

*Syllabus*  
*HIST 364 The Rise and Fall of American Slavery*  
*Fall 2017*  
*William G. Thomas III*  
*University of Nebraska*

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|----------------------|--|
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*Course Description:*

This course covers the history and development of slavery and the process of emancipation in the U.S. This course will closely examine the economic, social, legal, political, and cultural characteristics of American slavery, how these changed over time, and how slavery grew in the Atlantic world. The South became the primary but not the only location for the development of slavery in the British North America and eventually in the United States. Other states and colonies actively shaped the institution and were deeply entangled in the economic, social, and political structures underpinning slavery in the U.S. The history of slavery in the U.S. also followed a different trajectory from other societies in the Americas. This course fully explores the emergence of slavery in British North American colonies, the development of the transatlantic slave trade, and the expansion of slavery in the early modern and modern world, including the plantation agriculture, financial markets, and human migration. The course also explores in detail the constituent attempts to eliminate enslavement in America, including the various processes of emancipation in the U.S. from the colonial period to the 20th century such as self-libration, slave resistance, compensated emancipation, the antislavery and abolition movement, and colonization projects.

Chronological treatments include the following major subjects: the encounter of Indian, European, and African peoples in the seventeenth century, the development of slavery in the Atlantic economy, the nature of the transatlantic slave trade, the consequences of the American Revolution and its impact on slavery, the politics of slavery and emancipation in the early republic, the expansion of slavery on the cotton frontier in antebellum America, the problem of the sectional crisis and secession over slavery, and the experience and legacies of the Civil War and emancipation in U.S. history. We will consider various efforts at reconciliation, repair, and recovery of the history of American slavery.

This course will use a wide array of digital history projects for students to investigate primary sources-- letters, diaries, photographs, and maps from and about the region. Students of all backgrounds are welcome in this course to learn about the problem of slavery in the U.S., the process of emancipation, and the legacies of slavery and emancipation today.

*Course Objectives:*

- to give students the experience and opportunity to do history for themselves and participate in it through gathering evidence, communicating ideas, and engaging with historical scholarship.

- to improve fluency and proficiency in and historical thinking, primary source analysis, essay writing, and critical analysis.
- to develop comprehensive and deep knowledge of the history of slavery and emancipation in the United States, including the Atlantic World context of its development from 1570 to the present--the events, structures, ideas, and people that shaped slavery as social system and their relevance today and the process of emancipation in the U.S. and its relationship to other societies.

*What will I be able to do at the end of the semester?*

*Narrative:* Write complex historical narratives that answer a question or solve a problem using a sophisticated understanding of causation, continuity, and change.

*Inquiry:* Support and revise claims about the past using critical approaches to the available evidence.

*Empathy:* Look for the strengths and insights offered by alternative points of view, especially if they conflict with your own or conventional understandings.

*Style:* Communicate clearly and concisely in writing, with appropriate detail and awareness of audience.

*Self-reflection:* Show you can think reflexively and critically about yourself as a student of history.

#### *Course Readings:*

##### Books:

David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*

Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*

Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America*

Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*

Adam Rothman, *Beyond Freedom's Reach: A Kidnapping in the Twilight of Slavery*

Octavia E. Butler, *Kindred* (1979)

##### Selected Essays:

Barbara J. Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*. Ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson. New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982. <http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furg:essays:fieldsideolandrace.html>

##### Selected Films:

*Twelve Years a Slave* (2013)

*Amistad* (1997)

*Nat Turner: A Troublesome Property* (2003)

Required Electronic Archives:

O Say Can You See: Early Washington D. C. Law and Family

<http://www.earlywashingtondc.org>

Geography of Slavery in Virginia

<http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/>

Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War

<http://lib.valley.virginia.edu>

Visualizing Emancipation, University of Richmond

<http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/>

*Grading Scale:*

|            |          |
|------------|----------|
| A+ 97-100  | C+ 77-79 |
| A 94-96    | C 74-76  |
| A- 90-93   | C- 70-73 |
| B+ 87-89   | D+ 67-69 |
| B 84-86    | D 64-66  |
| B- 80-83   | D- 60-63 |
| F below 60 |          |

*Grading:*

|                          |       |            |
|--------------------------|-------|------------|
| Mid Term Readings Essay  | 20 %  | 100 points |
| Case Report              | 20 %  | 100 points |
| Final Exam               | 40 %  | 200 points |
| Attendance/Participation | 10 %  | 50 points  |
| Participation/Hand-ins   | 10 %  | 50 points  |
| =====                    |       |            |
| Total                    | 100 % | 500 points |

Two-page hand ins are meant for students to try out ideas, gain fluency in historical thinking, and to demonstrate use of primary source evidence. These regular, brief writings are an essential aspect of the practice of scholarly engagement. Assignments will be assessed on a 10 point scale based on: significance of the thesis, quality of historical thinking, and the effectiveness of the use of primary source evidence. The five two pages hand in assignments count 50 points total (10 %). Participation in class discussion will count 50 points total (10 %).

