

# Hist/AS2140

# History of African Americans to 1865

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**Prof. Patrick Rael, Bowdoin College, Spring 2015**

Meets: WM 11:30-1:00  
Adams 208  
Office hours: MW2-4, by apt.

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**T**his 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 as we attempt 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 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:** These books can be found at the campus book store. Other readings will be made available via the course website.

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 Blight, ed. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993. ISBN: 0312075316. \$9.99.

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.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Secondary analysis** (two papers @ 15% each, for 30%): 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. Both of these papers will be due before Spring Break.

**WPA Slave narrative project** (15%): In this project, we will explore the voluminous collection of slave narratives gathered in the 1930s. You will pick a topic and mine the narratives to write about it.

**Historical census data project** (15%): We will work singly or in pairs to analyze census data in order to answer questions we have about the past. The project will involve using Microsoft Excel and a web browser to engage in some quantitative reasoning. The final product will be a paper illustrated with charts and tables. I will present this assignment in class.

**Weekly posts** (10%): Each week, I would like you to post one message on the course's electronic message board regarding issues we have discussed in class. A post may respond to a point raised in class, or perhaps to a question or issue raised by another student, either in class or on the discussion list. The object here is to keep discussion and the critical process going on outside of class. You needn't say anything earth-shattering, but you should say something thoughtful -- something that reflects a genuine curiosity about what is happening in the course. I will award you one point for each 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 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.

**Final** (20%): Take-home essay exam. This will be due at the end of the scheduled final exam period. It will be handed out on the last day of class, and may be turned in before then.

## COURSE CONTRACT

**Attendance and classroom etiquette:** 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 prevent you from fulfilling course obligations (such as illness), please provide me with documentation so we may consider an exception. Remember that it is *your* responsibility to initiate any discussion about missed work. Because it is disruptive to the entire class, please do not excuse yourself in the middle of a class session, unless you are sick or have an emergency. We will also not be using laptops, iPads, or other electronic devices in class, so be sure to leave those in your backpack and bring hard copies of your reading to class. Needless to say, cell phones should be silenced and away for class.

**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.***

**Paper re-writes:** I encourage you to re-write your papers with an extremely generous re-write policy. You may re-write any assignment. If you re-write a paper, your grade for the assignment may or may not go up, but it will not go down. A re-write is a significant re-working of the paper which responds to my critiques of the original paper regarding organization, argument, and evidence. It is not sufficient to, for instance, simply correct grammatical mistakes or errors in punctuation. I will accept re-writes for any paper up to the last regular class meeting, but not after. Re-written papers will receive the same late penalty (if any) applied to the original paper. You must submit any originals with your re-write. Grading re-writes must be my lowest grading priority; please give me plenty of time.

**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. Views expressed in the material we will cover do not 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.

**Disabilities:** Students who have documented learning disabilities with the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs may be entitled to various accommodations. It is your responsibility to initiate with me any conversion over accommodations.

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### 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.
- Complete readings prior to class and be prepared to discuss them.
- 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.

#### 1/19 Introductions

#### 1/21 The origins of race and slavery

Oscar and Mary F. Handlin, "Origins of the Southern Labor System," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 7, no. 2 (April 1950), 199-222. (Jstor)

Carl N. Degler, "Slavery and the Genesis of American Race Prejudice," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no. 1 (October 1959), 49-66. (Jstor)

#### 1/26 Writing issues

Keith Hjortshoj, "Footstools and Furniture," in *The Transition to College Writing* (Boston: Bedford/Saint Martin's, 2001), 32-45. (online readings)

Patrick Rael, "What Happened and Why? Helping Students Write Like Historians," *The History Teacher* 39, no. 1 (November 2005), 23-32. (online)

#### 1/28 Defining race, defining slavery

Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (London: Oxford U.P., 1974), chs. 1-2. (online readings)

#### 2/2 Trans-Atlantic perspectives

Winthrop D. Jordan, "American Chiaroscuro: The Status and Definition of Mulattoes in the British Colonies," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 19, no. 2 (April 1962), 183-200. (Jstor)

Ira Berlin, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 53, no. 2 (April 1996), 251-88. (Jstor)

2/4 Colonial perspectives I

Russell R. Menard, "From Servants to Slaves: The Transformation of the Chesapeake Labor System," *Southern Studies* 16 (Winter 1977), 355-90. (online readings)

2/9 Colonial perspectives II

John K. Thornton, "African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion," *American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (October 1991): 1101-13. (Jstor)

Ira Berlin, "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America," *American Historical Review* 85, no. 1 (February 1980), 44-78. (Jstor) (our class notes on Berlin)

2/11 The archeology of the plantation

In-class film screening: "Digging for Slaves" during regular classtime.

First paper assignment due.

2/16 Slavery and freedom in the age of the Revolution I

Edmund S. Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox," *Journal of American History* 59, no. 1 (June 1972), 5-29. (Jstor)

Here's the Morgan powerpoint.

