

HISTORY 227
AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

P. Albert Lacson
Department of History
Grinnell College

Office: Mears 201
Phone: x3229
E-mail: lacson@grinnell.edu

Course time and location: M,W,F 11-11:50 a.m., N1116
Office hours: by appointment

Description

To understand what freedom has meant and continues to mean in the United States, the experiences of African Americans must be considered. Given that this course begins in the sixteenth century and ends in the present, it is impossible to cover every place and topic of significance to the history of African Americans. Instead, the course will focus on illuminating the experiences of African Americans related to slavery and efforts to gain and give meaning to freedom. The course will examine familiar people and topics, like Frederick Douglass, the Civil War, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. You will also be introduced to some less familiar topics and people, like Anne Moody, the African role in the development of the Atlantic slave trade, and antebellum Black activism. In addition, we will examine familiar people engaged in less known activities, like Rosa Parks and her work as an anti-rape activist.

Format

Class sessions will be a combination of lectures, discussions, group and individual activities. Regardless of the specific class activity, you must work from the assumption that you will come to class having read the assigned material *and thought about it*.

Reading

The course is reading intensive. At the beginning of the semester, we will briefly discuss strategies for how best to read course material. Throughout the semester, you will be presented with a variety of different kinds of primary documents that we will use as windows into the past. Below are the required books for the course.

1. Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*
2. Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
3. Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul*
4. Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*
5. Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance*

Any assignment listed as a PDF can be found in the Documents section of the course website on Pweb.

ASSIGNMENTS

RESEARCH PAPER

An 8-10 page research paper provides you with an opportunity to explore a topic that interests you. This course introduces you to key problems, issues, and questions of African American history from the colonial period to the present. The research paper presents you with the chance to explore an issue in greater detail than the course covers on the syllabus. To make the project manageable, you will have short assignments throughout the semester. There will be separate grades for these assignments.

SHORT ASSIGNMENTS

Short assignments serve as an opportunity to reinforce course content and to systematically explore the implications of the course reading for a given class session. We will use these short assignments as a way to improve your understanding of course material through writing. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** I may assign a short assignment the meeting before the assignment is to be submitted. In such an instance, it will be the kind of assignment that can be completed within one hour—after you have completed the assigned reading.

EXAMS

Mid-Term Exam: Monday, March 11. I will provide you with a study guide for the exam approximately one week before the test.

Final Exam: A take-home exam due by 5 p.m., Friday, May 17.

Grades

Participation: 20%

- Attendance
- Active participation in class that demonstrates your engagement with the assigned course material

Short Assignments: 25%

Research Paper: 25%

Mid-Term Exam: 15%

Final Exam: 15%

Extra Credit: There will be extra credit opportunities to bolster your course grade. I will explain the specifics of each extra credit assignment as they arise.

Policies

1. ATTENDANCE. Each class is worth 100 points. You have “**two free passes.**” This means that you can miss two class sessions for any reason at all without informing me. After you use up the two free passes, your lack of attendance will affect your grade for the course. After using up the two free passes, you will lose 100 points per missed class session.
2. LATE WORK.
 - a. I will not accept late Short Assignments. They are meant to prepare you for class. There is no point in submitting a Short Assignment after the class has met to discuss the assignment.
 - b. If you submit parts of the research paper late, you will incur a penalty. I will deduct a third of a grade for each day that the assignment is late—i.e., If you receive an “A” for a paper that is submitted one day late, you will actually get an A-; for that same paper two days late, you will get a B+.
3. CLASSROOM RULES.
 - a. Cell phones must be turned off before class.
 - b. No laptops. I know that some of you use laptops to take notes, but for this course, you will need to rely on pen and paper.
 - c. After two tardy arrivals, I will subtract 25 points from the 100 points that you automatically receive for coming to class.

Religious Holidays

Grinnell College “embraces the religious diversity of its faculty, students and staff,” and therefore the college’s policy on religious observance emphasizes that the “Faculty and students share the responsibility to support members of our community who observe religious holidays.” I will work with any students to make sure that class requirements do not conflict with their religious holidays/observances. Students have the responsibility to let me know in advance when these potential conflicts may occur (preferably at the beginning of the semester), so that we can formulate alternative solutions to missing class or assignment deadlines.

Learning Accommodations

If you require specific physical, psychiatric or learning accommodations, please let me know at the beginning of the semester so that we can formulate a plan to address your needs. You should also provide appropriate documentation to the Associate Dean and Director of Academic Advising, Joyce Stern, whose office is located in Rosenfield Center (x3702).

