

George Mason University
Department of History and Art History

Spring 2021
T, 4:30-7:10
Online via Zoom
Office Hours: T 2:30-3:30 (in Blackboard Course Room)

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HISTORY 300-DL2

INTRODUCTION TO HISTORICAL METHOD: SLAVERY AND RESISTANCE IN VIRGINIA

This course introduces History majors to the practices and methods of researching, interpreting, and writing history by focusing on the history of slavery in Virginia, and particularly three key moments of resistance and rebellion: the American Revolution, Gabriel's Conspiracy of 1800, and the Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831. By exploring these and other arenas in which enslaved people contested the terms of their bondage, students will develop skills in historical imagination and empathy, framing historical questions, working creatively with sources, dealing with ambiguity and silences in the record, and presenting the results of research in oral and written forms.

History 300 fulfills in part the **Writing-Intensive (WI)** requirement in the History major and for the university. It does so primarily through multiple short written assignments and a substantial final project. Note that students must earn a grade of C or better in History 300 in order to register for the second required Writing-Intensive course in the History major, History 499.

History 300 is also identified as a ***Students as Scholars Scholarly Inquiry*** course, where students learn about the recursive process of scholarly inquiry through studying previous scholarship and participating in an original scholarly project. To learn more about *Students as Scholars*, visit oscar.gmu.edu. In this class, students will learn to evaluate and assess existing scholarship, formulate a relevant research question in the context of that scholarship, identify relevant primary and secondary sources, analyze these sources and construct a historical argument based on those sources, and present that argument in oral and written forms that conform with the disciplinary expectations of the field of history.

This course focuses primarily on developing skills in historical methodology, but those skills also have real-world applications. Learning to research, interpret sources, construct arguments, and present those arguments in written and oral forms is crucial to many careers and applications. The final project for the course is an NEH-style grant proposal based on your research—grant-writing and applying for funding are major parts of many careers, as is structure

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Participation	15%
Exercises & Workshops (Runaway Ads, Historiography, Questions & Sources)	10%
Primary Source Analysis	15%
Research Proposal*	60%
Topic and Annotated Bibliography Draft	5%
Topic and Annotated Bibliography Final	10%
Draft	20%
Oral Presentation	10%
Final Version	15%

*You cannot pass the course without completing each element of the research proposal

NOTE: BECAUSE OF THE SPECIAL NATURE OF THIS COURSE, THE NUMBER OF ASSIGNMENTS, AND THE WAY IN WHICH THEY BUILD UPON ONE ANOTHER, YOU NEED TO AVOID LATENESS AS MUCH AS YOU CAN—LATE PAPERS WILL ONLY BE ACCEPTED UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING SURE THAT YOU COMPLETE YOUR WORK AND TURN IT IN ON TIME.

In general, if you have any kind of problem that interferes with your work for the class, please consult with me as soon as possible.

ONLINE ETIQUETTE

Our discussions and other online communication are crucial to the community that this class aims to develop. The tone of all communication, both in Blackboard Collaborate and in discussion posts and responses, should be collaborative and supportive while remaining rigorous; you are creating a learning environment, sharing information and learning from one another. Respectful communication is important to your success in this course and as a professional.

In class this means being logged in on time, muting your microphone when others are talking (except in small group work), keeping your camera on as much as possible, but turning it off if there are distractions in the background or other issues, staying until the end of class unless you have let me know of an issue before hand, and **ESPECIALLY** not multitasking—make sure you close other applications and programs so that you can avoid distractions and focus on class.

On discussion boards, please re-read your communications carefully before you post them to make sure your meaning is clear and that others will not take them out of context or as personal attacks. Be positive to others and diplomatic with your words, even when disagreeing. Be particularly careful when using sarcasm and humor. Without face-to-face communications your joke may not come across the way in which you intend. Experience shows that even an innocent remark in the online environment can be misconstrued.

EXPLORING CHARGED TOPICS

Our course often covers issues of race, slavery, gender, sexual exploitation, violence, and oppression that still have resonance today. In dealing with these issues, it is important to be both respectful of the historical experience of the people involved and aware of the larger implications of that history in our world. This means making the effort to learn the appropriate vocabulary for discussing these issues in an analytical and scholarly way and avoiding uncritically echoing language that replicates the attitudes and assumptions of the past. This does not mean shying away from dealing with these issues if you are unsure of how to talk or write about them—we will do our best to confront them frankly and directly, and the course is designed to help you do so.

Because this is a learning process and these are complex and charged issues, we should presume good faith and give everyone the benefit of the doubt when people struggle with some of these concepts. At the same time, we should all work to *earn* that benefit of the doubt: by engaging in good faith, by learning from our mistakes, and by being open to new perspectives and ways of seeing this complex history and what it means to people today.

HONOR CODE STATEMENT

All work in the course is governed by the George Mason University honor code:
To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: **Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.**

More information can be found at the GMU [Office of Academic Integrity](#).

