

Hist/AS237

History of African Americans

1865 - now

Bowdoin College, Spring 2009

Meets: Scarles 213, TuTh 11:30 - 1:00
Prof. Patrick Rael
Office hours: MW1-3, by apt.

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This course examines the history of African Americans from the end of the Civil War to the present. We will explore a wide range of topics, including: the nature and problem of black identity, the emergence of a national leadership, the development of protest strategies, the impact of industrialization and urbanization, and the public significance of black cultural styles. We will broach an equally wide range of questions: 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? Conversely, how have the institutions and values of American society influenced upon the African-American experience? We will be concerned 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 as we attempt to better understand this complex part of the nation's past.

Level: This course is taught as a 200-level lecture course in the History Department. That means that it is open to all students, yet is particularly suited for those with some experience in college-level history courses. If you are a first-year student or require help, it is imperative that you take responsibility for your experience and see me during office hours. I expect students to spend at least two hours in personal study on this course for every hour spent in class. This time should be spent reading, reviewing class notes, and preparing course assignments.

Course websites: The material for this course may be found online through the Blackboard system. You will find a copy of this syllabus, as well as all the reading and paper assignments. You may easily refer to the website for the most recent course assignments and requirements. 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

Required

- Smith, John David. *When Did Southern Segregation Begin?* Boston: Bedford Books, 2001.
- Thomas, Brook, ed. *Plessy v. Ferguson: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford Books, 1997.
- DuBois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Edited by David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams. Boston: Bedford Books, 1997.
- Shaw, Nate. *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw*. Theodore Rosengarten, ed. Reprint ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Kelley, Robin. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*. New York: The Free Press, 1996.
- Martin, Jr., Waldo E. *Brown v. Board of Education: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford Books, 1998.
- X, Malcolm. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Edited by Alex Haley. 1964; New York: Ballantine Books, 1991.

Recommended

- Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. 3rd edition. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 2001. ISBN 0312274664. \$7.99. A short, concise, and complete guide for history undergraduates.
- Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. ISBN 0226816273. \$13.00. The ultimate student guide to citations and paper writing.
- Hacker, Diana. *Rules for Writers: A Brief Handbook*. 4th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999. ISBN: 0312241429. \$26.30. A handy reference for tackling writing problems.

ASSIGNMENTS

Nate Shaw and Malcolm X analysis (10% each = 20%): We will be reading two extended primary historical sources: the narrated words of Alabama sharecropper Nate Shaw, and the autobiography of black radical Malcolm X. For each of these, I will ask you to work with these the way historians work with primary sources, culling through them for particular themes. I will discuss these papers in class as the assignments near.

Census data project (20%): This will be a group project that will challenge you to use quantitative data to make sense of some aspect of the African-American past. Using census data already collected, you will use software applications such as Excel to construct and address a historical problem. We will take time in class to work on the project, and have the help of campus IT staff.

Mid-term (20%): An essay-based in-class exam.

Final (20%): An essay-based in-class exam, held on the scheduled final day.

Discussion 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 read 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 your comments relevant, and consider others when speaking.

Course journals (Blackboard) (10 @ 1 point each = 10%): Each week, I would like you to compose a journal entry (using Blackboard) of at least 250 words. A post may raise a question about a reading, respond to a point raised in class, or raise a new point. You needn't say anything earth-shattering, but you should say something thoughtful and coherent. Do not worry about correct grammar and spelling. This is an informal, low-stakes opportunity for you to become comfortable with your thoughts — to play around with ideas and take positions you might not necessarily endorse. I shall count ten posts toward your grade: one per week for ten weeks. This means you may safely miss four weeks of posts. Each post will receive one point unless it is clearly substandard, for a maximum of ten points.

COURSE CONTRACT

Attendance: No absences are “excused” -- you are responsible for all material covered during missed class days. Those who may miss class to attend extra-curricular events are requested to inform me, as a courtesy, of planned absences. If special considerations (such as illness) prevent you from fulfilling course obligations, please provide me with documentation so we may consider an exception.

Late or missed assignments: Unless stated otherwise, assignments are due at the beginning of class; assignments handed in later in the day (during or after class) will be considered one day late. I will accept late assignments with no penalty only for documented health or other emergencies. In general, assignments which receive letter grades will be marked down one-third of a grade (e.g., from B+ to B), for each day late. A final but crucial point: *All work must be completed in order to pass this course.*

A note on academic honesty: Each author owns his or her own ideas, words, and research. You *must* give appropriate credit — generally in the form of quotations and proper footnotes — when using the work of another scholar. I expect you to be familiar both with Bowdoin's honor code, and with the guidelines for proper citation and attribution of sources provided for this course. If you have any questions, ask rather than take risks. *Plagiarism, whether intentional or not, is a serious violation of academic standards and Bowdoin's honor code.* I will enforce violations of the honor code by bringing immediate, uncontested action before the Judicial Board. Minimum penalties for plagiarism will be to fail the course.

