Course Description

The quest for freedom from enslavement did not begin and end with President Lincoln’s 1862 Emancipation Proclamation. Enslaved men, women, and children in Virginia resisted enslavement in many ways and with varying degrees of success throughout the long nineteenth century. This Mason Impact Course introduces History majors to the practices and methods of researching, interpreting, and writing history by focusing on the history of resistance to enslavement in Virginia during the long 19th century (1782 to 1899). This course is designated as part of Mason’s Students as Scholars initiative and fulfills in part the Writing Intensive (WI) requirement in the History major. This means you will learn about the history of resistance to enslavement by articulating questions, problems, and challenges in the research process from multiple points of view. Through a study of relevant scholarly literature and primary sources you will identify constraints and options, silences and voices, collective and individual decisions, and key historical processes that shaped resistance activism and its responses. Through a series of assignments you will learn how to gather and organize information, analyze source materials, form an argument, and communicate your original scholarly research to the public.

Course Modality

We learn by sharing our perspectives and ideas. Therefore, this course focuses on discussion and is designed for the modality of face-to-face instruction, on campus.

Given the unpredictable nature of the current pandemic, we also need to be flexible and able to adapt when conditions change. My goal is to maintain educational continuity. I fully understand that each of us may face new obstacles or old obstacles in novel ways during this time. Please communicate with me if situations or circumstances are affecting your ability to be a part of our class. My goal is to facilitate your growth and success in this strange and uncertain time; I can only do that if you tell me what is happening.

Pandemic Protocols

All students taking courses with a face-to-face component are required to follow the university’s public health and safety precautions and procedures outlined on the university Safe Return to Campus webpage (https://www2.gmu.edu/safe-return-campus). Similarly, all students in face-to-face and hybrid courses must also complete the Mason COVID Health Check daily, seven days a week. The COVID Health Check system uses a color code system and students will receive either a Green, Yellow, Red, or Blue email response. Only students who receive a “green” notification are permitted to attend courses with a face-to-face component. If you suspect that you are sick or have been directed to self-isolate, please quarantine or get testing. Faculty are allowed to ask you to show them that you have received a Green email and are thereby permitted to be in class.

Students are required to follow Mason's current policy about facemask-wearing. As of August 11, 2021, all community members are required to wear a facemask in all indoor settings, including classrooms. An appropriate facemask must cover your nose and mouth at all times in our classroom. If this policy changes, you will be informed; however, students who prefer to wear masks will always be welcome in the classroom.
Situating HIST 300 into your GMU Degree

This course is designated as a:
- Mason CORE course
- Mason Impact course
- Research and Creative Activities (RS) course
- Writing Intensive (WI) course

The following opportunities are available to you as a student in this Research and Creative Activities (RS) and Mason Impact (MI) course.
- You can receive a line on your transcript that highlights the name of your specific project by uploading your project or a link via the portal on the student section of the Mason Impact website.
- You can receive a MINI Grant for up to $500 to complete your project.
- You can share the results of your project at the Celebration of Student Scholarship and Impact.
- You can use the Mason Innovation Exchange (MIX). Note the MIX’s new location—Horizon Hall on the Fairfax Campus. New this year is an “incubator” area where selected student groups will be able work on their projects.

In this Research and Creative Activities (RS) Course, students will participate actively and meaningfully in the process of creative inquiry: generating and sharing scholarship. By the end of the course students will complete an original digital research project that synthesizes their knowledge of content, demonstrates their ability to read and analyze a variety of sources, and makes a significant contribution to public historical knowledge. Students will also demonstrate their ability to apply critical thinking skills to evaluate the quality, credibility, and limitations of an argument using appropriate evidence and a variety of sources. They will also be expected to judge the quality or value of an idea, work, or argument based on historical standards and forms of analysis.

In this Writing Intensive Course, students will partially fulfill the Writing Intensive requirement for the History Major. Students will complete a substantial digital project analyzing primary sources, incorporating secondary sources, and presenting your research question and major findings. Project components will include images and an annotated bibliography. Students must earn a grade of C or better in HIST 300 to register for the second required Writing Intensive History course, HIST 499.