SCHEDULE

Note: You can find any item labeled as a PDF in the Documents section of the course website on Pweb.

INTRODUCTIONS

Wednesday, January 23

Introductions: Why is it important to study the history of African Americans in the United States?

PAST IN PRESENT

Friday, January 25

Reading: Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, Part I

Monday, January 28

Reading: Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, Parts II and III

Short Assignment #1 due via email attachment (by Mon., Jan. 28, midnight): In no more than one paragraph (double-spaced), based on your analysis of *Between the World and Me*, why did Coates write the book for his fifteen-year-old son?

Wednesday, January 30

Reading:

- 1) Caleb McDaniel, "How to Read for History" (PDF)
- 2) David Blight, "'For Something beyond the Battlefield': Frederick Douglass and the Struggle for the Memory of the Civil War," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (Mar., 1989), pp. 1156-1178 (JSTOR)

Class preparation and Short Assignment #2:

- 1) Apply McDaniel's method for reading history to your reading of Blight's article. We will discuss your experience, especially if your reading method(s) are very different from that of McDaniel.
- 2) Short Assignment #2: Identify a noun in the Blight article that illuminates a key point that Blight seeks to make. In no more than one double-spaced paragraph, explain the significance of that noun in Blight's article.

Friday, February 1:

- 1) The Brownies' Book Encourages Black Children to Know Their History, 1920
- 2) Carter G. Woodson on His Goals for Black History, 1922
- 3) Mary McLeod Bethune Outlines the Objectives of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History
- 4) John Hope Franklin Explains the Lonely Dilemma of the American Negro Scholar, 1963
- 5) Vincent Harding on the Differences Between Negro History and Black History, 1971 (All 5 are in one PDF, entitled "African American History Over Time")

Short Assignment #3, due before class via email attachment. This assignment compels you to grapple with how the meaning of African American history for African Americans has changed over time. In one paragraph, explain what you see as the most significant difference between the early twentieth century and the latter part of the twentieth century in the role of African American history for African Americans.

ORIGINS

Monday, February 4:

Reading: Ira Berlin, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 53, No. 2 (April 1996), 251-288 (JSTOR)

Wednesday, February 6:

- 1) Walter Rodney, "African Societies Were Transformed by the Slave Trade" (PDF)
- 2) John Thornton, "African Societies Voluntarily Participated in the Slave Trade" (PDF)

Friday, February 8

Reading: Job Ben Solomon account (PDF)

Short Assignment #4, due at the beginning of class: After reading and reflecting on all the course material for this week, write one complete paragraph (double-spaced) in which you explain the historical significance of Job Ben Solomon.

BECOMING AFRICAN AMERICAN

Monday, February 11

- 1) Stanley Elkins, "Slavery and Personality" (PDF)

Wednesday, February 13

Reading:

- 1) Michael Gomez, "Talking Half African" (PDF)

SLAVE SOCIETIES

Friday, February 15

Reading:

- 1) Ira Berlin, "Time, Space, and Place," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (Feb., 1980): 44-78. (JSTOR)
- 2) Anthony Johnson, a Former Slave, Claims His Slave Property, 1655 (PDF)
- 3) "Petition of an African slave, to the legislature of Massachusetts." From *The American Museum, or Repository of Ancient and Modern Fugitive Pieces, Prose and Poetical*. For June, 1787. Volume 1. Number 6. Philadelphia: Mathew Cary, 1787 (PDF)

REVOLUTIONS

Monday, February 18

Reading:

- 1) Gary Nash, *Race and Revolution*, Ch. 3 (PDF)
- 2) Nash, *Race and Revolution*, Documents for Ch. 3 (PDF)

THE DOMESTIC SLAVE TRADE

Wednesday, February 20

Reading:

- 1) Holt, *Children of Fire*, 141-148
- 2) Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, Introduction – Ch. 2

Friday, February 22

Reading: Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, Ch. 3 – 4

Monday, February 25

Reading: Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, Ch. 5 – Epilogue

LIFE AS A SLAVE

Wednesday, Feb. 27

Reading: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (through Ch. VII)

Friday, March 1

Reading: Douglass, *Narrative of the Life* (finish)

Monday, March 4

Reading:

- 1) Wendy Anne Warren, ““The Cause of Her Grief”: The Rape of a Slave in Early New England,” *Journal of American History* 93 (2007): 1031-1049. (History Cooperative)
- 2) Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy*, Ch. 6 (PDF)

Wednesday, March 6

Reading:

- 1) Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, pp. 123-242

Friday, March 8

Reading:

- 1) Finish Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, pp. 243-375

Monday, March 11

Mid-Term Exam

ANTEBELLUM ACTIVISM

Wednesday, March 13

Reading:

