

History of the African American People to 1877

HIST 259

Fall 2020

T/R 2:30 PM - 4:00 PM

All classes will be held virtually via Zoom

Instructor: Professor Nneka D. Dennie

Email: ndennie@wlu.edu

Virtual Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM and by appointment

Zoom Link to Attend Class:

<https://wlu.zoom.us/j/99523280112?pwd=YmRBdW42ZVU5Um01TXdBcCt0eFp3Zz09>

Zoom Link to Virtual Office Hours: <https://wlu.zoom.us/j/9184661994>

Course Description

This course is an introduction to African American history from Africans' earliest arrivals in the United States through Reconstruction. Drawing on primary and secondary sources including slave narratives, speeches, newspaper articles, and more, students will learn how to engage in historical analysis. Key topics for consideration include slavery, abolition, free Black communities, and Black resistance. Specific attention will be devoted to enslaved Black women's experiences and Black women's activism. Of particular significance will be Black people's ongoing efforts to critique the limits of American democracy, claim their freedom, and exercise the rights of citizenship.

Learning Objectives

- Summarize how colonialism, capitalism, slavery, and anti-black racism have impacted United States history
- Identify major figures, laws, and ideologies in African American history and explain their significance
- Analyze the relationships between race, gender, and class
- Apply historical modes of analysis to the study of Black people in the United States
- Synthesize primary and secondary sources about African American history
- Develop familiarity with archival research methods

Required Texts

- John Hope Franklin and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, 9th edition (2011). **The 2011 version of this book is the one that is required for this class. You do not need to purchase the more recent (and more expensive) 10th edition released in 2020.**

The required text is available at the college bookstore. All other readings will be available through Canvas or as e-books on the library website. To access Canvas, go to <http://canvas.wlu.edu>. Films will occasionally be required. While some will be available on

YouTube, you may occasionally need to watch it through a paid service (i.e. Netflix or rent it on Amazon Prime for \$3.99). Films are marked with an asterisk (*) on the reading schedule.

Academic Misconduct

All students are expected to abide by the Honor System. Instances of academic misconduct may result in failing the assignment. Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to: aiding and abetting academic misconduct; cheating; fabrication; plagiarism; and violating ethical or professional standards. For further information, see <https://my.wlu.edu/executive-committee/the-honor-system/plagiarism/plagiarism-pamphlet>.

Disability Resources

I am committed to ensuring equitable access to course content for all students. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Contact Lauren Kozak, Title IX Coordinator and Director of Disability Resources, at kozakl@wlu.edu or 540-458-4055 to confidentially discuss your individual needs and the accommodation process. More information can be found at <https://www.wlu.edu/disability-accommodations/undergraduate-accommodations>.

If you have already been approved for accommodations, please meet with me within the first two weeks of the term so we can develop an implementation plan together. It is important to meet as early in the term as possible; this will ensure that your accommodations are implemented early on. If you have accommodations for test-taking, please remember that arrangements must be made at least a week before the date of the test or exam.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is mandatory. Material that we cover in class, including lectures, small-group discussions, and in-class assignments will be essential to developing a comprehensive understanding of African American history. However, due to the unpredictability of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we will need to be flexible. In the event that you will miss class, please email me in advance so that I can plan accordingly. I encourage you to prioritize your health and do not expect you to attend class if you are ill, whether it is from the coronavirus, a chronic illness, or simply the common cold. I do not require a doctor's note and will take you at your word if you are sick. In turn, I trust that you will attend our virtual classes if you are well enough to do so. Tardiness and repeated absences for reasons other than illness or emergencies will affect your daily class participation grade. A student who is absent from more than one-fourth of the course meetings (six classes) may receive a zero for class participation.

Instructor Communication

I look forward to working with you throughout the semester to ensure that you have a fulfilling learning experience. I will hold drop-in virtual office hours twice a week and you are more than welcome to stop by. I encourage students to speak to me during office hours about any questions or concerns regarding the course. You can make an appointment for office hours at <https://calendly.com/nnekadennie>.

Please consult the syllabus, Canvas, and your classmates prior to sending emails about class procedures and requirements. If we have not resolved your issue after exchanging three emails, meet with me during office hours. I will respond to emails within three business days. This includes emails sent after 5 PM on weeknights or any time on weekends. I will not answer last minute questions via email the night before an assignment is due.

