

HISTORY 227
AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY
SPRING 2023

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Course time and location: M,W, 8-8:50 am, HSSC N3111
Office hours: MW, 2-4 pm
Office location: HSSC N3166

Description

This course seeks to introduce you to the experiences of African Americans from the colonial era to the present. Given such a long time span, the course does not offer a comprehensive examination of African American history. I had to make difficult choices to determine our focus. How did I make my choices? My choices have been driven by my desire to make this course as relevant to our twenty-first century world as possible. At first pass, it may seem that the destruction of slavery marked the beginning of freedom for African Americans. In some ways, this has proven to be the case. But, there is nothing self-evident about the meaning of freedom. The experiences of African Americans makes clear that freedom has been and continues to be a contested idea. By the end of this course, I hope that you will have a better sense of the history of freedom in the United States.

Format

Class sessions will be a combination of mini-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.

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

ASSIGNMENTS

PAPERS

You will write three 3-5 page papers for this course. These papers provide you with an opportunity to systematically explore a questions that are of particular interest to you through the creative process of writing. I will provide you with detailed instructions for each paper.

COVER STORY

At the end of the semester, you will write a 4-page explanation of the story that your three previous papers tell. This writing assignment provides you with an opportunity to identify change over time, one of the most important tasks that historians undertake.

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. These are pass/fail assignments. If you demonstrate that you have grappled with the relevant course material in the assignment, you will receive full credit. If not, you will not receive credit for the assignment.

EXAMS

Mid-Term Exam: Friday, March 10. I will provide you with a study guide for the exam approximately one week before the test.

Grades

Participation: 15%

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

Short Assignments: 20%
Paper #1: 15%
Paper #2: 15%
Paper #3: 15%
Mid-Term Exam: 10%
Cover Story: 10%

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 have a legitimate excuse, I will accept papers 1, 2, and 3 after the deadline for full credit. I will determine if the excuse is “legitimate” after you inform me of the situation.
3. CLASSROOM RULES.
 - a. Cell phones must be turned off before class.
 - b. No laptops or tablets. I know that some of you use devices to take notes, but for this course, you will need to rely on pen and paper—unless I receive official documentation from the college.
 - c. After two tardy arrivals, for subsequent tardies, I will subtract 50 points from the 100 points that you automatically receive for coming to class.
 - d. While I will not prevent you from leaving the classroom while we are in session, please make an effort to fill up your water bottles, use the restroom, make phone calls, text messages to friends, etc. BEFORE class. The time we have together is precious. It is also only 50 minutes.
 - e. For the reading assignments that I place in the Documents section, I expect that you will print out copies and bring them 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.

SCHEDULE

Note: “Documents” refers to the Documents section of the course hub on PWeb.

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

Mon., Jan. 30

Read: Jill Lepore, “What the January 6th Report is Missing,” *New Yorker*, Jan. 16, 2023.
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/01/16/what-the-january-6th-report-is-missing>

What distinguishes the study of history from other academic disciplines?

PAST IN PRESENT: Why has it been important for African Americans to study history?

Wed., Feb. 1

Reading (all in one PDF in Documents):

- 1) Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Preface
- 2) The Brownies' Book Encourages Black Children to Know Their History, 1920
- 3) Carter G. Woodson on His Goals for Black History, 1922
- 4) Mary McLeod Bethune Outlines the Objectives of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History
- 5) John Hope Franklin Explains the Lonely Dilemma of the American Negro Scholar, 1963
- 6) Vincent Harding on the Differences Between Negro History and Black History, 1971

African American have always valued the study of history. Based on your analysis of today’s set of reading material, why has history been so important for African Americans? Think about 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.

Fri., Feb. 3

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 (March, 1989), pp. 1156-1178 (JSTOR)

Class preparation and Short Assignment #1:

- 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 #1: 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.

AFRICA AND THE HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

Mon., Feb. 6

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 1, "Africa and Black Americans"

Choose one discussion question from p. 21 of *Creating Black Americans* to present to the class.

