

HIST / AFRS 2140

History of African Americans to 1865

Prof. Patrick Rael, Bowdoin College, Spring 2018

Meets: WM 11:30-1:00
Pickering Room (Hubbard Hall)
Office hours: MT2-4, by apt.

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This course examines the history of African Americans from the origins of slavery in America through the death of slavery during the Civil War. How could anyone (let alone the Founding Fathers) have traded human beings as chattel? How did African-descended people in America come to be both part of and yet perpetually marginalized in America? What does this say about the nature of American democracy and the mythologies of American history? How much agency did African Americans have in crafting their own experience, and what does this say about the nature of both their oppression and their resistance? In what ways have African Americans contributed to the formation of American society? We will be concerned not simply with the important task of re-inserting the African-American past into our national historical narrative. We will also be interested in understanding the depths to which American society has been predicated on the intersections of race, economy, and society. Throughout, we will try to work by listening to the neglected voices of African Americans themselves to better understand the complex part of the nation's past.

LEVEL: This course is a 2000-level lecture course, intended for majors and non-majors, of every class standing. It is a moderately difficult course, requiring frequent reading and writing. Students who have not had a previous history course at Bowdoin may wish to speak with me early in the semester during office hours.

COURSE WEBSITE The material for this course may be found online through Blackboard. You will find a copy of this syllabus, many readings, and class handouts. Note that the online version of the syllabus is always the most up to date. You will also find my website <<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/faculty/P/prael>> useful. It links to guides on writing, plagiarism, and other matters crucial to your success in history courses.

BOOKS: These books can be found at the campus bookstore. Other readings will be made available via Blackboard, either under "Readings" or through links in the syllabus.

- Turner, Nat. *The Confessions of Nat. Turner*. Kenneth S. Greenberg, ed. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996. ISBN: 0312112076. \$9.99.
- Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. David S. Reynolds, ed. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993. ISBN: 0312075316. \$9.99.
- Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 2001. ISBN 0312274664. \$7.99. An concise guide for history undergraduates.

ASSIGNMENTS

Secondary analysis (two papers @ 20% each, for 40%): For this assignment, you will prepare short papers on the readings assigned for class. I will discuss what I'm looking for early on in the semester.

WPA Slave narrative project (20%): In this project, we will explore the voluminous collection of slave narratives gathered in the 1930s. You will pick and mine the narratives to write about it.

Weekly posts (10%): Each week, send an email to the class (hist2140@bowdoin.edu) that reflects on what we've discussed in class. You take an issue with an argument made in class, comment on a reading, or anything else that substantively contributes to your coursework. Generally speaking, a post should be at least 100 words. I will award you one point for each substantive post per week, up to a total of ten points.

Attendance and participation (10%): Your thoughtful participation in both lecture and discussion is a significant part of your course work. Please make sure that you have the assigned readings before each class and are prepared to discuss them. While I know it is sometimes difficult or frightening to participate in class discussions, it is also necessary. Please keep comments relevant, and consider others when speaking.

Final (20%): Take-home essay exam. This will be the end of the period scheduled for our final exam (though you may submit it before that), will be handed out on the last day of class, and cover the entire period the course covers.

and attribution of sources (we use [Chicago/Turabian style](#) History), and any guidelines provided specifically for this course (see [Blackboard > Library/Research](#) [Plagiarism](#), whether intentional or not, is a serious violation of academic standards and Bowdoin's honor code.

Offensive materials disclaimer Views expressed in the material we will cover do not reflect my own personal opinions. The academic enterprise invites class discussion, which includes critical thinking with mutual respect. Students are expected to take responsibility for their experience in this course by examining their own reactions to material they confront. At all times, our priority will be critical engagement with scholarly material. By continuing with this course, you are agreeing to be held academically accountable for all required material in the syllabus, regardless of your personal reactions to it. Students who are unwilling to critically engage such material are encouraged to drop this course at their discretion.

