

HISTORY 755.01/AAAS 755.01  
AFRICAN AMERICANS IN EARLY AMERICA

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Office Hours: Vary by quarter

Course Description

This intensive reading and discussion seminar explores African American life and culture during the colonial, revolutionary, and early national eras. Specifically, we will examine the themes of culture, identity, community formation, slavery, and resistance among the enslaved and free populations. This course will be particularly useful to graduate students who are preparing for their general examinations, but it is open to all graduate students. This course is the equivalent to African-American and African Studies 755.01, and is not open to students with credit for that course.

Course Requirements and Grading

Evaluation for this course will be evenly weighted in four areas: attendance and participation, weekly response papers, a short book review, and a lengthy historiographic essay.

Class Participation: Regular attendance and active participation in discussions is mandatory. As this is a graduate seminar, students are expected to attend every class, and be prepared to discuss the assigned reading. Grades will be based upon frequency and quality of participation, so bring specific questions or comments for consideration.

Guidelines for Papers:

It should go without saying that all papers should be double-spaced, written in 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. Please consult the descriptions listed below, along with the notes on style at the conclusion of the syllabus, for information about how to construct your papers.

Weekly Response Papers: In preparation for class each week, students are required to write a 1-2 page response to the reading assignment. Response papers should not be solely a summary of the readings, but rather, an analysis of the materials, and a reflection upon the historiographic methods the author(s) employed. Think of these papers as the opportunity to express your intellectual voice: What was the author attempting to do? Was s/he successful or convincing? What methods or sources did s/he utilize? What were the strengths and weaknesses in the author's approach?

Book Review: Attached to the syllabus is a list of recent studies on early African American life. Students are required to choose a book from this list and write a 3-4 page book review analyzing the study. If a student has a desire to select an alternative book, s/he must receive approval from the instructor. Rather than a traditional summary, the book review should focus mainly on historiographic analysis, and engage scholarly book reviews published in history or Black Studies journals, as well as the other readings we have completed during the quarter. See below for a listing of appropriate journals. You will want to consider a range of specific issues including:

1. The author's academic background and intellectual philosophy
2. The author's main thesis and conclusions—what are the central arguments?
3. The author's evidence. Does the author mostly rely on primary or secondary sources? What specific documents or materials does s/he use?
4. Offer your assessment of the study. What the strengths and weaknesses of the book? How does it compare with studies on similar topics? Are the arguments and evidence convincing, or unconvincing?
5. How has this study been received in the academic community? What opinions do other scholars have about this work? Students are strongly encouraged to consult academic journals like the Journal of African American History, Journal of the Early Republic, William and Mary Quarterly, and The Journal of American History to identify and discuss how other scholars have viewed the book you choose. You may want to review JSTOR for a listing of relevant journals.

Historiographic Essay: As with the weekly response papers and book review, the final essay should be primarily a discussion of historiography rather than a summary of the works. The essays should focus upon a particular historiographic trend and discuss that issue using 3-5 books from the course. Draw upon the guidelines above for specific details, and be sure to examine how the books interact or engage each other on similar themes. If you choose, you may also incorporate other outside reading that is relevant to your topic. The final paper, due during finals week by 5:00pm, should be approximately 12-15 double-spaced, typewritten pages.

### Grading scale

Grades will be distributed as follows: A: 92.6 and above; A-: 89.6-92.5; B+: 87.6-89.5; B: 82.6-87.5; B-: 79.6-82.5; C+: 77.6-79.5; C: 72.6-77.5; C-: 69.6-72.5; D+: 67.6-69.5; D: 62-67.5; E: below 62.

### Important Information

Students are welcome to talk with me about any aspect of the course, or the history department. You should feel free to attend my office hours, or contact me by email to set up an appointment.

In accordance with departmental policy, all students must be officially enrolled in the course by the end of the second full week of the quarter. No requests to add the course will be approved by the department chair after that time. Enrolling officially and on time is solely the responsibility of the student.

### Disability Services

Students who feel they may need an accommodation due to a disability should contact me to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. During this meeting we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs, and explore potential accommodations. We rely on the Office for Disability Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing strategies. If you have not previously contacted the Office for Disability Services, you may do so at: 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307 (V), 292-0901 (TDD); <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>

### Academic Misconduct

All forms of academic dishonesty or misconduct (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, or unauthorized collaboration) will be directed to the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM). Students found in violation of the Code of Student Conduct by COAM may receive a failing course grade and are subject to disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion from the Ohio State University (Faculty Rule 33356-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct: [http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info\\_for\\_students/csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp)

### Statement on plagiarism

Anytime you use someone else's ideas as your own without acknowledging their contributions you are committing plagiarism, which is a case of academic misconduct. This includes all information obtained on the internet. **You must indicate all primary and secondary sources either in a footnote, or with some other method acceptable to the course instructor.**

## Required Readings

All required readings are listed below, and are available for purchase at SBX. Books are also on reserve in the Ackerman Library, and can be checked out for a day. Please be sure to locate the book you have selected for your book review early in the quarter, to make sure that you have access to it in plenty of time. Most should be available in the OSU Library system, or can be ordered through OhioLink.

