

History 335
The African-American Experience in the United States:
From Enslavement to Emancipation

Fall 2015



Professor: Dr. Suzanne Smith
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Course Time and Place:

TR 1:30 pm – 2:45 pm, Planetary Hall, Room 224

Office Hours:

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00-4:00 pm, and by appointment.

Course Description:

This course is the first part of a two-semester examination of the African American experience in the United States. In this semester, we explore the formation and repercussions of the Atlantic Slave Trade with particular attention to how African culture transformed early American life in the New World. We study the slave experience in colonial New England; plantation life in the South; and the history of free blacks including their participation during the American Revolutionary War. The latter half of the semester focuses on slavery in antebellum America; slave resistance including the Underground Railroad, and the national abolitionist movement. The course concludes with analysis of African American participation in the Civil War as well as studying how enslaved African Americans responded to freedom and Reconstruction after the war.

Grading and Assignments:

In this course you will be graded in three major areas:

- 1) **Class participation:** (20%)
- 2) **Written assignments:**
 - Weekly discussion board postings (10%)
 - Two Extended Response Papers (25%)

3) Exams:

Midterm exam (20%)

Take-home Final exam (25%)

Grade Assessment:

- **Class participation:** Class participation is crucial to one's overall grade and will be assessed by attendance and *active* participation in class discussions. Evidence of preparation (i.e. having completed and thought about the reading), quality of discussion, engagement with other students' ideas, completion of in-class assignments/quizzes, and appropriate behavior all factor into the class participation grade.

- **Written Assignments:**
 - **Weekly discussion board postings:** For each set of weekly readings, please prepare a brief discussion board post and upload it to Blackboard by 9:00 am on Thursdays. Discussion posts should be brief (one healthy paragraph or 4-6 sentences). The first sentence should begin with "I was surprised" or "I am confused," followed by something that surprised or confused you in the reading. This may concern a choice made by the historical actors ("I was surprised that slave masters . . .") or by the historian ("I am confused by Litwack's claim that . . ."). The last sentence of the paragraph should pose a question for class discussion.

 - **Two Extended Response Papers:** Students in this class will be divided into five work groups. Each work group will be assigned two extended response papers. The first paper will be 3-4 pages in length; the second paper will be 4-6 pages in length. Specific information about each paper assignment will be posted on Blackboard.

On the week your second paper is due, your work group will also be responsible for leading class discussion for the first half of class. Your group will work together to brainstorm discussion ideas and compile any other additional materials that might spark discussion for the class.

- **Exams:**
 - You will have an in-class midterm and a take-home final exam. In the exams, you will be responsible for all material covered in course readings, lectures, and any additional materials--films, music, etc.

Required Readings:

James Oliver Horton and Lois Horton, *Hard Road to Freedom*
Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed., *The Classic Slave Narratives*
Kenneth Greenberg, ed., *The Confessions of Nat Turner*
Leon Litwack, *Been In the Storm So Long*
William Piersen, *Black Yankees*
Peter Hinks, ed., *David Walker's Appeal*

Additional articles available on Blackboard under “Course Content”

Class Policies:

- 1) **Punctuality:** Please make every effort to arrive in class on time; arriving late to class is disruptive.
- 2) **Cell phones:** Turn off or silence cell phones before class begins and refrain from any texting.
- 3) ****Laptop Free Zone**:** Laptops and other electronic devices may not be used except by special arrangement. For my rationale on this policy, see Jennifer Senior, [“The Case Against Laptops in the Classroom,”](#) *Science of Us*, July 9, 2015. Please bring a notebook and pen or pencil with which to take notes on class discussions. I will plan to bring hard copies of the readings, but if you wish to refer to them during class, please bring a hard copy yourself.
- 4) **Email Communication:** As a state employee, I am required to use my GMU email for all work communications. Students are also required to use their GMU email for all communications related to your courses. This is done to protect your privacy and the security of information related to your education. **It is your responsibility to regularly check your GMU email account for course announcements.** *Failure to routinely check your GMU email account may negatively affect your grade in the course as you could miss key updates on course assignments or syllabus revisions.*
- 5) **Honor Code:** *All of George Mason University's academic policies and honor code apply to this course.* Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving proper credit. Self-plagiarism involves recycling papers from previous coursework. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me. Violators will be brought before the University's Honor Committee for disciplinary action. For details, see the Undergraduate Catalog.
- 6) **Disability Accommodations:** If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations are arranged through that office.
- 7) **Add and Drop Deadlines:**
Last Day to Add: **September 8, 2015**
Last Day to Drop: **October 2, 2015**

Class Schedule:

- Week 1 (Aug. 31-Sept. 4): Introduction: Why Study African American History?**
Readings:
- *Hard Road to Freedom*, pp. 1-5.

- Desiree Melton, “Monticello’s Whitewashed Version of History”
- John J. Cummings, III, “The U.S. has 35,000 museums. Why is only one about slavery?”
- Raha Jorjani, “Could black people in the U.S. qualify as refugees?” (All three editorials available under “Course Content” on Blackboard)

Assignment: Discussion Board post due by 9:00 am on Thursday.

