

HISTORY 227
AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY
SPRING 2023

P. Albert Lacson
Department of History
Grinnell College

Office: HSSC N3611
Phone: x3229
E-mail: lacson@grinnell.edu

Course time and location: M,W, 8-8:50 am, HSSC N3111
Office hours: MW, 2-4 pm
Office location: HSSC N3166

Description

This course seeks to introduce you to the experiences of African Americans from the colonial era to the present. Given such a long time span, the course does not offer a comprehensive examination of African American history. I had to make difficult choices to determine our focus. How did I make my choices? My choices have been driven by my desire to make this course as relevant to our twenty-first century world as possible. At first pass, it may seem that the destruction of slavery marked the beginning of freedom for African Americans. In some ways, this has proven to be the case. But, there is nothing self

Class sessions will be a combination of mini-lectures, discussions, group and individual activities. Regardless of the specific class activity, you must work from the assumption that you will come to class having read the assigned material *and thought about it*.

Reading

The course is reading intensive. At the beginning of the semester, we will briefly discuss strategies for how best to read course material. Throughout the semester, you will be

presented with a variety of different kinds of primary documents that we will use as windows into the past. Below are the required books for the course.

1.

Any assignment listed as a PDF can be found in the Documents section of the course website on PWeb.

ASSIGNMENTS

PAPERS

You will write three 3-5 page papers for this course. These papers provide you with an opportunity to systematically explore a questions that are of particular interest to you through the creative process of writing. I will provide you with detailed instructions for each paper.

COVER STORY

At the end of the semester, you will write a 4-page explanation of the story that your three previous papers tell. This writing assignment provides you with an opportunity to identify change over time, one of the most important tasks that historians undertake.

SHORT ASSIGNMENTS

Short assignments serve as an opportunity to reinforce course content and to systematically explore the implications of the course reading for a given class session. We will use these short assignments as a way to improve your understanding of course

Short Assignments: 20%
Paper #1: 15%

SCHEDULE

Note: “Documents” refers to the Documents section of the course hub on PWeb.

INTRODUCTIONS: Why is it important to study the history of African Americans in the United States?

Mon., Jan. 30

Read: Jill Lepore, “What the January 6th Report is Missing,” *New Yorker*, Jan. 16, 2023.
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/01/16/what-the-january-6th-report-is-missing>

What distinguishes the study of history from other academic disciplines?

PAST IN PRESENT: Why has it been important for African Americans to study history?

Wed., Feb. 1

Reading (all in one PDF in Documents):

- 1) Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Preface
- 2) The Brownies' Book Encourages Black Children to Know Their History, 1920
- 3) Carter G. Woodson on His Goals for Black History, 1922
- 4) Mary McLeod Bethune Outlines the Objectives of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History
- 5) John Hope Franklin Explains the Lonely Dilemma of the American Negro Scholar, 1963
- 6) Vincent Harding on the Differences Between Negro History and Black History, 1971

African American have always valued the study of history. Based on your analysis of today’s set of reading material, why has history been so important for African Americans? Think about what you see as the most significant difference between the early twentieth century and the latter part of the twentieth century in the role of African American history for African Americans.

Fri., Feb. 3

Reading:

- 1) Caleb McDaniel, “How to Read for History” (PDF)

- 2) Short Assignment #1: Identify a noun in the Blight article that illuminates a key point that Blight seeks to make. In no more than one double-spaced paragraph, explain the significance of that noun in Blight's article.

AFRICA AND THE HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

Mon., Feb. 6

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 1, "Africa and Black Americans"

Choose one discussion question from p. 21 of *Creating Black Americans* to present to the class.

Wed., Feb. 8:

TRANS-ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 2, "Captives Transported, 1619-c. 1850"
- 2) Olaudah Equiano, *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* (1789), excerpts. (Documents)

Discussion question #2 from p. 45 of *Creating Black Americans*.

Fri., Feb. 10

- 1) Michael Gomez, "Talking Half African" (Documents)

REBELLIONS AND REVOLUTION

Mon., Feb. 13

Reading:

- 1) Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 4, "Those Who Were Free"
- 2) "Petition of an African slave, to the legislature of Massachusetts." From *The American Museum, or Repository of Ancient and Modern Fugitive Pieces, Prose and Poetical*. For June, 1787. Volume 1. Number 6. Philadelphia: Mathew Cary, 1787 (PDF)

Wed., Feb. 15

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 4, "Those Who Were Free"

- 1) Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, chapters II-VI, 355-371

Mon., Feb. 20

Reading:

- 1) Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, chapters VII-Appendix, 372-426

Tue., Feb. 21, PAPER #1 DUE VIA PWEB

SLAVERY AND GENDER

Wed., Feb. 22

Reading:

- 1) Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race, *Signs*, Vol. 17, No. 2. (Winter, 1992), pp. 251-274
- 2) Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Preface and Introduction by the Editor

Fri., Feb. 24

- 1) Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Ch. I-VIII, pp. 1-48

Mon., Feb. 27

Reading:

- 1) Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Ch. IX-XVIII, pp. 49-116

Wed., Mar. 1

Reading:

- 1) Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Ch. XIX-XXVIII, pp. 117-170

Fri., Mar. 3

Reading:

- 1) Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Ch. XXIX-Appendix, pp. 171-239

THE CIVIL WAR

Mon., Mar. 6

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 6
- 2) Eric Foner, "Rights and the Constitution in Black Life during the Civil War and Reconstruction" *Journal of American History*, Vol. 74, No. 3, (December 1987), 863-883 (JSTOR)

Wed., Fri. Mar 8

Reading Day

Fri., Mar. 10

Mid

- 1) McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*, Ch. 3 (Documents)

Mon., May 1

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 13
- 2) Civil Rights Primary Documents (Documents)

Wed., May 3

Reading:

- 1) Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, Ch. 14
- 2) Civil Rights Primary Documents (II) (Documents)

Fri., May 5, PAPER #3 DUE VIA PWEB

No reading

Mon., May 8

- 1) Reading: Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, June 2014.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Wed., May 10

No reading

Fri., May 12

No reading

COVER STORY DUE: Thursday, May 18, 5 p.m., via email PioneerWeb.