Evaluation of Students

Class Participation (10%)
Discussion Board Posts (20%)
Archival Research Analysis (15%)
Two In-Class Quizzes (15%)
Film Analysis (15%)
Final Exam (25%)

Class Participation (10%)

All students are expected to contribute to discussion consistently. Students will receive a participation grade for each class. A rubric is available on the handout titled “Class Participation Guidelines” on Canvas. Given our virtual format, participation can take various forms, like speaking on Zoom, commenting using the chat function, or participating in Zoom polls. You may also tweet during class for participation points using **#hist259f20**. Your tweets must be public for me to see them. Feel free to make a separate Twitter account specifically for class if you want your existing account to remain private.

Discussion Board Posts (20%)

Throughout the semester, write five discussion board posts about the assigned readings and five responses to classmates. You may choose which days you would like to write a post or a response. Each post should be approximately 200-250 words long and each response should be approximately 100-150 words. Discussion board posts are due by **11:59 PM the night before we are scheduled to discuss the readings as a class**. Responses are due by **2 PM on the day of class**. For example, if you are writing a post about Tuesday’s readings, you must turn it in by 11:59 PM on Monday night and responses must be submitted by 2 PM on Tuesday. I will monitor the discussion board, but will not participate. Late discussion board posts/responses will not be accepted. Please refer to the Discussion Board Guidelines document on Canvas for further information.

Archival Research Analysis (15%)

The Special Collections and Archives Department has compiled a digital collection of primary sources about African American history at W&L, in Lexington, and in Rockbridge County. The list of documents with links to each source is available on Canvas. Browse through the documents and select **one** source using the Archival Document Sign-Up Sheet on Canvas. Each student needs to choose a different primary source. Write a 2-3 page paper analyzing the

document. This essay is due on Canvas by 5:00 PM on **Friday, September 18**. Additional instructions are available on Canvas in the Archival Research Assignment document.

Two In-Class Quizzes (15%)

There will be two short in-class quizzes, each worth 7.5% of your final course grade. Quizzes will assess your understanding of the readings and the concepts we discuss in class. Quizzes will cover lectures, discussions, and assigned readings. Each quiz will take approximately 15 minutes.

Film Analysis (15%)

Write a 3-4 page paper discussing the representation of slavery in *Django Unchained* (included with Netflix), *12 Years a Slave* (\$3.99 on Amazon Prime Video), *Freedom* (included with Amazon Prime Video), or *Harriet* (included with HBO). Pick one movie. Does the depiction of slavery seem historically accurate based on what you have learned in this class? If not, what do we gain from these fictional accounts? What do we lose? What are the strengths and weakness of the film's approach to slavery? How do you think this film would influence the audience's understanding of slavery? You must cite at least three sources from our course readings. This essay is due on Canvas by **5:00 PM on Friday, October 16**.

Final Exam (25%)

The final will be an open-book, open-note exam comprised of identifications/short answers and essays. You must work independently and are not permitted to consult others about material on the exam materials. The final will be self-scheduled.

Extra Credit

Extra credit will be available until the last day of class by writing a maximum of two response papers to campus or community events related to African American history. All of the events that are part of the year-long Africana Studies series, "Activism and Black Life," are eligible for extra credit, as well as other events on a case-by-case basis. In a 250-300 word paper, describe the event and connect it to themes we examine in this course. Successful completion of an extra credit assignment will raise one of your paper grades by 1/3 of a letter grade.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	B-	80-82	D+	67-69
A-	90-92	C+	77-79	D	60-66
B+	87-89	C	73-76	F	0-59
B	83-86	C-	70-72		

Late Policy and Extensions

Late submissions will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade per day (i.e. A- becomes B+ after one day; A- becomes B after two days). Everyone is permitted to use a maximum of one extension for the archival research analysis or the final group project. If requesting an extension, you must do so at least 48 hours in advance of the deadline. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional extension will be available under extenuating circumstances only (i.e. illness or emergency). Extensions will not be available for discussion board posts.

I reserve the right to edit this syllabus. In the event of any changes, I will notify you in a timely manner.

