

HIST 499 001: Senior Seminar in History

Slavery, Abolition and the Underground Railroad

Spring 2016

Prof. Spencer Crew

Email: screw@gmu.edu

Office: East Building room 207B

Office Hours: Wednesday 4:30 – 5:30 and by appointment

History 499 provides the opportunity for history majors to write an original major research paper. In addition it fulfills part of the writing-intensive requirement for the history major. In this course we will focus on researching slavery, abolition and the Underground Railroad. Your research projects will grow out of your increased understanding of these activities and their operation. Slavery and its abolition was one of the major issues in the United States leading up to the Civil War. Southerners saw slavery as a positive good for themselves and for the enslaved people they controlled. Abolitionists saw slavery as a blemish on the nation and were committed to bringing it to an end. The participants of the Underground Railroad took direct action to undermine slavery by aiding enslaved people seeking freedom. Reading the ideas and stories about these topics, investigating how they functioned, and examining how historians have assessed this movement will provide the foundation for the research conducted by class participants.

The Underground Railroad was a complex operation which over the years has had many myths connected to it. Sorting the myths from reality will enable students to better understand how historians assess research material and craft a thesis for their work. They will then apply these insights to the writing of their own research paper for the class. You do not need to have previous knowledge about slavery, abolition or the Underground Railroad for this course. You will gain that knowledge in the course of the semester. I do assume that you have experience in historical analysis and understand the difference between primary and secondary sources, can identify the main thesis of a scholarly work, and have previously used footnotes. This is your opportunity to apply that knowledge and to hone your skills as a historian by producing a well-researched and thoughtfully presented **20 page** research paper.

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 must be arranged through that office.

Drop/Add deadlines:

Last Day to Add: Tuesday, January 26

Last Day to Drop: Friday, February 19

Selective Withdrawal Period: Monday, February 22 – Friday, March 25

Required Texts:

Henry Box Brown *Narrative Of The Life Of Henry Box Brown*

Scott Christianson Freeing Charles

Levi Coffin *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin, the Reputed President of the Underground Railroad*

Ellen and William Craft *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom: The Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery*

Larry Gara *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad*

Harriet Jacobs *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Mary Kay Ricks *Escape on the Pearl: The Heroic Bid for Freedom on the Underground Railroad*

Kate L. Turabian *A Manual for Writers*

Betty Wood *The Origins of American Slavery*

Grading:

15% Attendance and class participation

10% Bibliographic essay

15% Rough Draft outline of paper

10% Final paper presentation

50% Final paper

Failure to complete any of the written assignments will result in automatic failure of the class. Each student will also have a mandatory conference with the instructor; failure to have this conference will result in automatic failure of the class.

All assignments must be turned in during the class period designated by the instructor. Late materials will be penalized one-half grade for each day after the due date. Material received on the due date, but after the class period will be penalized one-quarter grade. After the due date has passed, late material must be turned in before 5:00 and verified by the program coordinator in the Robinson Office of the East Building in order to be counted for that day.

If you are unable to turn in an assignment due to an emergency, you must bring a written note from a doctor or the dean. If at all possible, contact me ahead of time so that we can arrange for an alternative time for you to complete the work.

The class participation grade will be based on the students' preparation for and contribution to class discussions. In preparing for class students should complete all the required readings and be prepared to answer and ask questions regarding the reading. A student's discussion grade will be evaluated not according to the amount of talking that student does, but rather according to whether that student contributes thoughtfully and constructively, based on a careful consideration of the readings. Students cannot contribute to class discussions if they are absent, consequently, repeated unexcused absences will be reflected in their participation grade.

All plagiarism cases will be automatically submitted to GMU's honor committee.

According to GMU's honor code, plagiarism includes the following: **1.** Presenting as one's own words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement. **2.** Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement.

Schedule:

January 20

Bring a copy of the United States Constitution

Wood *The Origins of American Slavery*

Turabian *A Manual for Writers*, pp. 3 – 23, 129 -130.

January 27 **Levi Coffin** *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin* (Introduction thru chapter 10)

February 3 **Levi Coffin** *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin* (Chapters 11 thru 20 and memoir of Calvin Fairbanks)

February 10 **Gara** *The Liberty Line*

“Light on the Underground Railroad,” Wilbur H. Siebert, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Apr., 1896), pp. 455-463, Published by: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the American Historical Association.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1833723>

February 17 **Henry Brown** *Narrative Of The Life Of Henry” Box” Brown*

Crafts *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom*

Turabian *A Manual for Writers*, pp.24 - 47

Turn in no more than one page description of paper topic and the titles of at least **three books** that you will use in proper bibliography format (Chicago manual of style format www.chicagomanualofstyle.org)

February 24 **Christianson** *Freeing Charles*

March 2 **“Dispossessing Massa: Fugitive Slaves and the Politics of Slavery After 1850”** R.J.M. Blackett (on blackboard)

“Detroit to the Promised land,” Karolyn Smardz Frost (on blackboard)

In class paper topic discussion - Student will bring bibliographic essay highlighting eight to ten sources they intend to use for their paper. The essay will provide one or two sentences describing the content of each resource and how it will support the paper of the student. **The essay should include at least two primary sources.**

March 9

SPRINGBREAK

March 16

Harriet Jacobs *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Introduction thru chapter XXXVII)

March 23

Individual student meeting with the professor to discuss their paper topic. You are to prepare and bring a **one to three page outline** of the ideas which will be the basis of your paper. You will turn in the outline at the end of the discussion.

Turabian *A Manual for Writers*, pp.48 - 81

March 30

No Class Research week. You may turn in a draft of your paper for comments before you write the final version

Turabian *A Manual for Writers*, pp.98 - 128

April 6

Ricks *Escape on the Pearl*

April 13

Visit to Pearl landmarks

April 20

Class Presentations

April 27

Class Presentations

May 4

Final papers due