

**21:512:233 AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY I  
SPRING 2015**

Instructor: Brittany Hall

Location & Time: Bradley Hall, Room 410, T/Th 2:30-3:50pm

Office Hours:

Email: [Brittany.s.hall@rutgers.edu](mailto:Brittany.s.hall@rutgers.edu)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will introduce major themes and events in early African American History from its origins in fifteenth century West Africa to the post-Civil War Reconstruction era. Students will learn how people of African descent in the United States negotiated oppressive economic and social systems in order to make meaning of their lives and construct an identity amidst the growing nation we now know as the United States of America. Key points of discussion include Africa in the Atlantic World, the Atlantic Slave Trade, US Slavery, Slave Culture and Resistance, Free People of Color, Abolition, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. We will be paying close attention to how geography, color, gender, class, and politics may have affected the lived experiences of people of color in America. We will also discuss how African American labor, culture, and intellectual work has helped to shape the country we live in today.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Students will practice crafting an argument and articulating their ideas in an academic setting. Through class discussions, workshops, and presentations, students will collaborate with their peers to practice public speaking skills. Through coursework and written assignments, students will also practice analyzing and interpreting primary and secondary sources in order to identify the text's main elements - thesis, supporting arguments, evidence, assumptions, and rhetorical strategy in addition to its strengths, weaknesses, counterpoints, and bias. Students will encounter various forms of historical evidence, both textual and visual, as well as the historical interpretations that make use of this evidence. By engaging critically with course materials, students will understand how historians build their arguments from evidence, how to evaluate that evidence and the resulting argument, and how to use their writing and speaking skills to form their own interpretations of key events in African American history.

**REQUIRED WORK:**

Classes will consist of lecture and discussion. Students will be expected to come to class having read the required reading for the week and to be prepared for discussion. An outline will be posted on Blackboard prior to class in order to assist students in following the themes presented in each lecture. This class will be media rich. We will be conducting a number of in-class workshops and activities to practice writing, interpreting primary sources, and thinking critically. However, students should only bring laptops on specified dates. Otherwise, the use of laptops and tablets will be banned during class.

There will be **four (4) formal written assignments. (40% total)** Students should consult the instructor to discuss themes or supplementary materials based on their interests.

The first is a **2 page reaction paper** that reflects on your findings in our class workshop on Feb 5. I will talk more about this in class. **Due Feb 12. (5%)**

The second is a **3-5 page analytical essay** based on a slave narrative of your choosing in consultation with the professor. **Due March 5. (10%)**

The second is a **5-7 page critical review** of an article or book that relates to one of the themes of the course. Students are expected to summarize the argument, identify the evidence the author uses to make that argument, and show how material from our course either supports, refutes, or provides an alternative perspective to the work reviewed. For all written work, students will be expected to write in a clear and organized manner. Students will need to demonstrate critical thinking and original perspectives in their work. Please see Blackboard for detailed instructions for both of these assignments. **(15%)**

The fourth is a **3-5 page reading response** that compares and contrasts two historiographical themes relating to the Civil War. **(10%)**

Additionally, there will be **one (1) informal assignment** that will factor into your final grade for participation. Students will be assigned one date on which to provide questions, video clips, images, or quotes, to guide our discussions. This should be accompanied by a short 2-3 page paper that explains your presentation and its relationship to our readings. **Participation will account for (15%) of your grade.**

#### **EXAMINATIONS:**

To ensure that you are keeping up with the readings, there will be a number of **pop quizzes** held throughout the semester. **(5%)**

The **Midterm** is worth **(20%)** of your final grade and the **Final Exam** is worth **(20%)**.

**ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY** for all students in this class! Students are responsible for attending lectures and participating in class discussions. Hence, the final course grade will be determined, in part, by attendance. Excused absences include illness requiring medical attention, curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty, personal obligations claimed by the student and recognized as valid, recognized religious holidays, and severe inclement weather causing dangerous traveling conditions. I still expect that you will contact me in advance or promptly after an emergency situation so that we may discuss make up work. After three unexcused absences, your overall course grade will be lowered by a partial grade (from B+ to B, for example) for every further unexcused absence. Four latenesses will equal one unexcused absence. Any student who misses eight or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences will have missed more than a quarter of the class time and will not earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw from the course to avoid an F.

#### **CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR:**

You are a member of an academic community. Students are expected to make positive contributions to the classroom so that we may all make progress in our educational pursuits together. Students should refrain from disruptive behaviors that will be distracting to other students in the class. This means that students should not be holding private conversations, using their cell phones/laptops/tablets, **working on homework for other classes**, eating, or making comments not relevant to the topic of discussion. Your participation grade for the day will be reduced. Extremely disruptive students will be asked to leave class, and will be marked with an unexcused absence.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

Students should abide by the University's policy for academic honesty.

The principles of academic integrity require that a student:

- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others.
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.
- make sure that all work submitted as his or her own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of impermissible materials or impermissible collaboration.
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions.
- treat all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.
- uphold the canons of the ethical or professional code of the profession for which he or she is preparing.

All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge. To receive credit, every assignment must have your signature under the following phrase: "On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination / assignment."

I cannot stress how important it is that you CITE YOUR SOURCES. Please do not put your academic and professional future at risk by failing to give credit where credit is due. Academic historians use the Chicago Manual of Style, 16th Edition to guide them through this process. We will also talk about other electronic resources to assist you with citations and bibliographies.

### **REQUIRED READING:**

The textbook for this class is Deborah Gray White, Mia Bay, Waldo E. Martin, Jr.