Disabilities: Students who have documented learning disabilities with the office of the Dean of Student Affairs may be entitled to various accommodations. Feel free to initiate with me any conversation over accommodations.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

- \$ This schedule is liable to change to suit class needs. The online syllabus always offers the most recent version of the syllabus.
- \$ Print out any electronically assigned readings and bring them to class. I strongly urge you to highlight your reading, writing notes in the margins, etc. It is always wise to keep an online journal (Word document) of your thoughts for each course you take.
- \$ Complete each critical reading assignment. Print out any electronic

Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1999), ch. 3

1974), 3-7. (Blackboard)

Slavery and American Society. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1993), 13-17. (Blackboard)

Drew G. Faust, "Slave Management, Slavery and American Society. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1993), 237-47. (Blackboard)

4/11 The Nat Turner Rebellion

Nat Turner, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, Kenneth S. Greenberg, ed. (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996). (Focus on *Confessions* itself, then the introductory essay. The document is [available online](#), but I prefer you to have the Bedford edition.)

Recommended film to view on own time: *Nat Turner: A Troublesome Property* (San Francisco, CA: California Newsreel, 2002).

4/16 Free Blacks in a Slave Society

Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, *Chariot Let Down: Charleston's Free People of Color on the Eve of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), selections. (Blackboard)

David L. Lightner and Alexander M. Ragan, "Were American Slaveholders Benevolent or Exploitative? A Quantitative Approach," *Journal of Southern History*, no. 3 (August 2005), 535-58. [Scot](#)

4/18 Black life in the North

Emma Jones Lapsansky, "'Since They Got Those Separate Churches': Afro-Americans and Racism in Jacksonian Philadelphia," *American Quarterly*, no. 1 (Spring 1980), 54-78. [Scot](#)

James O. Horton, "Shades of Color: The Mulatto in Three Antebellum Northern Communities," *People of Color: Inside the African American Community* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), ch. 6. (Blackboard)

4/23 Black activists, white abolitionists

Maria Stewart, *Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart* (New York: Dover Publications, 1879), selections. (Blackboard)

Henry Highland Garnet, "An Address to the Slaves" (1843), and related documents. (Blackboard)

Proceedings of the National Emancipation Convention of Colored People (Pittsburgh, 1854). (Blackboard)

James Oakes, "The Political Significance of Slave Resistance," *Historical Workshop*, no. 22 (1986), 89-107. (Blackboard)

4/25 The slave narrative

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, ed. (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993).

4/27: WPA Slave narrative project due

4/30 The coming of the Civil War

J. Sella Martin, "Address by J. Sella Martin," December 2, 1859. [Scot](#)

H. Ford Douglas, "'I Do Not Believe That Antislavery of Abraham Lincoln Will Liberate Me,'" July 13, 1860. (Blackboard)

Frederick Douglass, "NEMESIS," *Douglass' Monthly* (Rochester, NY), 1861 (Blackboard).

5/2 Lincoln and the slaves

Kate Masur, "The African American Delegation to Abraham Lincoln: A Reappraisal," *Civil War History*, no. 2 (June 2010), 117-44. [Muse](#)

Allen Guelzo and Patrick Raela, "Slavery and Emancipation," *Claremont Review of Books* (June 27, 2016), [online](#)

5/7 Black agency during the Civil War

General Benjamin Butler to General Winfield Scott, 27 May 1861, [online](#).

Missouri Black Soldier to His Daughters, and to the Owner of One of the Daughters, 3 September 1864 ([online](#)).

Armstead L. Robinson, "In the Shadow of Old John Brown: Insurrection Anxiety and Confederate Mobilization, 1861-1863," *Journal of Negro History*, no. 4 (Autumn 1980), 279-93, [online](#).

5/9 Emancipation and Reconstruction

Proceedings of the National Convention of the Colored People of the United States (Washington, 1869), [online](#). (Blackboard)

Leon F. Litwack, "Blues Falling down Hill": The Ordeal of Black Freedom, *New Perspectives on Race and Slavery in America: Essays in Honor of Kenneth Stampp*, ed. by Robert M. Stampp and Stephen E. Maizlish, eds. (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 109-27. (Blackboard)