Learning Outcomes

1. Understand knowledge creation: Students will understand the situational nature of how knowledge is generated and communicated, and how it can be used to address questions or problems in history and in society.
2. Engage with multiple perspectives: Students will identify and negotiate multiple perspectives, work collaboratively within and across multiple social and environmental contexts, and engage ethically with their subject and with others.
3. Investigate a meaningful question: Students will use inquiry skills to articulate a question; engage in an inquiry process; and situate the concepts, practices, or results within a broader context. To do these, you will:
   a. Ask increasingly complex questions about significant problems, debates, or challenges.
   b. Evaluate and choose inquiry methods that are appropriate to your line of inquiry.
   c. Explain how your project has value to local, civic, or scholarly contexts.
4. Adhere to ethical principles and standards: Students will identify and adhere to ethical principles within the professional historians’ community for conducting, attributing, and representing research and analysis.
5. **Complete a project**: Students will design and carry out an individual digital project that explores an original question, seeks a creative solution to a problem, applies knowledge to a professional challenge, or offers a unique perspective.

6. **Communicate and share outcomes**: Students will communicate knowledge from their project through public presentation and performance to an audience.

**Course Requirements**

*Expect to spend at least five hours a week on research and writing assignments in addition to class time on Mondays.*

This course requires strict attention to the deadlines and to dedicating time for research, analysis, and writing. The schedule for the semester is designed to help you meet benchmark assignments and make weekly progress towards the completion of your research project. If you are having difficulty completing an assignment, please contact me. I’m here to guide you through this process.

**Participation and Engagement**: The learning experience of any course depends entirely on the engagement of its members. First and foremost, students are expected to be present in class and to complete all readings as assigned. Please note that being present does not simply mean that one makes it to our face-to-face class meetings; it means engaging with the course – the texts, the assignments, and with the viewpoints of other members of our classroom community – in ways that respectfully generates questions about the content, adds to our common understanding of the content, interprets the content in multiple viewpoints, and makes meaningful connections. We will work together in conversations and through discussion to navigate the research and writing process, so your full presence is expected.

**Foundational Assignments**: Students will complete a series of preliminary assignments designed to build a strong foundation for identifying, organizing, refining, and presenting your research project. Some of these tasks are completed in workshops, others assigned outside of class. **Students must turn in ALL foundational assignments in order to receive a passing grade for this course.**

**Individual Meetings**: During specified weeks you will schedule an individual meeting with me to talk about your writing and research progress. During these weeks I recommend that your class time be designated as time to work on your project so you do not lose momentum. We can meet in-person or virtually, during class time or at a time mutually convenient. I will post a sign-up schedule spreadsheet one week in advance. Individual meetings are not graded assignments, but failure to schedule or attend these sessions is a sign of concern.

I encourage you to meet with me at any point during the semester to discuss the course and your progress. My office hours are on Mondays before class (6:00 – 7:00pm) or we can set up a mutually convenient time to meet on campus or through Zoom.

**Oral Presentations**: Historians need to develop the ability to convey the significance of their work to a variety of audiences. Weekly discussions will help to refine your public speaking skills. Regular discussions of your research process helps you keep on track and provides opportunities to learn from your peers also immersed in the research process. At the culmination of our course, each student will host a 10 minute formal presentation of their research project.

Presentations will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated ability to present one’s work in a clear and organized manner
- Completion of the presentation’s major elements within the allotted time
- Ability to engage and maintain the audience’s attention
- Demonstrated ability to respond to questions from the audience
- Quality and completeness of the project

**Major Digital Creative Work**: In addition to foundational assignments, each student will design and complete a creative digital research project that interprets primary documents, historical context, scholarly works, and the
legacy or significance of your topic. Topics must be related to the broad theme of enslavement and resistance. Your project will:

- begin with a research question,
- draw from diverse primary and scholarly sources,
- clearly demonstrate interpretive analytical skills,
- utilize appropriate language and grammar conventions
- include appropriate citations and bibliography, and
- articulate a clearly articulated thesis (main argument).

