 15%  
 Midterm Exam, 20%  
 Final Exam, 30%  
 Attendance and Participation, 10%

### **Blackboard and Grading**

Grades for papers and assignments (and my comments on your papers) will appear on Blackboard after I have graded an assignment. (On some occasions I may hand a hard copy back to you with my comments.) Your cumulative grade on Blackboard is intended to allow you to keep track of your success in the course, but please note that it is only an approximation and does not include your participation grade (which I will calculate at the end of the semester).

### **Attendance and Assignment Policies**

You are expected to be in class each day. Please let me know beforehand if there is a **University sanctioned** reason why you will not be in class. Coming into the class more than ten minutes late will count as an absence. Attendance will be factored into your final grade as a part of the participation grade. Attendance, however, is not the only element factored into participation; I also expect you to be active participants in class conversations.

The Instructor reserves the right to reduce students' overall final grade by a 1/3 of a letter grade for three unexcused absences and to continue reducing the final grade by a 1/3 of a letter for each

additional unexcused absence over three. So for instance, three unexcused absences would take an overall grade of A to an A-, four would take an overall grade of an A- to a B+, etc.

Excused absences require medical (or athletic) documentation. Holiday trips are never counted as excused absences.

### **Make Up Policy Regarding Missed Papers and Other In-Class Assignments**

Papers and presentations must be submitted to Blackboard and/or handed in when scheduled unless medical (or athletic) documentation is provided BEFORE the deadline. Late assignments will be accepted with a deduction in points. Unforeseen emergencies, of course, will be accommodated in consultation with me.

### **Classroom Conduct Policy**

All students will show respect to one another and to the instructor. I promise to do the same. The course will encompass difficult topics including slavery and racial and gender discrimination. Students are expected to engage these issues critically and without denigrating any member of the university community. In the event that students are disrespectful in class they will be asked to leave.

### **Cellphone, Laptops, and Tablet Computers Policy**

**All cell phones, smart phones, tablet computers, laptops and other electronic devices should be turned off prior to the beginning of class.** Text messaging, emailing, and posting on facebook is considered to be the equivalent of cell phone conversation and is not welcome in the classroom. If there is a specific reason why you need to use a laptop for note taking or if you need to use an electronic device, in the case of a family emergency, etc., then please let me know before class begins. My goal is to have each member of the class engaged and participating in discussion. By eliminating the use of electronic devices during class time I seek to eliminate impediments to your participation. The only exception is if we are talking about a reading posted on Blackboard and you wish to access an electronic copy during our discussion, in which case you can do so on an electronic device (although printing a hard copy is preferred). Students are given two warnings regarding texting, etc. I will record a student's name for the first warning. I will dismiss a student from class for the second warning. For each offense after the second warning, the student will be dismissed from class and I will drop the student's final grade in the class by 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g. from B- to C+) for each additional warning that you receive.

### **Plagiarism Statement**

Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. **ANY instance of plagiarism on any assignment will result in a grade of "0" for that assignment. A second instance of plagiarism will result in a grade of "F" for the course.** Additionally, while I encourage students to discuss course work outside of class, all written assignments are to be your own work, you may not collaborate beyond the discussion of topics.

This course will use a Plagiarism Detection Service called "Safe Assign" built into Blackboard. I only use this program as a guideline to flag suspicious papers. If you do not plagiarize then there will be no problem—I grade each paper myself.

*Continued enrollment in this course after receipt of this syllabus signifies your understanding and acceptance of the definition and consequences of plagiarism and cheating as defined by George Mason University.*

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### Academic Honesty

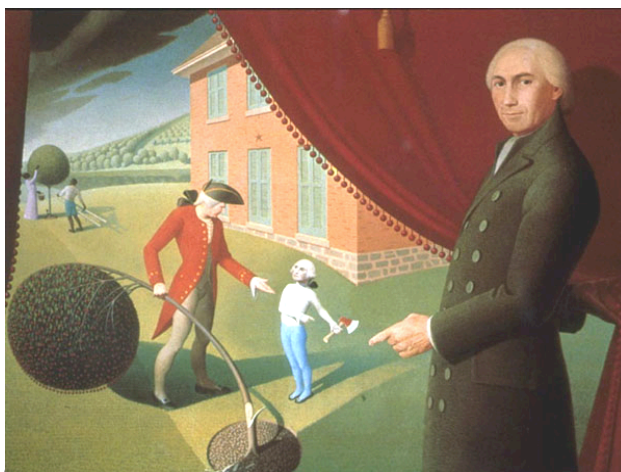
The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an [Honor Code](http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu) ([academicintegrity.gmu.edu](http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu)) with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using Chicago Manual of Style (Humanities) format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see the instructor.