OTHER POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Administrative Dates (Consult advising and Registrar's Office for more information)

Last day to add: Monday, February 1

Last day to drop with full tuition refund: Friday, February 12

Final Drop Deadline, with 50% tuition penalty: Tuesday, February 16

Unrestricted Withdrawal Period: Wednesday, February 17-Monday, March 1

Selective Withdrawal Period (undergrads only): Tuesday, March 2-Thursday, April 1

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ods.gmu.edu) at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

GMU Email Accounts

Students must use their Mason email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See masonlive.gmu.edu for more information.

Useful Resources

Writing Center (writingcenter.gmu.edu): see website to schedule online sessions

Counseling and Psychological Services (caps.gmu.edu): SUB I, Room 3129, (703) 993-2380

University Catalog: catalog.gmu.edu

Other university policies: universitypolicy.gmu.edu

REQUIRED TEXTS

The following books are required reading for this class:

- Greenberg, Kenneth, ed. *The Confessions of Nat Turner, with Related Documents*. 2nd Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2017.
- Rael, Patrick. *Reading, Writing, and Researching for History: A Guide for College Students*. Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2004. (Available as a website and as a PDF on our Blackboard site.)
- Whitman, T. Stephen. *Challenging Slavery in the Chesapeake: Black and White Resistance to Human Bondage, 1775-1865*. Baltimore, MD: Maryland Historical Society, 2006.

Additional required readings are listed on the syllabus. I will put links to those readings in the "Additional Course Readings" section of the class Blackboard site.

Other late-breaking readings may be distributed electronically, and those will also be considered part of the required reading.

You should make sure to have a way of easily and quickly consulting the readings during class

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

NOTE: Because of the nature of the work for this class, this syllabus is fairly fixed. It may, however, have to be adjusted in the event of power outages, connectivity issues, or other emergencies. Any necessary changes will be announced via email and on the Blackboard site, and an updated syllabus will be uploaded to Blackboard. Please make sure to keep informed about any changes.

T, Jan. 26: Course Introduction: Slavery and Resistance in the Revolutionary Era

T, Feb. 2: Revolutionary Transformations

Reading:

- Rael, *Reading, Writing and Researching for History*, Sections 1.a. and 2.b.
- Whitman, *Challenging Slavery in the Chesapeake*, pp. xi-73 (Introduction and Chapters 1-3).

Runaway Slave Advertisement Exercise (in class)

- Runaway Slave Advertisements, 1752 and 1793 (we'll analyze these in groups in class, but you may want to take a look ahead of time as well).

T, Feb. 9: Arguing about the American Revolution

Reading:

- Rael, *Reading, Writing, and Researching for History*, Sections 2.a., 2.c., 2.d., 3.a. and 3.b.
- Sylvia Frey, "Between Slavery and Freedom: Virginia Blacks in the American Revolution," *Journal of Southern History* 49:3 (August 1983): 375-398.
- Cassandra Pybus, "Jefferson's Faulty Math: The Question of Slave Defections in the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 62:2 (April 2005): 243-264.

Historiography Exercise Due

T, Feb 16: Antebellum Contests over Slavery

Reading:

- Whitman, *Challenging Slavery in the Chesapeake*, pp. 74--163 (Chapters 4-6).
- Rael, *Reading, Writing, and Researching for History*, Sections 3.a. to 3.e.

Question and Sources Workshop in Class

T, Feb. 23: Slavery and the Civil War

Reading:

- Whitman, *Challenging Slavery in the Chesapeake*, pp. 164-229 (Chapters 7-8).

- Rael, *Reading, Writing, and Researching for History*, Sections 4.a. to 4.d.

Topic and Annotated Bibliography First Draft Due

T, Mar. 2: Expanding Our Ideas of Resistance

Reading:

- Stephanie M. H. Camp, “The Pleasures of Resistance: Enslaved Women and Body Politics in the Plantation South, *Journal of Southern History* 68:3 (August 2002): 533-572.
- Rael, *Reading, Writing, and Researching for History*, Sections 5.a. to 5.d.

Topic and Annotated Bibliography Final Draft Due

T, Mar. 9: Individual Meetings—Work on Primary Source Analysis (Writing Sample)

Reading:

- Rael, *Reading, Writing, and Researching for History*, Sections 6.a.-6.d., 7.a. to 7.c.

T, Mar. 16: Workshop: Thinking about the Project Narrative

Reading:

- Example narratives from NEH website
- NEH Fellowship document

Primary Source Analysis (Writing Sample) Due

T, Mar. 23: Nat Turner and Interpreting Complicated Texts

Reading:

- Greenberg, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, pp. 1-56. (Introduction and *The Confessions of Nat Turner*).

T, Mar. 30: Individual Meetings—Work on Project Narrative

T, Apr. 6: Discussion and Assessment

Reading:

- Rael, *Reading, Writing, and Researching for History*, Sections 8.a. to 8.d. (not all of this is directly applicable to our particular project, but these are still useful for understanding practices and standards in assessing historical work).

Draft of Project Narrative Due (we'll figure out a way to share these in class)

T, Apr. 13: Individual Meetings—Feedback and Advice for Presentation and Final Draft

T, Apr. 20: Oral Presentations

T, Apr. 27: Oral Presentations

Final Paper Due via Blackboard Friday, May 7