READING SCHEDULE

Week 1: Welcome and Introduction

August 27

- *From Slavery to Freedom* (FSTF) Chapter 1: “Ancestral Africa,” pg. 1-21

Week 2: The Origins of the Slave Trade

September 1

- FSTF Chapter 2: “Africans in the New World,” pg. 22-35
- FSTF Chapter 3: “Establishing North American Slavery,” pg. 47-64

September 3

- Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, Chapter One: “The Origin of Negro Slavery,” pg. 3-29

Week 3: Eighteenth-Century Slavery

September 8

- FSTF Chapter 4: “Eighteenth-Century Slave Societies,” pg. 64-83
- Olaudah Equiano, [*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself*](#) (1789), pg. 1-44

September 10

- Equiano, Chapters 2-3, pg. 45-129

Week 4: African Americans and the American Revolution

September 14

- FSTF Chapter 5: “Give Me Liberty,” pg. 84-102

September 17 – Class cancelled; watch documentary independently

- Venture Smith, [*A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture, a Native of Africa: But Resident above Sixty Years in the United States of America. Related by Himself*](#) (1789), pg. 1-32
- Watch [Africans in America, Part 2](#)*

September 18 – PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS DUE BY 5 PM ON CANVAS

Week 5: Black Resistance and Slave Revolts

September 22

- FSTF Chapter 7: “Southern Slavery,” pg. 151-159
- Nat Turner, [The Confessions of Nat Turner, the Leader of the Late Insurrection in Southampton, VA](#) (1831), pg. 3-23
- [The Richmond Enquirer on Nat Turner’s Rebellion](#) (1831)

September 24

- Rebecca Hall, “Not Killing Me Softly: African American Women, Slave Revolts, and Historical Constructions of Racialized Gender,” *Freedom Center Journal* 1, no. 2 (2009): 1-44.

Week 6: Nineteenth-Century Slavery

September 29

- FSTF Chapter 7: “Southern Slavery,” pg. 129-150

October 3 – IN-CLASS QUIZ

- Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, Chapter 2: “The Nature of Female Slavery,” pg. 62-90

Week 7: Free Black Communities and Activism

October 6

- FSTF Chapter 8: “Antebellum Free Blacks,” pg. 159-182
- Henry Highland Garnet, [“An Address to the Slaves of the United States”](#) (1843)

October 8

- David Walker's Appeal (1829), pg. 6-45 (UNC Press 2011 e-book on library website)

Week 8: Contemporary Reflections on Slavery

October 13

- Nikita Stewart, *New York Times* 1619 Project, [“Why Can't We Teach Slavery Right in American Schools?”](#)
- Bryan Stevenson, *New York Times* 1619 Project, [“Why American Prisons Owe Their Cruelty to Slavery”](#)
- Watch the *Root*, [“How American Slavery Helped Create Modern-Day Policing”](#)*

October 15 – Class cancelled; watch a film independently

- Watch one of the following movies for your film analysis (3-4 pages)
 - *Django Unchained* (2012)
 - *12 Years a Slave* (2013)
 - *Freedom* (2015)
 - *Harriet* (2019)

October 16 – FILM ANALYSIS DUE BY 5:00 PM ON CANVAS

Week 9: Abolition

October 20

- FSTF Chapter 9: “Abolitionism in Black and White,” pg. 184-207
- William Still, *Still's Underground Rail Road Records*, “Henry Box Brown,” pg. 81-86

October 24

- Kellie Carter-Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*, Introduction: “The Philosophy of Force” and Chapter 3: “From Prayers to Pistols: The Struggle for Progress,” pg. 1-14, 80-105

Week 10: Black Women's Activism

October 28

- Carla Peterson, *Doers of the Word: African-American Women Speakers and Writers in the Nineteenth Century*, Chapter 1: “‘Doers of the Word’: Theorizing African-American Women Speakers and Writers in the Antebellum North,” pg. 1-23
- Maria Stewart, “Why Sit Ye Here and Die” (1832)

October 30

- Sojourner Truth, “Aint I a Woman?” Speech, 1851 and 1863 versions
- Frances Harper, “We Are All Bound up Together,” 1866
- Nell Painter, *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited*, Chapter 2: “Voices of Suffrage: Sojourner Truth, Frances Watkins Harper, and the Struggle for Woman Suffrage,” pg. 42-55

Week 11: Civil War

November 3 – Class cancelled; Election Day

- Class is cancelled in order to provide eligible voters sufficient time to exercise their right to participate in our democracy. If you are able, I encourage you to go vote!

November 5

- FSTF Chapter 10: “Civil War,” pg. 208-235

Week 12: Reconstruction and Wrap-Up

November 10

- FSTF Chapter 11: “Promises and Pitfalls of Reconstruction,” pg. 208-235

November 12

- Sydney Trent, *New York Times*, “[At 88, he is a historical rarity — the living son of a slave](#)”