Your project should be appropriately situated within the historiography of the field. Projects will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Clarity and originality of the project’s research inquiry and argument
- Use of primary sources in support of the thesis statement
- The degree to which the work is situated appropriately in the existing literature of secondary sources (i.e. historiography)
- Use of diverse sources appropriated cited and acknowledged
- Sophistication of historical analysis, interpretation, and making meaning out of information, including identifying the significance or potential applications of your research.
- Organization and quality of writing and digital presentation.

**Graded Assignments**

Completion of ALL assignments is required to pass this course. Timely completion of assignments is crucial to keeping on track with the course, yet I understand the need for flexibility given the nature of coursework and research during a pandemic. If you need a short extension or are having difficulties working through an assignment, please email me for support.

**Foundational Assignments**

- **#1 Preliminary Topic proposal (provide 3 potential choices)** 3 points due end of class January 31
- **#2 Revised topic and research question description** 4 points due before mtg. Feb. 28
- **#3 Primary Source Assignment #1** 6 points due March 7
- **#4 Preliminary annotated bibliography** 6 points due March 28
- **#5 Primary Source Assignment #2** 6 points due April 4

**Cumulative Assignments**

- **#6 Complete final draft storyboard of website pages** 15 points due April 18
- **#7 Oral presentation** 20 points due April 25 or May 2
- **#8 Final digital project** 25 points due May 7
- Participation – class discussions 15 points

**Grading Scale**

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<td>66 and below</td>
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Remember, students must earn a grade of C or better in HIST 300 to register for the second required Writing Intensive History course, HIST 499.

**Required Texts – eBooks are available through library.gmu.edu**

- All other readings and materials are available through library.gmu.edu or through our Blackboard site
Expectations and Ethos of Our Learning Community

Land Acknowledgement

A land acknowledgment engages all present in an ongoing indigenous protocol to enact meaningful, reciprocal relationships with ancestors and contemporary tribal nations. As a state university, we have a responsibility to include and support indigenous communities and sovereign tribes in our work.

At the place George Mason University occupies, we give greetings and thanksgivings

- to these Potomac River life sources,
- to the Doeg ancestors, who Virginia annihilated in violent campaigns while ripping their lands apart with the brutal system of African American enslavement,
- to the recognized Virginia tribes who have lovingly stewarded these lands for millennia including the Rappahannock, Pamunkey, Upper Mattaponi, Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Nansemond, Monacan, Mattaponi, Patawomeck, and Nottaway, past, present, and future, and
- to the Piscataway tribes, who have lived on both sides of the river from time immemorial.

Acknowledging the History of Enslavement on GMU Lands

We acknowledge the enslaved persons who were forced to labor for more than 200 years on the lands that are now home to George Mason University. Most of these men, women, and children will never be known to us due to the racist policies that tried to strip away their humanity. We honor Linah Thornton, Surah, Siriah, Lego, Anna, Lewis, Louisa, and Cato and the many unknown, but not forgotten, enslaved laborers who left their imprint on this land.

Chosen Names and Pronouns

The Mason community and I support and recognize that creating a welcoming environment enhances a sense of belonging and well-being. I encourage you to inform me of your chosen first name and pronouns before the start of class so I may properly address you in class and via email. Information about making this information available through Mason records is found at https://registrar.gmu.edu/updating-chosen-name-pronouns/. I use she/her/hers as my pronouns. You may address me as either Dr. Huerta or Prof. Huerta.

Mason’s Nondiscrimination Policy

George Mason University is committed to providing equal opportunity and an educational and work environment free from any discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, veteran status, sexual identity, or age. Mason shall adhere to all applicable state and federal equal opportunity/affirmative action statutes and regulations. Moreover, in this class we seek to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across the entire range of human identities. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.

