The Haitian Revolution
1791-1804
1697 - Treaty formally ceded the western third of Hispaniola from Spain to France, which renamed it Saint-Domingue
By about 1790, Saint-Domingue had quickly became the richest French colony in the New World due to the immense profits from the sugar, coffee and indigo industries.
Pearl of the Antilles

• The colony of Saint-Domingue was the richest colony in the West Indies and probably the richest colony in the history of the world.

• Driven by slave labor and enabled by fertile soil and ideal climate, Saint-Domingue produced sugar, coffee, cocoa, indigo, tobacco, cotton, sisal as well as some fruits and vegetables for the motherland, France.
The French, who were outnumbered 10:1 by their slaves in Haiti, lived in constant fear of a revolution. To prevent them from organizing resistance movements, the owners tried to keep slaves of the same tribes apart; forbade any meetings of slaves at all; tied slaves to their own plantations, and used brutal forms of punishment to keep the slaves under control.
L'EXECUTION DE LA PUNITION DU FOIET.
Haitian Revolution

• Critical role of French Revolution (1789)
  – Fiscal crisis brought on by cost of Great Wars for Empire
  – Louis XVI calls Estates General for 1\textsuperscript{st} time since 1614 in order to raise tax revenues
  – Pent-up social and political antagonisms unleashed
  – July 14, 1789: storming of Bastille
  – 1791: National Assembly implements constitutional monarchy
On July 14, 1789, a Parisian mobs stormed the Bastille, a medieval fortress representing royal authority. Thus began the popular phase of the French Revolution, in which commoners assumed control of an increasingly radical revolution.
The Declaration of the Rights of Man (August 27, 1789)

• How would the Declaration of the Rights of Man influence a revolt in Haiti?

“Article 1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may only be founded upon the general good.”

“The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptibly rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression”
St. Domingue

- Most profitable sugar island in the world
- Nearly 500,000 enslaved = 90% population
- 1751-1757: vodún priest François Makandal leads uprising that costs 6,000 lives
The colonies in the revolution

• Where did the colonies fit in the revolutionary matrix?
  – colonies:metropole as commoners:monarchy?
  – But how could slaveholders represent the revolutionary impulse toward liberty?
  – Who best represented the revolutionary spirit in the colonies?
Colonial St. Domingue on the eve of the revolution.
The western portion of the island belonged to France.
It was divided into three sub-provinces, each with its own distinct economy and social structure.
Colonial society in St. Domingue

- **Whites**
  - Apx. 40,000
  - Grand blancs: wealthy planters
  - Petit blancs: merchants, officials

- **Gens de couleur**
  - Apx. 28,000
  - Free by virtue of partial white parentage
  - Free by virtue of self-purchase
  - Some (South Province) large slaveholders

- **Slaves**
  - Apx. 500,000
  - Creole-born
  - African-born
  - Maroons
The colony of San Domingue was torn by numerous dissensions:

- many white planters wanted independence from Revolutionary France (1789-1799).
- free persons of color, attracted to the concept of equality embedded in the doctrine of The Rights of Man, were struggling for full rights of citizenship.
- slaves, hearing the talk of human equality, and oppressed by inhuman conditions, revolted to improve their lot.
• How could the colony be related to events in France?
• Who would emerge as the dominant group within the colony?
• What relations would that group have with the mass of enslaved workers?
A revolution in 3 acts

Act 1 (1788-1791): Hostilities begin

1. *Grand blancs* position themselves in French events
   - Send representatives to Estates General to represent them (particularly against the *petit blancs*)
   - Create local assemblies in the colonies and begin moving toward independence

2. Revolt of the *petit blancs* in Spring 1790
   - Civil war in colony between *grand blancs* and *petit blancs*
   - Force *grand blanc* leadership to flee to France
   - Which group represents the unfolding revolution in France?

3. *Gens de couleur* enter (Vincent Ogé’s failed revolt)
   1. Launched with American arms
   2. Everyone claims the revolutionary mantle
A revolution in 3 acts

Act 2 (1791-1794): Toward abolition

– August 1791: slave revolt in the North Province
  • 200 sugar estates burned
  • 1,000 whites killed
  • Rest flee to towns, leave island

– 4-sided civil war with shifting alliances: *grand blancs, petit blancs, gens de couleur, slaves*

– 1793: Spanish from St. Domingo (eastern portion of island) and British from Jamaica invade
Bois Caïman (Haitian Creole: Bwa Kayiman) is the site of the Vodou ceremony presided over by Dutty Boukman on August 14, 1791. The stated purpose of the ritual was to attempt to overthrow French rule, which was based on slave labor.
Boukman Dutty