Week 2 (Sept. 7-11):

The Slave Trade from African to the New World

Readings

Required:

- *Classic Slave Narratives*, Introduction through Chapter 5 of *Equiano*, pp. xi-110
- *Hard Road to Freedom*, Chp. 1

Recommended:

- *Classic Slave Narratives*, *Equiano*, Chapters 6-12

Assignment: Discussion Board post due by 9:00am on Thursday.

Week 3 (Sept. 14-18):

African-Americanization

Readings:

- *Black Yankees*, Introduction and Chps. 1-7
- Allan Kulikoff, “The Origins of Afro-American Society in Tidewater Maryland and Virginia, 1700-1790,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 35 (April 1978), 226-259.

Assignment: Group 1: Response Paper #1
All other students: Discussion Board post due by 9:00 am on Thursday.

Week 4 (Sept. 21-25):

Life in the Colonies

Readings:

- *Black Yankees*, Chps. 8-11
- *Hard Road to Freedom*, Chp. 2
- Selected primary source documents

Assignment: Group 2: Response Paper #1
All other students: Discussion Board post due by 9:00 am on Thursday.

- Week 5** (Sept. 28-Oct. 2): **African Americans in the Revolutionary Era**
Readings:
- *Hard Road to Freedom*, Chp. 3
 - Sylvia Frey, “Between Slavery and Freedom: Virginia Blacks in the American Revolution”
 - Edmund S. Morgan, “Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox,” *Journal of American History*, 59 (1972), pp. 5-29.
- Assignment:** Group 3: Response Paper #1
All other students: Discussion Board post due by 9:00 am on Thursday.
- Week 6** (Oct. 5-9): **The Early Origins of Black Nationalism**
Readings:
- *David Walker's Appeal*
 - Maria Stewart and Sojourner Truth speeches
 - *Hard Road to Freedom*, Chp. 6
- Assignment:** Group 4: Response Paper #1
All other students: Discussion Board post due by 9:00 am on Thursday.
- Week 7** (Oct. 12-16): **Midterm**
Note: No class on Tuesday, October 13,
Columbus Day Holiday
****Midterm Exam in class on Thursday, October 15****
- Week 8** (Oct. 19-23): **Blacks in the New Republic**
Readings:
- *The Confessions of Nat Turner*
 - *Hard Road to Freedom*, Chp. 4
- Assignment:** Group 5: Response Paper #1
All other students: Discussion Board post due by 9:00 am on Thursday.
- Week 9** (Oct. 26-30): **Cultural Life in Slave Communities**
Readings:
- *Hard Road to Freedom*, Chp. 5
 - Shane White and Graham White, “Slave Clothing and African-American Culture in the Eighteenth

and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Past & Present*, No. 148 (August 1995), pp. 149-186.

- Lawrence W. Levine, “The Sacred World of Black Slaves,” from *Black Culture, Black Consciousness*

Assignment: Group 1: Response Paper #2 and Discussion
All other students: Discussion Board post due by 9:00 am on Thursday.

Week 10 (Nov. 2-6):

Black Women in Slavery

Readings:

- *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, in *Classic Slave Narratives*

Assignment: Group 2: Response Paper #2 and Discussion
All other students: Discussion Board post due by 9:00 am on Thursday.

Week 11 (Nov. 9-13):

The Abolitionist Movement

Readings:

- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, in *Classic Slave Narratives*

Assignment: Group 3: Response Paper #2 and Discussion
All other students: Discussion Board post due by 9:00 am on Thursday.

Week 12 (Nov. 16-20):

The Coming of the War

Readings:

- *Been in the Storm So Long*, Chps. 1-2
- Selected primary source documents

Assignment: Group 4: Response Paper #2 and Discussion
All other students: Discussion Board post due by 9:00 am on Thursday.

Week 13 (Nov. 23-27):

The Civil War

Readings:

- *Been in the Storm So Long*, Chp. 3
- *Hard Road to Freedom*, Chp. 7
- Selected primary source documents

Assignment: Discussion Board post.
**Please post early on Tuesday by 9:00 am.

Note: No class on Thursday. Enjoy Thanksgiving Break!

Week 14 (Nov. 30-Dec. 4): Reconstruction

Readings:

- *Been in the Storm So Long*, Chps. 4-5
- Selected primary source documents

Assignment: Group 5: Response Paper #2 and Discussion
All other students: Discussion Board post
due by 9:00am on Thursday.

Week 15 (Dec. 7-11):

Reconstruction Resisted

Readings:

- *Been in the Storm So Long*, Chps. 9-10
- Selected primary source documents

Assignment: Discussion Board post due by 9:00 am on
Thursday.

Take Home Final Exam: Due Tuesday, Dec. 15, by 5:00 pm.

****PLEASE NOTE: No late exams accepted under ANY circumstances.****