2/18 Slavery and freedom in the age of the Revolution II

Herbert J. Storing, "America's Founders Recognized the Dilemma of Slavery," in *Slavery: Opposing Viewpoints* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2002), 280-89. (online readings)

John Hope Franklin, "Slavery Left America with a Weak Moral Foundation," in *Slavery: Opposing Viewpoints* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2002), 270-79. (online readings)

2/23 Slavery and freedom in the age of the Revolution III

Ira Berlin, "The Revolution in Black Life," in Alfred F. Young, ed., *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976), 349-82. (online readings)

2/25 The expansion of slavery

Adam Rothman, "Slavery and National Expansion in the United States," *OAH Magazine of History* 23, no. 2 (April 2009). (Online)

Patrick Rael, "An Empire for Slavery," unpublished paper. (online readings)

Check out "Django Unchained's Bloody Real History in Mississippi," *Daily Beast* (February 24, 2013).

3/2 Slavery: women and family

Linda Brent [Harriet Jacobs], *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston, 1861), selections.

Marie Jenkins Schwartz, "Family Life in the Slave Quarters: Survival Strategies," *OAH Magazine of History* 15, no 4 (Summer 2001). (Online)

Citations powerpoint

3/4 Writing day

James West Davidson and Mark H. Lytle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2000), ch. 7. (online readings)

Donna J. Spindel, "Assessing Memory: Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives Reconsidered," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 27 (1996): 247-61. (Jstor)

WPA slave narrative assignment handed out today.

Second paper assignment due.

3/23 Slavery: religion

Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., "Religion, Society and Culture in the Old South: A Comparative View," *American Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (October 1974), 399-416. (Jstor)

William Courtland Johnson, "'A Delusive Clothing': Christian Conversion in the Antebellum Slave Community," *Journal of Negro History* 82, no. 3 (Summer 1997), 295-311. (Jstor)

3/25 Control and resistance

Eugene Genovese, "On Paternalism," in *Slavery and American Society*, 3rd. ed. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1993), 13-17. (online readings)

Drew G. Faust, "Slave Management," in *Slavery and American Society*, 3rd. ed. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1993), 237-47. (online readings)

Eugene D. Genovese, "The Legacy of Slavery and the Roots of Black Nationalism," *Studies On the Left* 6, no. 6 (November-December 1966): 3-26. (online readings)

3/30 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 the Confession itself, then the introductory essay.)

In-class film: *Nat Turner: A Troublesome Property* (San Francisco, Ca.: California Newsreel, 2002).

4/1 The slave community: revisions

Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), selection. (online readings)

Herbert Gutman, "Family Life," in *Slavery and American Society*, 3rd. ed. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1993), 161-66. (online readings)

Peter Kolchin, "Reevaluating the Antebellum Slave Community: A Comparative Perspective," *Journal of American History* 70, no. 3 (December 1983), 579-601. (Jstor)

We will also discuss the WPA assignment.

4/6 Census project: Introduction

WPA slave narrative assignment due

4/8 Census project

Computer lab: meet in the Electronic Classroom in the basement of the Hawthorne-Longfellow Library..

4/13 Free Blacks in a Slave Society

Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, *No 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. (online readings)

Ira Berlin, "The Structure of the Free Negro Caste in the Antebellum United States," *Journal of Social History* 9, no. 3 (Spring 1976), 297-319. (Jstor)

Recommended: David L. Lightner and Alexander M. Ragan, "Were African American Slaveholders Benevolent or Exploitative? A Quantitative Approach," *Journal of Southern History* 71, no. 3 (August 2005), 535-58. (Jstor)

4/15 Black life in the North

Patrick Rael, "Instruments in the Hands of God: Caste and Resistance in the Early Republic," unpublished paper (March 2013): 1-12. (online readings)

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

4/20 Black activists, white abolitionists

Patrick Rael, "Ere the Storm Come Forth: Antislavery Militance in Black and White," unpublished paper (March 2013): 1-12. (online readings)

James Oakes, "The Political Significance of Slave Resistance," *History Workshop* 22 (1986), 89-107. (online readings)

4/22 The slave narrative

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

4/27 The coming of the Civil War

*Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857)

Read online: background summary, key excerpts from majority opinion, key excerpts from dissenting opinion, how the case moved through the courts, more background.

4/29 Lincoln and the slaves

George M. Fredrickson, "A Man but Not a Brother: Abraham Lincoln and Racial Equality," *Journal of Southern History* 41, no. 1 (February 1975): 39-58. (Jstor)

James M. McPherson, "Who Freed the Slaves?" in *Drawn with the Sword: Reflections on the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 192-207. (online readings)

Census project due

5/4 Black agency during the Civil War

Armstead L. Robinson, "In the Shadow of Old John Brown: Insurrection Anxiety and Confederate Mobilization, 1861-1863," *Journal of Negro History* 65, no. 4 (Autumn 1980), 279-97. (Jstor)

Ira Berlin, "Who Freed the Slaves? Emancipation and Its Meaning," in *Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, Michael Perman, ed., 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 288-97. (online readings)

5/6 Emancipation and Reconstruction

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

5/17 Take-home final exam

Due, 12noon