“[I am Boukman Dutty, former slave and voodoo priest.] God who made the sun that shines on us from above, who makes the sea to rage and the thunder roll, this same great God from his hiding place on a cloud, hear me, all of you, is looking down upon us. He sees what the whites are doing. The God of the whites asks for crime; ours desires only blessings. But this God who is good directs you to vengeance! He will direct our arms, he will help us. Cast aside the image of the God of the whites who thirsts for our tears and pay heed to the voice of liberty speaking in our hearts....”
News of the slaves' uprising quickly reached Cap Français. Reprisals against nonwhites were swift and every bit as brutal as the atrocities committed by the slaves. Although outnumbered, the inhabitants of Le Cap (the local diminutive for Cap Français) were well-armed and prepared to defend themselves against the tens of thousands of blacks who descended upon the port city. Despite their voodoo-inspired heroism, the ex-slaves fell in large numbers to the colonists' firepower and were forced to withdraw. The rebellion left an estimated 10,000 blacks and 2,000 whites dead and more than 1,000 plantations sacked and razed.
"Revenge Taken by the Black Army."

Engraving by J. Barlow from Marcus Rainsford's An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti, 1805.
Saint-Domingue, The Taking of La Ravine Aux Couleuvres),
Book illustration by James Outhwaite (19th century) after an original steel engraving by Karl Girardet (1813-1871).
A revolution in 3 acts

Act 2 (1791-1794): Toward abolition

- North Province: threat of slave rebellion unites whites and gens de couleur
- West Province: still no uprising; conflict between planting and non-planting classes
- South Province: white–colored conflict predominates
A revolution in 3 acts

Act 2 (1791-1794): Toward abolition

- Slave rebellion spreads from North, 1792
- Widespread recruitment of slaves into armies
- French commissioners (representatives of the Revolution) seek to exert authority, figure out who on island best represents the Revolution
- Declare equality of all free people, regardless of color
- 1793: *Grand blancs* cout d’etat
- French authorities arm 12,000 slaves
- Abolition of slavery in all French territory (February 1794)
- Toussaint shifts and fights for France
On April 4, 1792, the National Assembly of France declared that “the *hommes de couleur* and *nègres libres* must enjoy, along with the white *colons*, equality of political rights.” This means that henceforth, there will only be two kinds of people in the French colonies: free and enslaved. Legal distinctions on the basis of race were outlawed.
1792 decree

As one historian wrote:
“the slave insurgents of Saint-Domingue had expanded the political horizon in a paradoxical way, making it necessary to grant racial equality in order to save slavery.”

Laurent Dubois, _Avengers of the New World_, p. 131
Painting of the battle of Valmy in 1792 by Jean-Baptiste Mauzaisse from 1835, reproduced from a painting by Horace Vernet. The white uniformed infantry to the right are regulars while the blue coated ranks to the left are from the citizen volunteers of 1791.

War of the First Coalition against revolutionary France 1792-97
During the Reign of Terror (Summer 1794), the Place de la Concorde, a public square in Paris, became a site of execution. Among those who fell victim to “Madame de Guillotine” (understood as a civilized alternative to more primitive forms of corporal punishment) were King Louis XVI and his queen, Marie Antoinette.
Toussaint L’Ouverture

- Led slave revolts
- Considered brilliant
- Self – educated
- Former slave
- Fought against French, British and Spanish troops
- Arduous battle
- Many lives lost
Shortly after the 1791 uprising, Toussaint Louverture, a former slave who was over forty years old, joined the camp of the rebels as a medical officer. Toussaint practiced herbal and African healing, but unlike most such healers, he was not a Voodoo houngan.

Toussaint did not remain a medical officer for long. His ability to organize, train and lead men became immediately apparent. Toussaint rose from his position of aide-de-camp to become a general.
Toussaint Louverture: Early Years

- Born into slavery as François Dominique Toussaint Bréda in 1743 in north of Saint-Domingue
- Informal education from father or godfather & relatively kind master
- Freed at age 33
- Married, had 2 children, & rented a plot of land which had 13 slaves attached to it
  - Personally owned at least 1 slave; later freed him
Letter from Toussaint L’Ouverture, 1793

Brothers and friends. I am Toussaint L’Ouverture, my name is perhaps known to you. I have undertaken vengeance. I want Liberty and Equality to reign in San Domingo. I work to bring them into existence. Unite yourselves to us, brothers, and fight with us for the same cause, etc.