- 1) Emma Jones Lapsansky, "Since They Got Those Separate Churches": Afro-Americans and Racism in Jacksonian Philadelphia,” *American Quarterly* , Vol. 32, No. 1 (Spring, 1980), pp. 54-78 (JSTOR)

Friday, March 15

Reading (all in one PDF, entitled “Antebellum Activism Primary Docs”):

- 1) David Walker, “Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World (1829,1830)
- 2) Maria W. Stewart, “Productions” (1835)
- 3) Henry Highland Garnet, “Address to the Slaves of the United States of America,” (1848)
- 4) Frederick Douglass, et al., “Address to the People of the United States” (1853)

March 18 – March 29: SPRING BREAK

CIVIL WAR AND EMANCIPATION

Monday, April 1

Reading:

- 1) Margaret Garner, a Slave Mother, Kills Her Child Prevent Reenslavement, 1856 (Documents 2-5 are in one PDF)
- 2) Description of Two Women Outlaws, c. 1850s

- 3) Descriptions of Love and Courtship in Slavery
- 4) Letters Showing Relations Between Slave Husbands and Wives, 1840-1863

Wednesday, April 3

Reading:

- 1) James McPherson, "Who Freed the Slaves?" (JSTOR)
- 2) Barbara Fields, essay from *Slaves No More* (PDF)

RECONSTRUCTION (I)

Friday, April 5

Reading:

- 1) Eric Foner, *Forever Free*, Ch. 6 (PDF)

Monday, April 8

- 1) Herbert G. Gutman, "Schools for Freedom: The Post-Emancipation Origins of Afro-American Education," in Herbert G. Gutman, *Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class* (1987). (PDF)
- 2) Julie Saville, "Defining Free Labor," *Slavery and Abolition*, Vol. 12, No. 3.

Wednesday, April 10

Reading (All in one PDF in the Documents Section of the course website):

- 1) African Americans in Richmond, VA, Petition President Andrew Johnson, 1865
- 2) Freedmen of Edisto Island, South Carolina, Demand Land, 1865
- 3) Captain Charles Soule, Northern Army Officer, Lectures Ex-Slaves on the Responsibilities of Freedom, 1865
- 4) A Share-Wages Contract, 1865
- 5) Charles Raushenberg, a Freedmen's Bureau Agent, Reports from Georgia, 1867
- 6) Elizabeth Botume, a Northern Schoolteacher, Remembers a Husband and Wife Reunion, c. 1865
- 7) Dave Waldrop, a Florida Freedman, Seeks to Reunite His Family, 1867
- 8) Harriet Hernandes, a South Carolina Woman, Testifies Against the Ku Klux Klan, 1871

ORIGINS OF JIM CROW

Friday, April 12

Reading:

- 1) Howard N. Rabinowitz, "From Exclusion to Segregation: Southern Race Relations, 1865-1890," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Sep., 1976), pp. 325-350. (JSTOR)

ELITE RESPONSES TO JIM CROW

Monday, April 15

Reading:

- 1) Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Exposition Address" (PDF)
- 2) Alexander Crummell, "The Attitude of the American Mind toward the Negro Intellect" (PDF)
- 3) Gregory Mixon, "Henry McNeal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine: Black Leadership in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Negro History* 79, no. 4 (Autumn 1994), 363-80 (JSTOR).

Wednesday, April 17

Reading:

- 1) Reading: W.E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Chs. 1, 3, 5-6 (PDF)

LIVING UNDER JIM CROW

Friday, April 19

Reading: James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*

A NEW HISTORY OF CIVIL RIGHTS?

Monday, April 22

Reading:

- 1) Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*, Prologue, and Ch. 1

Wednesday, April 24

NO CLASS

Reading:

- 1) McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*, Ch. 2 – Ch. 5

Friday, April 26

NO CLASS

Reading:

- 1) McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*, Ch. 6 – Epilogue

COMING OF AGE DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA

Monday, April 29

DISCUSS McGuire, but stay on schedule with reading Moody

Reading: Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, Part I

Wednesday, May 1

Reading: Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, Part II

Friday, May 3

Reading: Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, Part III

Monday, May 6

Reading, Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, Part IV

RACE AND INEQUALITY IN THE POST-CIVIL RIGHTS ERA

Wednesday, May 8

Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, June 2014.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Friday, May 10

Reading: none

RESEARCH PAPER DUE: Thursday, May 16, 5 p.m., via email attachment.

TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DUE: Friday, May 17, 5 p.m., via email attachment.