Offensive materials disclaimer: Students occasionally find some course materials offensive. My intent is not to offend, but to educate. Views expressed in the material we will cover do not necessarily reflect my own personal opinions. The academic enterprise invites vibrant class discussion, which balances 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 consider offensive. 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 materials in the syllabus, regardless of your own personal reactions to it. Students who are unwilling either to hear or think critically about such material are encouraged to drop this course at their discretion.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

- This is a tentative schedule, liable to change to suit class needs. The online syllabus always offers the most recent version of the syllabus.
- All readings should be completed before class.
- We will not discuss each reading with the same degree of rigor. I will do my best to let you know when to make special efforts with your reading. You are, however, responsible for all the assigned material, whether or not we discuss it in class.

| Date | Topic and assignment |
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| 1/20 | <u>Introductions</u> Inauguration of President Obama |
| 1/22 | <u>The Civil War</u> James M. McPherson, "Who Freed the Slaves?" <i>Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society</i> 139, no. 1 (March 1995), 1-10. Ira Berlin, "Who Freed the Slaves? Emancipation and Its Meaning," in <i>Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction</i> , Michael Perman, ed., 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 288-97. RECOMMENDED: George M. Fredrickson, "A Man but Not a Brother: Abraham Lincoln and Racial Equality," <i>Journal of Southern History</i> 41, no. 1 (February 1975), 39-58. |
| 1/27 | <u>Reconstruction</u> W.E.B. DuBois, "Of the Dawn of Freedom," ch. 2 of <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> , David Blight, ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998). Wilbert H. Ahern, "Laissez Faire vs. Equal Rights: Liberal Republicans and Limits to Reconstruction," <i>Phylon</i> 40, no. 1 (1st Qtr., 1979), 52-65. (Jstor) |
| 1/29 | <u>The origins of Jim Crow</u> C. Vann Woodward, "When did the South capitulate to segregation?" in <i>When Did Southern Segregation Begin?</i> , John David Smith, ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001). Joel Williamson, "Was segregation the creation of custom or of law?" in <i>When Did Southern Segregation Begin?</i> Howard N. Rabinowitz, "What did segregation replace?" in <i>When Did Southern Segregation Begin?</i> |
| 2/3 | <u>Plessy v. Ferguson</u> Plessy v. Ferguson: <i>A Brief History with Documents</i> , Brook Thomas, ed. (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997). |
| 2/5 | <u>Living under Jim Crow</u> Nate Shaw, <i>All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw</i> , Theodore Rosengarten, ed. (New York, Knopf, 1974), 1-94. Paper writing |
| 2/10 | <u>Folk Responses to Jim Crow</u> Nate Shaw, <i>All God's Dangers</i> , 97-262. In-class video: "Good Mornin' Blues" Nate Shaw assignment due |
| 2/12 | <u>Elite responses to Jim Crow: BTW and his precursors</u> Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Exposition Address" (online). Alexander Crummell, "The Attitude of the American Mind toward the Negro Intellect" (online). Gregory Mixon, "Henry Mcneal Turner Versus the Tuskegee Machine: Black Leadership in the Nineteenth Century," <i>Journal of Negro History</i> 79, no. 4 (Autumn 1994), 363-80. (Jstor) |
| 2/17 | <u>Elite responses to Jim Crow: DuBois</u> W.E.B. DuBois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> , David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams, eds. (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), chs. 1, 3, 5-6. |
| 2/19 | <u>The Great Migration</u> Henderson H. Donald, "Causes of the Recent Negro Migration," <i>Journal of Negro History</i> 6, no. 4 (October 1921), 410-20. (Jstor) In-class video: "The Promised Land" |
| 2/24 | Mid-term exam |
| 2/26 | Introduction to GIS project |
| 3/3 | <u>Harlem Renaissance: Introduction</u> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black," <i>Representations</i> 24 (Autumn 1988), 129-55. (Jstor) In-class video and discussion: "Ethnic Notions" |
| 3/5 | <u>Harlem Renaissance: The Garvey movement</u> Lawrence Levine, "Marcus Garvey and the Politics of Revitalization," in <i>The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History</i> (New York: Oxford U.P., 1993), 107-36. (On reserve) |
| 3/24 | GIS project: lab session |

