

History 343 - Slavery in the United States

Dr. Charles W. McKinney

Fall 2009, 302 Clough Hall
TR 9.30 - 10.45
Office Hours: T 1.30-3.30, W 10-12
and by appointment

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Course Description

The purpose of this course is to attain a fundamental knowledge of one of the most complex and controversial experiences in United States history. This course will examine various social, economic, and political factors in an attempt to explain why slavery developed as it did. Also, because slavery remained in the United States over such a long period (approximately 240 years), we will discuss how it changed over time. Students will consider the role historians play in shaping popular conceptions of historical events. Using primary and secondary sources and film, students will come to a greater understanding of the central issues presented in the course, and respond to these issues in a series of critical essays and one longer writing project.

Books:

- Ira Berlin, ed., *Remembering Slavery (Remembering)*
- Thomas C. Holt, Elsa Brown, *Major Problems in African American History (Problems)*
- James and Lois Horton, *In Hope of Liberty (Hope)*
- Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul*
- Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity (Generations)*

Course Requirements

4 Synopses - 30% of final grade

Synopses (4)

You will submit **four** 2-page, single spaced synopses due on the days indicated. For each synopsis, you will thoroughly answer 1-2 questions provided in advance on the required reading in the course. You will then use these small papers to inform your participation during the **four discussion days** we will have throughout the semester.

Book Review (1) Due on October 15 - 20% of final grade

You will submit **one** 6-8 page book review essay, due on the indicated date. In your review, you will evaluate **three** pieces of scholarship pertaining to slavery. Please consider the following questions when describing the works under review:

- What is the scope and focus of the work? What is the author attempting to do?
- What conclusions did the author reach?
- To reach those conclusions, what kinds of evidence did the author use?
- How would you describe the author's research and methodology?

To critique your chosen works, you should consider the following:

- Does the author have a bias? Explain and illustrate by brief example.
- Are the author's methodology and arguments convincing? If so, how so? If not, why not? Illustrate your point with brief examples.
- In what ways does this work change your understanding of slavery in the United States? What does it contribute to our understanding of slavery? Does it add fresh perspectives or does it recycle old stereotypes?
- Remember - this assignment can provide you with a solid start to your final research paper.

In-class discussion/participation - 20% of final grade

I expect you to attend every class, arrive on time and come ready, having done the assigned reading and/or written assignment. Since there will be a very high premium on class discussion, it is imperative that everyone comes to class ready to contribute with comments, questions and insights. Remember though, class participation is not a contest. The people who talk the most do not necessarily “win.” What really counts is your ability and willingness to bring something valuable to the discussion that your colleagues and I can build upon in our efforts to bring some clarity to the issues that we are discussing. Of course, this level of participation will require full reading of assigned work. Also, to ensure the best possible experience for all of us, let’s refrain from using inappropriate language, or any other activity that may make our classroom less than open and engaging. In addition, coming to the office to discuss material covered in the class, or engaging in a substantive electronic conversation also count (broadly) as class participation.

Discussion days and Discussion page:

On selected days throughout the semester, we will have in-class discussion (these days will be in **bold** on your syllabus). On those days you will come to class with the corresponding **synopsis**, which you will then use to engage in dialogue about the readings and themes being covered in class. I will call on students randomly to begin discussion on these days. Please note that a fifth of your grade is based on your participation in class. While in-class discussion days represent a significant opportunity for you to shine, it is in your best interest to come to class throughout the semester ready to contribute to the intellectual give and take of the class.

Research Paper - 30% of final grade - Due on November 17

You will write a research paper that will be approximately 10-12 pages in length. You may select any topic related to American slavery that is of interest to you. Your research should be based upon at least some primary (i.e., original) documents. All topics must be approved by me. Toward this end, you will submit a one-to-two paragraph summary of your topic, along with a list of at least four sources from which you will begin your research (no encyclopedia or Internet sources at this stage). Your book review essay can come in quite handy for this.

Please do not hesitate to come by my office to discuss any of these requirements.

Honor Code:

All work turned in for this course is to be completed in accordance with the Rhodes College Honor Code. To demonstrate your commitment to the Code, each student must write “pledged” and sign his/her name on every assignment. If you have questions about plagiarism you should talk to me directly.

Policies:

Note on written work:

All written work must be composed on a computer, be double-spaced and in 10 or 12 point font. Have your name, the assignment name (and number if necessary), date, course name and email address on each document you turn in. Students who feel that they need assistance with written assignments should feel free to contact me so that we can discuss whatever challenges you may be facing.

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. Students will be allowed three unexcused absences. *All other absences after the third one must be excused. Each unexcused absence after the third one will cost you 5% of your final grade. If you miss three weeks worth of classes, you can be dropped from the class or flunked.* Valid excuses for missing class include but are not limited to religious observances, college-sanctioned academic or athletic travel, personal illness or injury, family illness or injury or bereavement. Needless to say, infrequent class attendance will negatively impact your final grade.

Paper Policies:

Due Dates

Papers are due at the beginning of class and I define “beginning” as the first fifteen (15) minutes. On the 16th minute, your paper is late, and ***I do not accept late papers.*** “My computer crashed” or “the printer jammed a few minutes ago” or “my slacker roommate didn’t wake me up” are not reasons to excuse/accept a late paper; rather, they are a testament to poor time management on your part. ***However, please keep in mind that, while I do not accept late papers, you must turn in all of the assigned work in order to pass the class.*** Of course, I will accept a late paper with an acceptable, college-sanctioned excuse.

