

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

Fall 2017



Professor: Dr. Suzanne Smith
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Course Time and Place:

TR 10:30 pm – 11:45 pm, Robinson Hall, Room B208

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 and explore 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 second 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:**
 - Discussion Board Posts/Responses (20%)
 - Two Reaction Papers (20%)

3) Exams:

Midterm exam (20%)

Final exam (20%)

Work Groups:

To make the workload for this class more manageable, I have assigned students to small “work groups” (e.g. Group 1, Group 2, etc.). Each week, your work group will have **one** of three assignments to complete:

- Reaction Paper
- Discussion Board Post
- Response to Discussion Board Post

Our Blackboard webpage will direct you to the assignment you are responsible to complete each week.

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**. Regular attendance, evidence of preparation (i.e. having completed and thought about the assigned readings), offering relevant commentary, *respectful* engagement with other students' ideas, completion of in-class assignments, and appropriate class behavior all factor into the class participation grade. If you are unable to attend class for any reason, it is helpful to notify me via e-mail.
- **Written Assignments:**
 - **Discussion board postings:** When your group is assigned a discussion board post, **each member of your group** should write **an individual discussion board post** and upload it to Blackboard by **10:00 am on Thursdays**. Discussion posts should be concise (250-400 words) and should focus on what you found most provocative about the reading assignment. Please **do not summarize the readings** in these posts, but discuss what surprised you or deepened your understanding of the course topics for the week. For more details about how to write a successful discussion board post, please review the Discussion Board Post Rubric on our Blackboard.
 - **Response to Discussion Board Posts:** When your group is assigned to **respond** to discussion board posts, **each member of your group** should write **a response to two of the posts** submitted by other students participating in the discussion board for that week. Please post your response to the discussion board **no later than 11:59 pm on Thursdays**. Responses to posts should be approximately 50-100 words; show respect to the person who wrote the post, and should offer meaningful feedback (e.g. Simply writing, “Good job!,” is insufficient.) For complete details, see Discussion Board instructions on Blackboard.

- **Reaction Papers:** These papers are **individual** assignments. The first paper will be 3-4 pages in length; the second paper will be 4-6 pages in length. For more details about how to write a successful response paper, please review the Reaction Paper Rubric on Blackboard.
- **Leading Class Discussion:** On the week that your work group's **second** Reaction Paper is due, **your work group will be responsible for leading class discussion**. Your group will work together to brainstorm discussion ideas and compile any other additional materials (e.g. PowerPoint slideshow) that might spark discussion for the class. Additional details for this assignment are available on Blackboard.
- **Exams:**
 - You will have a midterm and 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:

Deborah Gray White, et. al., *Freedom on My Mind, Vol. 1*
 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.
- 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 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: **Sept. 5, 2017**
Last Day to Drop: **Sept. 29, 2017 (67% Tuition penalty)**

Class Schedule:

Week 1 (Aug. 28-Sept. 1): Introduction: Why Study African American History?

Readings:

- *Freedom on My Mind*, Introduction, pp. xxvii-xxxii
 - Steve Hendrix, “The Day White Virginia Stopped Admiring General Robert E. Lee and Started Worshiping Him”
 - Gregory S. Schneider, “In the former Capital of the Confederacy, the Debate over Statues is Personal and Painful”
 - **Video:** “New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu Addresses the Removal of Confederate Statues”
- NOTE:** All course material (with the exception of the course textbook) is available under “Course Content” on Blackboard.

Assignments:

ALL Groups:

Discussion Board post due by 10:00 am on Thursday, Aug. 31 (Names A-M) and write two responses to peers by 11:59 pm on Thursday, Aug. 31 (Names N-Z).

Week 2 (Sept. 4-8):

The Slave Trade from Africa to the New World

Readings:

Required:

- *Classic Slave Narratives*, Introduction through Chapter 5 of *Equiano*, pp. xi-110
- *Freedom on My Mind*, Chp. 1

Recommended:

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

Assignments:

ALL Groups:

Discussion Board post due by 10:00 am on Thursday, Sept. 7 (Names N-Z) and write two responses to peers by 11:59 pm on Thursday, Sept. 7 (Names A-M).

Week 3 (Sept. 11-15):

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.

Assignments:

Group 1: Reaction Paper #1

Groups 2&3: Discussion Board Post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Groups 4&5: Response to Discussion Board Posts due by 11:59 pm Thursday.