Your very humble and very obedient servant. (signed) TOUSSAINT L’OUVERTURE,

General of the Armies of the King, for the Public Good.
Toussaint Louverture: Military Career

- Doctor → successful military commander
- Used name “L’Ouverture,” meaning “The Opening” for 1st time in 1793 (later: “Louverture”)
- Fought French, Spanish, & British troops
A revolution in 3 acts

Act 3 (1794-1804): Repelling invaders and consolidating gains

1. Conquest of Spanish portion of island
2. Subjugation of André Rigaud, leader of mulatto independent state of coffee-growing South
3. 1799: Napoléon takes control of French state, plots to re-institute slavery
4. Slave uprising and resistance result, leading to independence under Jean-Jacques Dessalines
Meanwhile back in France........ The mother country

- 1799: Napoleon declares himself emperor
- French Revolution turns from radical phase to reactionary
By August of 1800 Toussaint was ruler of all San Domingue and no foreign power was on San Domingan soil. He was governor general of the whole colony.
Napoleon’s Secret Instructions
To General Leclerc

“If after the first 15 or 20 days it is impossible to bring back Toussaint....he is declared traitor to the country and, at the end of the delay, one will start war to the knife.”
Letter: from General Leclerc, 1802

“Show no mercy with anyone that you suspect.... One must be unflinching and inspire great terror; it is the only thing that will suppress the blacks.”
Louverture to Dessalines, 1802

“...Tear up the roads with shot; throw corpses and horses into all the fountains; burn and annihilate everything, in order that those who have come to reduce us to slavery may have before their eyes the image of that hell which they deserve.”
“On both sides, it was a war of unsurpassed brutality. The bodies of rebel slaves swung from tree branches where they had been hanged, while fortifications the slaves built were lined with French skulls.

....The general... mounted his horse...and left camp with 600 men and four pieces of artillery. Two hours later one could not find a living Negro within a circle of two and a half miles, and the roads were strewn with their bloody remains."

Adam Hochschild, “Birth of a Nation”, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2004
On June 7, 1802 Toussaint received a message from French General Brunet to meet with him at a plantation near Gonaives. Brunet assured Toussaint that he'd be perfectly safe with the French, who were, after all, gentlemen!

Shortly after arriving at the plantation he was arrested and shipped off to prison in France. Toussaint was taken to Fort de Joux, a cold, damp prison near the Swiss border. Toussaint soon withered away and died on April, 7, 1803.
Toussaint Louverture: Haitian Revolution

- French civil servants allied with Toussaint, freeing slaves & deporting white radicals (French Nat’l Assembly abolished slavery in colonies in 1794)
- Toussaint defeated British, who captured Port-au-Prince in 1794, & negotiated British troops out of colony in 1797
- Toussaint named Lieutenant Governor in 1796, Governor General of Saint-Domingue 1797-1802
- Toussaint worked closely w/ British & US gov’t under Washington & Adams
- Toussaint controlled all of Saint-Domingue by 1800 & entire island of Hispaniola (defeated Spain) by 1801; drafted constitution & abolished slavery throughout island
- In 1802, Napoleon (who took over France in 1799) tried to reestablish slavery in Saint-Domingue
Toussaint Louverture: Haitian Revolution (continued)

- Toussaint agreed to truce when told by French General Leclerc (Napoleon’s brother-in-law) lie that if fighting stopped, slavery would not begin again; Toussaint imprisoned (died in French jail in 1803) & slavery reinstituted
- Leclerc told Napoleon that all blacks over age 12 should be killed to preserve peace; when Leclerc died, successor Rochambeau brought man-eating dogs from Cuba to hunt blacks & worsened massacres Leclerc started
- After Toussaint died, his former general Dessalines took command & defeated French troops, declaring the independent country of Haiti on Jan. 1, 1804
- Accepting defeat in the New World, Napoleon pulled out entirely, negotiating the Louisiana Purchase w/ Jefferson in 1803
Haitian Independence!

• 1802 – Napoleon sent a large army to reconquer Haiti
• Something other than Toussaint’s forces attacked the French armies...
  – Yellow Fever destroyed much of Napoleon’s troops
• 1802 – French agreed to a truce
Constitution of 1801 (excerpt)

TITLE II
Of the Inhabitants

• **Art. 3.** - There cannot exist slaves on this territory, servitude is therein forever abolished. All men are born, live and die free and French.

• **Art. 4.** – All men, regardless of color, are eligible to all employment.