*Freedom on Mind: A History of African-Americans with Documents: Volume One to 1885* (FM).

The book is available in Rutgers' bookstore or can be ordered through online retailers like Amazon or Barnes & Noble.

We will also be reading Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. This book, any edition, can be obtained easily and for a few dollars. I did not order it from the bookstore.

All other course material for this course may be found online through our Blackboard site. You will find a copy of this syllabus, as well as supplementary readings and paper assignments there. You may easily refer to the website for the most recent course assignments and requirements.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

This syllabus details the required reading for each week. Readings are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Please check Blackboard for the most up-to-date reading list.

Jan 20 Introduction and Expectations

What is African American History and why should we study it?

Themes, Approaches and Challenges

In class: Jon F. Sensbach, "Charting a Course in Early African-American History"; Countryman, "The Beginnings of American Slavery"

Jan 22 African Beginnings

Read: *Freedom on my Mind*, Chapter 1: 1-16; Walter Rodney, "African Societies were Transformed by the Slave Trade"; John Thornton, "African Societies Voluntarily Participated in the Slave Trade"

Jan 27 Early African Contributions to the New World beyond the Columbian Exchange

Read: selections from Thornton, *Africans and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*;

Jan 29; The Atlantic Slave Trade

Read: *Freedom on my Mind*, Chapter 1: 18-38; Thornton, *Africans and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*; Philip Morgan, "Cultural Implications of the Atlantic Slave Trade: African Regional Origins, American Destinations and New World Developments"

Feb 3 African American Slavery in the Colonial Era

Read: *Freedom on My Mind*, Chapter 2: 56-109; Ira Berlin, "Introduction: The Charter Generations;" Kenneth E. Marshall, "Powerful and Righteous: The Transatlantic Survival and Cultural Resistance of an Enslaved African Family in Eighteenth-Century New Jersey"

Feb 5: In class workshop: Finding humanity in the archives.

We will be using digital resources to recover the experiences of enslaved Africans trafficked to the Americas using primary documents. More details prior to class.

Feb 10 Blacks in the Revolutionary Era; Fighting for Freedom?

Read: *Freedom on My Mind*, Chapter 3: 112-128, 145-158; Thomas Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia (1787)"

Feb 12 Slavery and Freedom in the New Republic

Read: *Freedom on My Mind*, Chapter 4: 162-209

**\*\*REFLECTION PAPER DUE**

Feb 17 The rise of King Cotton - Economics of Slavery & Expansion

Read: *Freedom on My Mind*, Chapter 5: 212-218; Ed Baptist, "Cuffy, Fancy Maids, and One-Eyed Men: Rape, Commodification, the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States"

Feb 19 Every day Resistance and Survival: Life on the Plantation

Read: *Freedom on My Mind*, Chapter 5: 220-229, 242-262; David Walker's "Appeal"

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/walker/walker.html>

Feb 24 Slave Narratives as Literary Genre and Historical Document

Read: James Olney, "I Was Born": Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature; Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Feb 26 Abolitionism and Free People of Color

Read: *Freedom on My Mind*, Chapter 6: 266-284, 295-320; Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"

Mar 3 in class: First half of *Twelve Years a Slave*

Read: Fugitive Slave Acts

Mar 5 In class: Second half of *Twelve Years a Slave*

**\*\* ANALYTICAL ESSAY DUE**

Mar 10 MIDTERM REVIEW

Mar 12 MIDTERM

March 17-19 Spring Break NO CLASS

Mar 24 America at the brink of Civil War: The Slavery Question

Read: *Freedom on My Mind*, Chapter 5: 285-297

Mar 26 John Brown's Raid on Harper's Ferry & Its Precursors

Mar 31 Causes of the Civil War

Read: "What Twenty-first Century Historians Have Said About the Causes of Disunion: a Civil War Sesquicentennial Review of the Recent Literature;" Excerpts from David Potter, *The Impending Crisis*

In class: Ken Burns, *The Civil War*, Part 1

Apr 2 African Americans and the Civil War, 1861-1865

Read: *Freedom on My Mind*, Chapter 7: 324-331, 351-36

In class: *Glory*

Apr 7 Black Soldiers and Civilians during the Civil War

Read: *Freedom on My Mind*, Chapter 7: 322-331, 334-339, 351-361

In class: *Glory*

**\*\* BOOK REVIEW DUE**

Apr 9 Emancipation Proclamation and The Thirteenth Amendment: A Closer Look at the Documents

Read: *Freedom on My Mind*, Chapter 7: 332-33, 340-350, 362-375, "Emancipation Proclamation" and Thirteenth Amendment in Appendix 1; Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

Apr 14 The Reconstruction Era, 1865-1877, Opposing Viewpoints

Read: *Freedom on My Mind*, Chapter 8: 376-397, 414-429

Apr 16 Black Codes and Freedmen's Bureau

Read: *Freedom on My Mind*, Chapter 8: 408-413; Excerpts from W.E.B Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*

Apr 21 The Southern Way Becomes the American Way

Read: *Freedom on My Mind*, Chapter 8: 400-408

**\*\* SHORT PAPER DUE**

Apr 23 Black Collective Organizing at the End of the Century; Early Civil Rights

Read: *Freedom on My Mind*, Chapter 8: 285-297

Apr 28 Slavery and Civil War in American Memory

Read: "For Something Beyond the Battlefield": Frederick Douglass and the Struggle for the Memory of the Civil War; Excerpts, Willis and Krauthamer, *Envisioning Emancipation*

Apr 30 FINAL EXAM REVIEW

FINAL EXAM Tuesday, May 12 3:00-6:00pm