### Accommodations for Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see the instructor and contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, <http://ods.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

### Dates to Remember

Sept 12	Reading Questions #1 due
Sept 19	Submit Personal Probate Inventory
Sept 24	Class Cancelled, Probate Inventory Analysis due
Oct 1	Reading Questions #2 due
Oct 15	Class Cancelled, Columbus Day Holiday, GMU closed
Oct 22	Midterm Exam
Oct 29	Reading Questions #3 due
Sat Nov 2	Field Trip to Gunston Hall 10:00 AM-12:30 PM
Nov 5	Class Cancelled for field trip
Nov 7	Exhibition Review due
Nov 28	Class Cancelled for Thanksgiving Break, GMU closed
Dec 5	Reading Questions #4 due
<b>Thurs Dec. 12</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM 10:30 am – 1:15 pm</b>



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Grant Wood, *Reverend Weems Recounting Washington/Cherry Tree*, 1939.

**Schedule of Course Activities, Readings, and Assignments:**

- Week 1**            **Definitions: The Plantation and the Chesapeake**
- Aug 27            Introductions
- Aug 29            Lecture: Developing the Plantation in the Chesapeake
- Week 2**            **Building the Plantation Landscape**
- Sept 3            **Recovering the Evidence: How do I read a primary source?**  
**In-class Activity:** Primary Source Exercise, Visitor’s Accounts of the Plantation  
**Read:** Reading Tools: Primary and Secondary Sources **Blackboard**
- Sept 5            Discussion White and Black Plantation Landscapes  
**Read:** Dell Upton “White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia” in *Material Life in America* p. 357-369. **Blackboard**
- Week 3**            **Inside the Plantation House**
- Sept 10            Monticello’s Landscape: A Case Study  
**Complete:** “Domestic Life at Monticello” Virtual Tour (<http://explorer.monticello.org/>) or through **Blackboard**  
Select: “Domestic Life at Monticello” on right and then go through tour clicking “Click to Proceed” on the video to see the entire tour including all floors, the basement, and the dependencies)
- Sept 12            Discussion Gentility  
**Read:** Chapters 2, 3 and 4 from Richard Bushman, *Refinement of America* p. 30-138 **purchase**  
**Due: Reading Questions #1 submit on Blackboard before the start of class**
- Week 4**            **The Consumer Revolution**
- Sept 17            Lecture: Transatlantic Trade and Taste  
**Read:** Luck Beckerdite, “Architect Designed Furniture in Eighteenth Century Virginia: the Work of William Buckland and William Bernard Sears,” *American Furniture* 1994 available at: <http://www.chipstone.org/framesetpublications.html> or through **Blackboard**



- Sept 19      **In-class Activity:** Studying Historic Probate Inventories and discussion of Personal Probate Inventory  
**Due: Personal Probate Inventory (instructions posted on Blackboard) bring a hard copy to class**
- Week 5      Probate Inventories and the Enslaved**
- Sept 24      **Class Cancelled; Time to meet with Instructor**  
**Due: Probate Inventory Analysis (submit on Blackboard by 8:00 PM)**
- Sept 26      Lecture: Slavery in the Chesapeake Historical Background  
**Read:** Frederick Douglass, Chapters 1 and 2 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, and American Slave*. Read Chapters 1 and 2. Accessible at: (<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DouNarr.html>) or through **Blackboard**
- Week 6      Recovering the Experiences of the Enslaved**
- Oct 1      Discussion Enslaved Consumers  
**Read:** Ann Smart Martin, “Suckey’s Looking Glass: African Americans as Consumers” in *Buying into a World of Goods*, 2008, p. 173-193.  
**Blackboard**  
**Due: Reading Questions #2 submit on Blackboard and bring a hard copy to class**
- Oct 3      Discussion Slave Communities and Work  
**Read:** Lucia Stanton, “‘Those Who Labor for My Happiness,’ Thomas Jefferson and His Slaves,” in “*Those Who Labor for My Happiness*” *Slavery at Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello* p. 3-26 **Blackboard**
- Week 7      Enslaved Communities and Resistance**
- Oct 8      Discussion Running Away  
**Read:** Rebecca Ginsburg, “Freedom and the Slave Landscape” *Landscape Journal* 26:1-7, p. 36-44 **Blackboard**  
**Due: Runaway Advertisement (instructions posted on Blackboard) bring a hard copy to class**
- Oct 10      Discussion Enslaved Women’s Experiences: Sally Hemings and Jefferson  
**Read:** Chapters 16 and 17 Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello*, p. 326-375 **Blackboard**