Commitment to an inclusive, antiracist learning environment

Public higher education in the United States – and George Mason University, specifically – ideally exists to foster a more free, just, and democratic society. Racism – systemic and otherwise – is among the most pernicious barriers to the realization of that mission. GMU, the History and Art History Department, and this instructor are all committed to confronting the realities of race and racism head on; we are committed to establishing learning environments that are welcoming, inclusive, and equitable; and we are committed to breaking down the barriers to freedom, justice, and democracy posed by racism. This is challenging work, and I acknowledge that at times, we – and I – will fall short. If you feel that our learning environment does not meet these standards, please do not hesitate to tell me. I am committed to listening, to hearing you, and to working together to create an inclusive, antiracist learning environment.
Engaging with Hard History

At times, this particular course will take many of us (including the instructor) into areas of inquiry, historical and current, that will be challenging and unsettling. We may be anxious and uncertain as to how to engage when faced with some of these topics, but these responses should be taken as evidence of the importance of our confrontation with them. In all of our interactions, you must commit to participating in our conversations with respect, tolerance, curiosity, and forthrightness. You must be willing to contribute to the conversation, to give others space to offer their views, and to listen generously and carefully. While you will certainly disagree with me and with one another at times, we expect and, in fact, demand that you interact as colleagues and treat each other with mutual respect and tolerance. Conduct that does not comply will not be acceptable. If, at any point, you feel that our learning environment falls short of these standards of mutual respect and tolerance – or I have fallen short of this standard – please do not hesitate to tell me.

Honor, Integrity, and Ethics

The integrity of the University community and the community of professional historians is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that:

1. All work submitted is your own;
2. When using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations;
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. In this course we will follow the Chicago Manual of Style / Turabian, notes and bibliography format. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using the appropriate format for this class. 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 questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me.


Researching during a Pandemic

I realize that trying to complete a major research project during a pandemic will be a challenge. Shuttered archives, travel restrictions, social distancing, and limiting contact with persons outside your household have altered the ways that historians research. While there has been a growth in the number of digitized resources and online databases, this may not include all potential topics. Creative thinking will be an asset. I encourage you to share interesting databases and resources in our Blackboard Discussion Forum.

Compassion in the Learning Community

We are living in a stressful time for many reasons and I fully understand that each of you may be under different and changing levels of stress over the course of our semester. We all learn best when our basic needs are met and when we have the mental space and the physical place for learning. At times this may not be possible and I understand.

If circumstances prevent you from being fully engaged with the class or coursework, or if you feel overwhelmed, please reach out to me as soon as possible.

Addressing Basic Physical and Mental Needs

If you are struggling to fulfill basic needs like secure housing and food, contact our campus food pantry https://ssac.gmu.edu/patriot-pantry or reach out to other Mason resources at
https://learningservices.gmu.edu/campus-resources. Remember that asking for assistance and advocating for yourself is an important part of your collegiate experience and that these resources are in place to support you.

If you find that you are experiencing feelings of anxiety, panic, depression, or sadness during the semester, the Student Health Services and Counseling and Psychological Services program on campus can offer a wide range of resources. Students can call 703.993.2831 to schedule an appointment to talk with a healthcare provider. I am also available to speak with you about stresses related to your work in my course.

Our Mason community and I are here to help. Remember that you are not alone!

**Disability Accommodations**

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit http://ds.gmu.edu/ for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu and Phone: (703)993-2474.

**Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, and Interpersonal Violence**

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living, and working environment that is free from discrimination and a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students and employees who believe that they have been sexually harassed, sexually assaulted or subjected to sexual or interpersonal misconduct to seek assistance and support. University Policy 1202: Sexual Harassment and Misconduct https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/ speaks to the specifics of Mason's process, the resources, and the options available to students and employees.

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, complicity, and retaliation to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703.380.1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703.993.2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703.993.8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

Now that we understand the foundation and core values of this course, let’s see how the course will unfold.

**Tentative Schedule**

Most assigned readings are available through links in our Blackboard site or through electronic resources available at library.gmu.edu. See Blackboard for detailed assignment instructions to prepare for each weekly class. This schedule is subject to change. I will update Blackboard as needed and will apprise you when there are changes to the posted syllabus.