Wed., Feb. 8:

TRANS-ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 2, "Captives Transported, 1619-c. 1850"
- 2) Olaudah Equiano, *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* (1789), excerpts. (Documents)

Discussion question #2 from p. 45 of *Creating Black Americans*.

Fri., Feb. 10

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

REBELLIONS AND REVOLUTION

Mon., Feb. 13

Reading:

- 1) Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 4, "Those Who Were Free"
- 2) "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)

Wed., Feb. 15

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 5
- 2) Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Preface by William Lloyd Garrison, Letter from Wendell Philips, and chapter I, 339-355

Fri., Feb. 17

Reading:

- 1) Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, chapters II-VI, 355-371

Mon., Feb. 20

Reading:

- 1) Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, chapters VII-Appendix, 372-426

Tue., Feb. 21, PAPER #1 DUE VIA PWEB

SLAVERY AND GENDER

Wed., Feb. 22

Reading:

- 1) Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race, *Signs*, Vol. 17, No. 2. (Winter, 1992), pp. 251-274
- 2) Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Preface and Introduction by the Editor

Fri., Feb. 24

- 1) Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Ch. I-VIII, pp. 1-48

Mon., Feb. 27

Reading:

- 1) Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Ch. IX-XVIII, pp. 49-116

Wed., Mar. 1

Reading:

- 1) Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Ch. XIX-XXVIII, pp. 117-170

Fri., Mar. 3

Reading:

- 1) Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Ch. XXIX-Appendix, pp. 171-239

THE CIVIL WAR

Mon., Mar. 6

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 6
- 2) Eric Foner, "Rights and the Constitution in Black Life during the Civil War and Reconstruction" *Journal of American History*, Vol. 74, No. 3, (December 1987), 863-883 (JSTOR)

Wed., Fri. Mar 8

Reading Day

Fri., Mar. 10

Mid-Term Examination (In-Class)

RECONSTRUCTION

Mon., Mar. 13

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 Hernandez, a South Carolina Woman, Testifies Against the Ku Klux Klan, 1871

SEGREGATION

Wed., Mar. 15

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)

UPLIFT

Fri., Mar. 17

Reading:

- 1) Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*, pp. iii-30

SPRING BREAK (Mar. 18-Apr. 2)

Mon., Apr. 3

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 8
- 2) Washington, *Up from Slavery*, Ch. IV- Ch.IX, pp. 30-71

Wed., Apr. 5

Reading:

- 1) Washington, *Up from Slavery*, Ch. X-XIII, pp. 71-105

Fri., Apr. 7

Reading:

- 1) Washington, *Up from Slavery*, Ch. XIV-XVII, pp. 105-157

Mon. Apr. 10

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 9
- 2) W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Note, The Forethought – Ch. III, Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others, pp. 161-201

Wed., Apr. 12

Reading:

- 1) DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Ch. IV, Of the Meaning of Progress – Ch. VII, Of the Black Belt, pp. 203-248

Thur., Apr. 13, PAPER #2 DUE VIA PWEB

Fri., Apr. 14

Reading:

- 1) DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Ch. VIII, Of the Quest of the Golden Fleece – Ch. X, Of the Faith of the Fathers, pp. 249-279

Mon., Apr. 17

Reading:

- 1) DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Ch. XI, Of the Passing of the First Born – The After-Thought, pp. 293-331

Wed., Apr. 19

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Chapters 10 and 11

Fri., April 21

Reading

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 12

Mon., Apr. 24

Reading:

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

Wed., Apr. 26

Reading:

- 1) McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*, Ch. 2 (Documents)

Fri., Apr. 28

Reading:

- 1) McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*, Ch. 3 (Documents)

Mon., May 1

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 13
- 2) Civil Rights Primary Documents (Documents)

Wed., May 3

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 14
- 2) Civil Rights Primary Documents (II) (Documents)

Fri., May 5, PAPER #3 DUE VIA PWEB

No reading

Mon., May 8

- 1) Reading: Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, June 2014.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Wed., May 10

No reading

Fri., May 12

No reading

COVER STORY DUE: Thursday, May 18, 5 p.m., via email PioneerWeb.