**Week 8      Plantation Life for Women**

Oct 15      **Class Cancelled Columbus Day Holiday, GMU closed.**

Oct 17      Discussion White Women on the Plantation  
**In-class Activity: Letters of Martha Washington**  
**Read:** Catherine Clinton, "Slave of Slaves" from *The Plantation Mistress*, 1984, p.16-35. **Blackboard**

**Week 9**

Oct 22      **Midterm Exam**

Oct 24      **In-class Activity:** Mount Vernon's Enslaved Community  
**Start reading for Oct 29:** Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery* 1-22; 59-89, 95-102, 105-110, 125-146, 147-179, 199-202, 203-210, 257-270 **purchase**

**Week 10      The Role of Museums**

Oct 29      Interpreting Slave Life Discussion  
**Read:** Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery* 1-22; 59-89, 95-102, 105-110, 125-146, 147-179, 199-202, 203-210, 257-270 **purchase**

**Due: Reading Questions #3 submit via Blackboard**

Oct 31      Lecture: How do history museums work?  
**In-Class Activity:** Furnishing the Historic House Interior

**SATURDAY Nov 2 Field Trip to Gunston Hall tentatively scheduled 10:00 AM-12:30 PM**

**Week 11      Gunston Hall Plantation**

Nov 5      **Class Cancelled** for field trip to Gunston Hall Plantation

Nov 7      Discussion field trip to Gunston Hall  
**Read:** Edward Chappell, "Social Responsibility and the American History Museum" *Winterthur Portfolio* Vol. 24, No. 4 (Winter, 1989): 247-265. **Blackboard**

**Due: Exhibition Review submit on Blackboard by the start of class**

**Week 12**      **Art of the Plantation**

Nov 12      Lecture: Representing the Plantation and Plantation Owners  
**Read:** John Michael Vlach, “Plantation Images: The Contours of Practice” in *The Planter’s Prospect: Privilege & Slavery in Plantation Paintings* p. 5-47  
**Blackboard**

Nov 14      Lecture: The Many Faces of George Washington and Mount Vernon  
**Read:** Maurie McInnis, “The Most Famous Plantation of All: The Politics of Painting Mount Vernon,” in *Landscape of Slavery: The Plantation in American Art* p. 86-114 **Blackboard**

**Week 13**      **Preserving and Recreating Plantations**

Nov 19      Discussion Preserving Monticello and Mount Vernon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century  
**Read:** Mark Leepson, “The Levys at Monticello” *Preservation Magazine*  
**Blackboard**  
**In class activity:** watch *Preserving Mount Vernon*

Nov 21      Discussion the Lost Cause and Plantations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries  
**Read:** Lydia Brandt, “Re-creating Mount Vernon: The Virginia Buildings at the 1893 Chicago Worlds Fair” *Winterthur Portfolio* 43 (Spring 2009): 79-114  
**Blackboard**

**Week 14**      **Myth Making**

Nov 26      “Moving Midway”  
**In-class Activity:** viewing documentary “Moving Midway”

Nov 28      **Class Cancelled for Thanksgiving Break, GMU closed**

**Week 15**      **The Legacy of Plantation Life**

Dec 3      Discussion Emancipation and Life after Emancipation for the Enslaved  
**Read:** Lucia Stanton, “Monticello to Main Street: The Hemings Family and Charlottesville,” in “*Those Who Labor for My Happiness*”: *Slavery at Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello* p. 215-231 **Blackboard**

Dec 5      Discussion President’s House Controversy  
**Read:** Gary Nash, “For Whom Will the Liberty Bell Toll? From

Controversy to Cooperation” in *Slavery and Public History* p. 75-102

**Blackboard**

**Due: Reading Questions #4 submit via Blackboard**

**FINAL EXAM Thurs. Dec. 12 10:30 AM – 1:15 PM**