## Weekly Class Schedule

### Meeting 1

Introduction to Course

### Meeting 2

Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press /Belknap, 1998.

### Meeting 3

Pierson, William. *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth Century New England*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

### Meeting 4

Sobel, Mechal. *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

### Meeting 5

Morgan, Philip D. *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry*. OIEAHC and University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

### Meeting 6

Rucker, Walter. *The River Flows On: Black Resistance, Culture, and Identity Formation in Early America*. Louisiana State University Press, 2005.

### Meeting 7

Frey, Sylvia. *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

### Book Reviews Due

### Meeting 8

Melish, Joanne Pope. *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

### Meeting 9

Creel, Margaret Washington. *'A Peculiar People: Slave Religion and Community-Culture Among the Gullahs'*. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

### Meeting 10

Rael, Patrick. *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

### Finals Week: Final Historiographic Essay Due

### List of Eligible Books for Book Review

You may want to consult this list for relevant books for your final paper as well

Aptheker, Herbert. *The Negro in the American Revolution*. New York: International Publishers, 1940.

Berlin, Ira and Ronald Hoffman, eds. *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution*. University of Virginia Press, 1983.

Bolster, W. Jeffrey. *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Davis, Thomas J. *A Rumor of Revolt: The "Great Negro Plot" in Colonial New York*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990.

Egerton, Douglas R. *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Foote, Thelma Wills. *Black and White Manhattan: The History of Racial Formation in Colonial New York City*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Franklin, John Hope and Loren Schweninger. *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Gomez, Michael. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Greene, Lorenzo. *The Negro in Colonial New England, 1620-1776*. Holiday House, 1968.

Gutman, Herbert G. *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925*. New York: Random House, 1977.

Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo. *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.

Harris, Leslie Maria. *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Hinks, Peter P. *To Awaken my Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance*. College Station: Penn State University Press, 1997.

- Horton, James O. and Lois E. Horton. *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Kaplan, Sidney. *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution, 1770-1800*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1989.
- Kulikoff, Allan. *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Levine, Lawrence. *Black Culture, Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Littlefield, Daniel. *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991.
- Litwack, Leon. *North of Slavery: the Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965.
- Miller, Floyd J. *The Search for A Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1863*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975.
- Morgan, Edmund. *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003.
- Mullin, Gerald. *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth Century Virginia*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Nash, Gary B. *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- and Jean R. Soderlund. *Freedom By Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Phillips, Christopher. *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997.
- Quarles, Benjamin. *The Negro in the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961.
- Taylor, Quintard. *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the West, 1528-1900*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998.
- Thornton, John. *Africa and the Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1440-1680*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

White, Shane. *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810*. University of Georgia, 1995.

Wilkins, Roger. *Jefferson's Pillow: The Founding Fathers and the Dilemma of Black Patriotism*. New York: Beacon Press, 2002.

Winch, Julie. *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787-1848*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.

Wood, Peter. *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 to the Stono Rebellion*. New York: Norton, 1975.

Zilversmit, Arthur. *The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967.



## Instructions on Writing Style

1. Good grammar, spelling, and punctuation are essential in any paper. Carefully check your spelling and grammar before submitting your papers. Papers that have not been reviewed appear sloppy and reduce the overall quality. If necessary, consult the Writing Center on campus (located in 475 Mendenhall Laboratory) to get revision tips before turning in papers.
2. Take time to consciously organize your thoughts and arguments. You should carefully consider how you want to present your information and arrange your ideas. Make sure that each paragraph fully develops an idea, and makes an effective transition into the next.
3. Keep your paragraphs reasonable in length, usually four to six sentences. Do not write one-sentence paragraphs, or ones that consume nearly an entire page.
4. Avoid the overuse of quotations. You should only use direct quotes when they truly enhance your argument, or when paraphrasing would diminish the power or clarity of the point.
5. When you choose to use a quote, be sure to provide proper context. Quotations do not effectively “stand alone,” rather it is essential that you explain what information you want the reader to take from the quote. In other words, what is the central message or idea in the quote that you want your reader to remember?
6. It is absolutely essential that properly cite the primary and secondary sources you use in your papers. Any time you employ the words or ideas of another person, you must cite it! Historians generally use the Chicago Manual of Style, so please consult this source if you are unsure about proper citation format.
7. Be sure to write your papers in a formal, scholarly fashion. The use of contractions (like don't, can't, wouldn't, etc...) is not appropriate in your work. Similarly, you should not use any slang expressions or colloquialisms unless they are part of a direct quote.
8. Be specific in your language. Do not use expressions like “Most scholars agree...” or “It is believed...” Instead, state exactly who presented certain ideas and then cite them properly.
9. Avoid passive voice as much as possible. For example, instead of writing “5 Black people were lynched by a mob in 1890,” you should state “A mob lynched 5 Black people in 1890” or “In 1890, a mob lynched 5 Black people.”