Grades

As a general rule, grades are not negotiable. However, I will gladly discuss the grade on any assignment 24 hours after the work is turned in.

Citation:

Papers should be written using the Chicago citation style. This style may be viewed at http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html. If you have any questions about proper citation, please refer to this site, *and then* contact me.

A note on the use of the web: websites must be approved by the professor before they can be cited in any of the written work in the class. Generally, approved sites will be those that provide you with primary source material (autobiographies, interviews, newspapers, etc.) However, please observe that websites may not be used as sources for either the book review or the historiographical essay.

Learning Differences:

I am strongly committed to accommodating students with disabilities, and ask your cooperation in making sure that I’m aware of any such accommodation you might need. For more information, please contact Student Disability Services to alert them of any needs you may have.

Additional Information:

- Please turn off all cell phones, pagers, games, and any other object that can beep, buzz, ring or vibrate. These devices are extremely disruptive when they go off in the middle of class.
- ***I reserve the right to amend this syllabus as necessary***

Class Schedule:

August 27: Introductions; go over the syllabus; class discussion

September 1, 3: The World Changed - African and European Encounters

T: Understanding Slavery and Freedom; African Origins and the development of a “Slave Society”
READING: *Generations*, 1-31; *Problems*, chap. 2, all documents

R: Library Orientation

September 8, 10: The Emergence of Slavery

T: The African Role in the Slave Trade
READINGS: *Problems*, chap. 2 essays by Rodney and Thornton

R: Making Slaves, Making Race - The Institution Emerges
READINGS: *Generations*, 31-49; *Problems*, chap. 3

September 15, 17: Slavery and the Revolutionary Era

T: Colonial Antecedents

READINGS: *Hope*, chaps. 1-2

R: The Riddle of the Revolution

READINGS: *Hope*, chap. 3; *Generations*, 99-102, 111-157; *Problems*, chap. 5, docs 3-5

September 22, 24: Slavery and the Constitution

T: The Problem of Black Freedom

READINGS: Smallwood, "Commodified Freedom", at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/4141508.pdf>

R: **Discussion Day 1: Making Sense of the Revolutionary Era: The Construction of Freedom and Unfreedom**

READINGS: "African American Voices" (in public folder)
Synopsis #1 Due

September 29, October 1: Free Blacks in the Antebellum North

T: The tenuous nature of black life in the North

READINGS: *Hope*, chaps. 4-6

R: **Film: Slavery and the Making of America**

October 6, 8: A Life of their own: African American Culture

T: Overview of Antebellum slave life

READINGS: *Generations*, 161-209

R: **Discussion Day 2: Masters and Slaves: The world they made together**

READINGS: *Problems*, chp. 6, docs. 1-6; chp. 7, docs. 1- 4, essay by Berlin and Rowland
Synopsis #2 Due

October 13, 15: African American Culture, Part II

T: Religion and Family Life

READINGS: Charles Joyner article, "African American Christianity" (in public folder); skim *Remembering*, chap. 3; *Hope*, chap. 6

R: Creating Culture in the Midst of Chaos

READINGS: *Hope*, chap. 7-8

BOOK REVIEW DUE!

October 16-20: Fall Break

October 22: The Chattel Principle

R: Marking bodies, making racial difference

READINGS: *Soul*, chaps. 1-2

October 27, 29: Turning People into Property

T: The impact of the trade on White America.

READINGS: *Soul*, chaps. 3-4; skim *Remembering*, chap. 1

R: Guest Lecture: Professor Art Carden, Economics

READINGS: *Soul*, chaps. 5-6; *Readings to prepare for Prof. Carden's lecture (tba)*

November 3, 5: Life in the Shadow of the Market

T: Discussion Day 3: Making Sense of the Slave Trade

READINGS: *Soul*, chap. 7 - epilogue

Synopsis #3 Due

R: TBA

November 10, 12: Black Women in Slavery and Freedom

T: The double dynamic of race and gender

READINGS: Stephanie Camp, "The Pleasures of Resistance: Enslaved Women and Body Politics in the Plantation South, 1830-1861" at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/3070158.pdf>

R: Free women of color in Antebellum America

READINGS: "My Mother was very much of a Woman." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2 (Summer 1982), 235-269. Can be accessed at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/3177562.pdf>

November 17, 19: Expansion, Anti-Slavery and Resistance

T: RESEARCH PAPER DUE!

R: Growing Militancy in the North

READINGS: *Problems*, chap. 8; *Hope*, chaps. 9-10

Hope, chaps. 9-10; Frederick Douglass speech "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" @ http://douglassarchives.org/doug_a10.htm

November 24-30: Thanksgiving Break

December 1, 3: Civil War and Emancipation

T: Making the War about Freedom

READINGS: *Remembering*, chap. 5; *Problems*, chap. 9

R: Discussion Day 4: Securing the Promise of Freedom

READINGS: Berlin, "A War for the Union" (public folder)

Synopsis #4 Due

December 8: The Promise of Freedom

T: "A Whole Race Learning to Read"

READINGS: Anderson, "Ex Slaves and the Rise of Universal Education" (public folder); *Problems*, chap. 10 documents

Monday, December 14: Final Exam Scheduled