Each student will select a petition for freedom case brought before the U.S. Circuit Court, District of

Columbia in its [Alexandria jurisdiction](#). Students are encouraged to pick a case with at least six documents in the case file. Students should consult with me early in the semester during office hours to discuss the case. Each student will research, summarize, and annotate his or her case. Case papers, minute book entries, and other documents for the cases are from the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

The Case Report is due at the end of the semester. The Case Report will have three parts: a.) summarize the case, b.) explain significant legal concepts, events, or persons within the case in detail, and c.) situate the case using available library digital databases (Jstor, Project Muse) and primary and secondary readings in the course and by relating the case to relevant secondary literature on the history of slavery and emancipation with full citation and footnotes. The Case Report should be approximately 2,000 words. The Case Report may be published through the "Early Washington, D.C., Law and Family" project, edited for publication, and will be made available for scholars, teachers, and students to access.

The mid-term exam will be an in-class essay exam based on the readings. The final exam will be an essay exam based on the readings.

#### *Academic Policies:*

Attendance at all lectures and class periods is required. Essays will not be accepted in email format or as attachments, only as hard copy handed in at class session. Assignments will not be accepted after the due dates except in cases where students can document an illness, family emergency, or university-related responsibility that prevented them from completing the assignment on time.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Writing Center can provide you with meaningful support as you write for this class as well as for every course in which you enroll. Trained peer consultants are available to talk with you as you plan, draft, and revise your writing. Please check the Writing Center website for locations, hours, and information about scheduling appointments. (<http://www.unl.edu/writing/>)

Participation will be graded on completion of occasional in-class writing assignments and hand-ins. Please remember to bring these to class the day they are due for discussion.

#### *Office Hours:*

Students are welcome to come by regular office hours to discuss the course, the history major, assignments, or other academic issues. Students are also welcome to schedule a meeting outside of

office hours. The best way to reach me is always by email, and I encourage all students to communicate questions directly.

*Academic Honesty:*

All students are expected to adhere to the University policies regarding academic honesty set forth in the Undergraduate Bulletin. Cases of academic dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating, misrepresentation) will be handled in strict accordance with the guidelines of the University. Violations of academic honesty will result in an F in the course and referral to the Dean of Students.

*Schedule of Assignments:*

(note: all assignments and due dates are subject to change as necessary in the semester)

Week 1: Introduction

Reading: Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, chapter 1

8/22 Introduction

8/24 Overview Discussion (pick one of the primary sources to discuss and present in class):

[Thomas Jefferson, \*Notes on the State of Virginia\*, query 14 and 18](#)

[Olaudah Equiano, \*Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano\*](#)

[Nat Turner, \*The Confessions of Nat Turner\*](#)

[Frederick Douglass, \*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass\*, chapter 7](#)

Week 2: Origins of Slavery in Atlantic World

Reading: Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, chapters 4 - 6

8/29 African Trade and Paths to the Middle Passage

8/31 The Atlantic System

Week 3: Colonial Slavery in British North America

Reading: Reading: Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America*

9/5 Race and Slavery in 17th c.

Discuss Primary Source Reading:

[Court Cases of the Johnson Family-College of William and Mary](#)

9/7 Tobacco Culture and Gentry Society in Chesapeake

Two-page hand-in: Find three (3) examples of runaways from The Geography of Slavery project, and briefly explain the evidence for their motivations using at least (1) document from the Carter Family Correspondence to support your explanation. Prepare to discuss in class.  
[http:// www.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos.html](http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos.html)

Discuss Primary Source Reading:

## Carter Family Correspondence

Week 4: Slavery, Laws and Courts

9/12 Discuss: Wendy Warren, *New England Bound*

9/14 Meeting for Research for Case Report

Week 5: The Slave Ship and The Slave Voyage

Reading: Walter Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*

9/19 British North American Colonies -- Conditions and Societies

9/21 Discuss: Rediker, *The Slave Ship*

Week 6: Revolutions and Slavery in the 19th century American South

Reading: Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, chapters 6, 7, 9 and 10

9/26 Slavery, Capitalism, and the Cotton South  
Two-page hand-in: Valley of the Shadow--select three documents of (3) different types (newspaper, letter, diary, census record, will, . . . ) in the period 1857-1861 from Augusta County, Virginia, to explain the ways that southern whites rationalized, defended, or explained slavery and discuss their significance. Was there a difference between private and public expression regarding slavery? Prepare to discuss in class.