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| 3/26 | <p><u>Harlem Renaissance: Literature</u> George S. Schuyler, "The Negro-Art Hokum" (Online) Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (Online) Claude McKay, "If We Must Die" (Online) Countee Cullen, "What is Africa to me?" (Online) Alain Locke, "The New Negro" (Online) In-class video: "From These Roots"</p> |
| 3/31 | <p><u>Harlem Renaissance: Jazz</u> Lawrence Levine, "Jazz and American Culture," in <i>The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 172-88 (on reserve). Chadwick Hansen, "Social Influences on Jazz Style: Chicago, 1920-30," <i>American Quarterly</i> 12, no. 4 (Winter 1960), 493-507. (Jstor)</p> |
| 4/2 | <p><u>Blacks in the Great Depression</u> Beryl Satter, "Marcus Garvey, Father Divine and the Gender Politics of Race Difference and Race Neutrality," <i>American Quarterly</i> 48, no. 1 (March 1996), (Muse) Nate Shaw, <i>All God's Dangers</i>, 263-343.</p> |
| 4/7 | <p><u>Blacks in the Great Depression: Scottsboro</u> Hugh T. Murray, Jr., "The NAACP versus the Communist Party: The Scottsboro Rape Cases, 1931-1932," <i>Phylon</i> 28, no. 3. (3rd Quarter, 1967), 276-87. (Jstor) In-class video: "Scottsboro: An American Tragedy"</p> |
| 4/9 | <p><u>Blacks in the Great Depression</u> Robin Kelley, "'Afric's Sons With Banner Red': African American Communists and the Politics of Culture, 1919-1934," in <i>Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class</i> (New York: Free Press, 1994), 103-22. Victoria W. Wolcott, "The Culture of the Informal Economy: Numbers Runners in Inter-War Black Detroit," <i>Radical History Review</i> 69 (Fall 1997), 47-75. (On reserve)</p> |
| 4/14 | <p><u>World War II</u> Robin Kelley, "The Riddle of the Zoot: Malcolm Little and Black Cultural Politics During World War II," in <i>Race Rebels</i>, 161-82. Malcolm X, <i>Autobiography of Malcolm X</i> (New York: Grove, 1965), through chapter 9.</p> |
| 4/16 | <p><u>World War II</u> "Communist Propaganda" (reserve) GIS assignment due</p> |
| 4/21 | <p><u>Origins of the Civil Rights Movement</u> Harvard Sitkoff, "Harry Truman and the Election of 1948: The Coming of Age of Civil Rights in American Politics," <i>Journal of Southern History</i> 37, no. 4 (November 1971), 597-616. (Jstor) Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," <i>Journal of American History</i> 75, no. 3 (December 1988), 786-811. (Jstor)</p> |
| 4/23 | <p><u>Brown vs. Board of Education</u> Waldo E. Martin, Jr., <i>Brown v. Board of Education: A Brief History with Documents</i>, "Introduction to Ch.4" (pp. 121-23); "The Effects of Segregation and the Consequences of Desegregation: A Social Science Statement" (pp. 142-51); "Federal Friend-of-the-Court Brief" (pp. 164-68); "Opinion of the Court in Brown v. Board of Education" (pp. 168-74); "Introduction" (1-41). In-class video: "The Road to Brown"</p> |
| 4/28 | <p><u>High tide of the CRM</u> Robin Kelley, "Birmingham's Untouchables: The Black Poor in the Age of Civil Rights," in <i>Race Rebels</i>, ch. 4. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." (Online) Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream." (Online) <i>Autobiography of Malcolm X</i> (chs. 10-15).</p> |
| 4/30 | <p><u>Toward black power</u> Timothy B. Tyson, "Robert F. Williams, 'Black Power,' and the Roots of the African American Freedom Struggle," <i>Journal of American History</i> 85, no. 2 (September 1998), 540-70. (Jstor) <i>Autobiography of Malcolm X</i>, ch. 16-end. Malcolm X assignment due</p> |
| 5/5 | <p><u>Race and inequality in the post-CRM era</u> Loïc Wacquant, "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration: Working Notes for Rethinking the 'Black Question' in the US." (Online) Robin Kelley, "Kickin' Reality, Kickin' Ballistics: 'Gangsta Rap' and Postindustrial Los Angeles," in <i>Race Rebels</i>, 183-228. Norman Kelley, "Rhythm Nation: The Political Economy of Black Music," <i>Black Renaissance</i> 2, no. 2 (Summer 1999), 8-15. (Online)</p> |
| 5/13 | <p>Final exam scheduled, 2pm-5pm</p> |