During our class on Mondays we will discuss the assigned readings assigned for that date and engage in the work of historians through case studies and analysis of primary and scholarly sources.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic and Assigned Materials</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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| Week 1 Monday January 24 | **Course Overview and Introduction to Working with 19th century Primary Sources**  
- What is resistance?  
- Watch “Slavery and the Making of America – Liberty in the Air” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozFFFNraQ18 | Note: AAHA program with Dr. Joshua Rothman on Wednesday, January 26 – see flyer in |
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<th>Week 1 folder</th>
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| **Read** Ramey Berry, “How Sally Hemings and Other Enslaved People Secured Precious Pockets of Freedom”  
**Read** “Tips for Reading Old Handwriting”  
**Workshop:** Transcribing 19th Century Handwriting |

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<tr>
<th>Reading a Scholarly Source</th>
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| **Read** Brower, “…Frank Having Subsequently Run Away: A Fresh Look at the Frank Wanzer Escape”  
**Read** Rael’s “Reading Sources” 2.a-2.d  
[https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/reading/](https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/reading/)  
**Read** “Keeping a Research Journal”  
[https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/research/keeping-a-research-journal/](https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/research/keeping-a-research-journal/)  
**View** the Library Research Resource videos: Using the Library Catalog and Using Journal Databases  
**Listen** to Ben Franklin’s World, Episode 070 podcast with Jennifer Morgan, “How Historians Research Enslaved Persons” (43:31) |

| Assignment #1  
Preliminary Topic proposal (provide 3 potential choices)  
Due by the end of class, January 31 |

| Week 3  
Monday  
February 7 |
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<td><strong>Courts as Sites of Resistance</strong></td>
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| **Read** Wallenstein, “Prologue: Annie’s Petition, 1808”  
**Read** Nicholls, “‘The squint of freedom’: African-American Freedom Suits in Post-Revolutionary Virginia”  
**Read** Foreman, et al. “Writing about Slavery / Teaching About Slavery: This Might Help”  
**Watch** “Historic Records Center – The County’s Living Timeline”  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWPD9bgB0P4&t=17s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWPD9bgB0P4&t=17s)  
**Workshop:** Freedom Suits and County Court Archives |

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<th>Developing a Research Project – Finding and Using Sources</th>
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| **Read** Greenberg, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, p. v-x, 1-56, and select three of the Related Documents, 2 from documents #1-9, and one from Documents #10-15  
**Read** Rael, “Working with Sources”  
[https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/working-with-sources/](https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/working-with-sources/)  
**Read** Rael, “Research”  
[https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/research/](https://courses.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/research/)  
**Workshop:** Mining a Bibliography |

| Week 5  
Monday  
February 21 |
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<td><strong>Case Study: Laws, Courts, and White Supremacy</strong></td>
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| **Read** Link, “The Jordan Hatcher Case: Politics and ‘A Spirit of Insubordination’ in Antebellum Virginia”  
**OR**  
**Read** Sprouse, “Outrage Near Spring Bank: Slave Resistance in Fairfax County”  
**Workshop:** Finding County Court documents |

| Assignment #2  
Revised topic and research question |

| Week 6  
Monday  
February 28 |
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<td><strong>Individual Meetings to discuss project ideas</strong></td>
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<td><strong>What types of sources will help you address your research</strong></td>
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**Question:**
- How will you acquire your sources?
- Who will you contact for assistance?
- What information, concepts, or laws do you need to understand to interpret your sources?
- Whose perspective will you emphasize?
- What types of viewpoints will you address?

**View America’s Historical Imprints** – watch “On-Demand Training: America’s Historical Imprints” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHEOT3S1OMo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHEOT3S1OMo)
| Week 14 | Monday | April 25 | Presentations – Group 1  
- Sign up to give a ten minute talk about your research project, your visual presentation of your project, and its outcomes  
| Assignment #7  
Oral presentation |
| Week 15 | Monday | May 2 | Presentations – Group 2  
- Sign up to give a ten minute talk about your research project, your visual presentation of your project, and its outcomes  
| Assignment #7  
Oral presentation |
| Saturday | May 7 | Final Projects are Due by noon  
| Assignment #8  
Final digital project |