• **Art. 5.** – There shall exist no distinction other than those based on virtue and talent, and other superiority afforded by law in the exercise of a public function.

• The law is the same for all whether in punishment or in protection.
Haitian Revolution

“Haitians were the first, and remain the only, enslaved people in human history to have overthrown slavery and established an independent polity rule by former slaves in place of one controlled by their masters.”

--Historian James Sidbury
INDEPENDENCE DAY, JANUARY 1, 1804

After 13 years of revolutionary activity France was formally removed from the island and Haitian independence declared, only the second republic in the Americas.

The country was in ruins, the masses mainly uneducated and struggling for survival. The western world's large and interested nations, the United States, Britain, Spain and, of course, France, were all skeptical and nervous about an all-black republic. After all, the large nations were all slave-owning states.

The immediate post-revolutionary period of Haitian history was a terribly difficult one. The country was in shambles. Most of the plantations were destroyed, many skilled overseers were gone (either dead, in hiding, or having fled for their lives because of the treatment of slaves), skilled managers were often also gone, the former slaves did not want to work someone else's plantation, there was a grave fear that France would re-invade, and the rest of the international community was either openly hostile or totally uninterested in Haiti.
Haiti’s Economy after the Revolution

- In 1804, Haiti's economy was dependent on agricultural exports, primarily sugar, which required plantation production and thus coercive forms of labor.

- The leaders of the Haitian Revolution immediately recognized that they needed to restart their economy, which had been devastated during fighting with the French. Haiti needed money, not only to feed its own people but also to support a strong military that could protect the young country's independence against the very real threat of invasion. (French war ships remained in Haitian waters until 1825!)
Haiti is the only nation to ever gain its independence from a successful slave revolt and was the second (after the United State’s successful revolution in 1776) independent nation in the Western Hemisphere.

Henri Christophe- King of Northern Haiti, 1806-1820

The Citadelle: built by Christophe to protect Haiti from future attempts by the French to recolonize Haiti.
Haiti’s “Independence Debt”

• Before Haiti was allowed to rejoin the world economy, the European powers made it pay an “independence debt” to the French slave owners who were expelled from Haiti during the Revolution and thus lost their plantations and—yes, get this—valuable slaves. So after winning their freedom from the French, Haitians essentially had to buy it from them too. (This is the only case I know of in history where the winners of a war have ever had to pay the losers simply because they won.)

• After resisting for 21 years, in 1825 Haiti finally capitulated to France's terms, and in exchange for diplomatic recognition they agreed to pay France 21 billion dollars in reparations.
Haiti’s “Independence Debt”

• The debt was ten times Haiti's total revenue in 1825 and twice what the United States paid France in 1803 for the Louisiana Purchase, which contained seventy-four times more land.

• This debt was a HUGE burden on Haiti's economy, and it was not paid off until 1947. Some years, 80 percent of government revenue went towards debt service, at the expense of investments in education, healthcare and infrastructure.
U.S. Reaction to Haiti

The United States played a major role in ostracizing Haiti from the international community. The U.S. blocked Haiti’s invitation to the Western Hemisphere Panama Conference in 1825, refused to recognize Haiti’s independence until 1862, and did not establish diplomatic relations until 1886.
What on earth does this all have to do with the Louisiana Purchase?

Without control of the crown jewel of its planned empire, France saw the Louisiana territory as a useless drain on its resources. Needing money for his renewed war with England, Napoleon sold the vast Louisiana territory to the United States on April 30, 1803, for about four cents an acre. With this abrupt act, France removed itself as a power in the Western Hemisphere.
The Louisiana Purchase was a turning point the historical importance of which has been ranked next to the Declaration of Independence and the adoption of the Constitution. It doubled the nation's size, making it formidable enough to withstand almost any outside threat. It gave the country its heartland, as well as control of the Mississippi River and the important port city of New Orleans on the Gulf of Mexico.
In April 1803, President Thomas Jefferson wrote: “There is on the globe one spot the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy. It is New Orleans, through which the produce of three-eighths of our territory must pass to market. The day that France takes possession of New Orleans...we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation.”
Atlantic abolition

• 2 major impulses
  – The political revolution represented by colonial independence movements
    • American Revolution
    • Haitian Revolution
    • Latin American Revolutions (mainland Spanish South America)
  – The economic revolutions represented by the industrial and market revolutions
Genovese

- What is Genovese’s central claim about the Haitian Revolution?

- In what ways do the documents support his thesis? What ways might they undermine it?