Discuss Primary Source Reading:

[Thomas Jefferson, \*A Summary View of the Rights of British Am.\*](#)

[John C. Calhoun, "Slavery as a Positive Good"](#)

[James Henry Hammond, "Cotton is King"](#)

9/28 Discussion: [Barbara J. Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History,"](#)  
[Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann](#)  
[Woodward. Ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson. New](#)  
[York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.](#)

Week 7: Mid Term Review

10/3 Review

**10/5 Mid Term Exam**

Week 8: Anti Slavery and Abolitionism

Reading: Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, chapters 12 and 13

10/10 Explaining Abolitionism and Anti-Slavery  
Two-page hand-in: Valley of the Shadow--Letters and Diaries--how did Northern and Southern women characterize the conflict over slavery, what language and symbols did they use to describe their respective sectional positions? Select 3 exemplary documents for discussion and bring to class with list of key points. Prepare to discuss in class.

10/12 Black Abolitionism

Discuss Primary Source Reading: (pick one--prepare to discuss in class)

[David Walker, An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World](#)  
[Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"](#)  
[Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl](#) (pp. 1-150)

Fall Break: The Slave Market and the Interstate Slave Trade

Reading: Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*

10/17 NO CLASS FALL BREAK

10/19 Kidnapping, Buying, and Selling

Film excerpt in class: *Twelve Years a Slave* (2013)

Discuss Primary Source Reading:

[Jesse Torrey, A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery, 1817](#) (excerpt)  
[Solomon Northrup, Twelve Years a Slave, chapter one](#)  
[Maria Perkins to Richard Perkins, October 5, 1852](#)  
[Contract for Negro Slaves, December 23, 1853](#)  
[John Coleman to John McCue, May 29, 1857](#)  
[A Slavetrader's Letter, February 22, 1861](#)

Week 10: Slave Revolts

Reading: Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, chapter 11

10/24 Discussion: Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*

10/26 Nat Turner's Revolt in History

Film excerpt in class: *Nat Turner: A Troublesome Property*

Discuss Primary Source Reading:

[Thomas Gray, \*The Confessions of Nat Turner\*](#)

Week 11: Freedom Suits  
Reading: Davis, Chapter 14 and 15

10/31 Manumission and Freedom Suits

Discuss Primary Source Readings:

[Register of Free Blacks, Augusta Co., Va.](#)

[Joe Thompson et al. v. Walter Clarke, 1817](#)

[James Ash v. William H. Williams, 1839-1843](#)

11/2 *Antelope, Amistad, and Dred Scott* cases  
Film excerpt in class: *Amistad* (1997)

Week 12: The Civil War  
Reading: Rothman, *Beyond Freedom's Reach: A Kidnapping in the Twilight of Slavery*

11/7 Military Necessity, Confiscation, Emancipation, and War Policy

11/9 Project Discussion

Week 13: Emancipation

11/14 U.S. Colored Troops  
Two-page hand in--explain the experience of the USCT soldier in the war and its immediate aftermath using the assigned documents below.

[The Demus and Christy Family Letters](#) (all)

[Valley of the Shadow--Freedman's Bureau](#) (pick a topic and read all documents)

11/16 Discussion: Rothman, *Beyond Freedom's Reach*

Thanksgiving Week: Reading: Octavia Butler, *Kindred*

11/21 The Meaning of Emancipation  
Two-page Hand in: Visualizing Emancipation--select three (3) events in one place or topic--evaluate their relationship to one another, and prepare to discuss in class

Week 14: Slavery and Reconciliation

Reading: Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, June 2014

11/28          Discuss: [Coates, "The Case for Reparations," \*The Atlantic\*](#)

11/30          Discuss: Butler, *Kindred*

Week 15: Review Week

12/5          Review for Final Exam

12/7          **Case Report Due 12/7 5 p.m.**

Week 16:      Exam Week

**Final Exam in Exam Week Monday Dec. 11, 3:30-5:30**