Week 4 (Sept. 18-22):

Life in the Colonies

Readings:

- *Black Yankees*, Chps. 8-11
- *Freedom on My Mind*, Chp. 2

Assignments:

Group 2: Reaction Paper #1

Groups 4&5: Discussion Board Post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Groups 1&3: Response to Discussion Board Posts due by 11:59 pm Thursday.

Week 5 (Sept. 25-29):

African Americans in the Revolutionary Era

Readings:

- *Freedom on My Mind*, 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.

Assignments:

Group 3: Reaction Paper #1

Groups 1&5: Discussion Board Post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Groups 2&4: Response to Discussion Board Posts due by 11:59 pm Thursday.

Week 6 (Oct. 2-6):

Blacks in the New Republic

Readings:

- *David Walker's Appeal*
- *Freedom on My Mind*, Chp. 4, Chp. 5, pp. 186-188

Assignments:

Group 4: Reaction Paper #1

Groups 1&2: Discussion Board Post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Groups 3&5: Response to Discussion Board Posts due by 11:59 pm Thursday.

Week 7 (Oct. 9-13):

Midterm

Note: No class on Tuesday, October 10,
Columbus Day Holiday

****Midterm Exam in class on Thursday, October 12****

Week 8 (Oct. 16-20): **Black Life in the Slave South**

Readings:

- *The Confessions of Nat Turner*
- *Freedom on My Mind*, Chp. 5, 172-186, 189-194

Assignments:

Group 5: Reaction Paper #1

Groups 3&4: Discussion Board Post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Groups 1&2: Response to Discussion Board Posts due by 11:59 pm Thursday.

Week 9 (Oct. 23-27):

Cultural Life in Slave Communities

Readings:

- *Freedom on My Mind*, Chp. 5, 195-213
- 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.
- Patrick W. O'Neil, "Bosses and Broomsticks: Ritual and Authority in Antebellum Slave Weddings," *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (Feb. 2009), pp. 29-48.

Assignments:

Group 1: Reaction Paper #1 and **Lead Discussion**

Groups 2&3: Discussion Board Post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Groups 4&5: Response to Discussion Board Posts due by 11:59 pm Thursday.

Week 10 (Oct. 30-Nov. 3):

Black Women in Slavery

Readings:

- *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, in *Classic Slave Narratives*
- Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I A Woman?" Speech (See: "Course Content")

Assignments:

Group 2: Reaction Paper #1 and **Lead Discussion**

Groups 4&5: Discussion Board Post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Groups 1&3: Response to Discussion Board Posts due by 11:59 pm Thursday.

Week 11 (Nov. 6-10):

The Abolitionist Movement

Readings:

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

Assignments:

Group 3: Reaction Paper #1 and **Lead Discussion**

Groups 1&5: Discussion Board Post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Groups 2&4: Response to Discussion Board Posts due by 11:59 pm Thursday.

Week 12 (Nov. 13-17):

The Coming of the War

Readings:

- *Been in the Storm So Long*, Chps. 1-2
- *Freedom on My Mind*, Chp. 6

Assignments:

Group 4: Reaction Paper #1 and **Lead Discussion**

Groups 1&2: Discussion Board Post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Groups 3&5: Response to Discussion Board Posts due by 11:59 pm Thursday.

Week 13 (Nov. 20-24):

The Civil War

Readings:

- *Been in the Storm So Long*, Chp. 3
- *Freedom on My Mind*, Chp. 7

Assignments:

ALL GROUPS: Complete reading for discussion on Tuesday.

Note: No class on Thursday. Enjoy Thanksgiving Break!

Week 14 (Nov. 27-Dec. 1):

Reconstruction

Readings:

Required:

- *Been in the Storm So Long*, Chps. 4-5

Recommended:

- *Freedom on My Mind*, Chp. 8

Assignments:

Group 5: Reaction Paper #1 and **Lead Discussion**

Groups 3&4: Discussion Board Post due by 10:00 am on Thursday.

Groups 1&2: Response to Discussion Board Posts due by 11:59 pm Thursday.

Week 15 (Dec. 3-8):

Reconstruction Resisted

Readings:

- *Been in the Storm So Long*, Chps. 9-10

Assignments:

ALL Groups: **Discussion Board post** due by 10:00 am on Thursday and write one response to a peer by 11:59 pm.

Take Home Final Exam: Due Tuesday, Dec. 19, by 1:00 pm.

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