The Lives of the Enslaved

Professor Daina Ramey Berry

Summer 2022

Course Description

This course is a study of enslaved people. It is a course about the ways human beings coped with captivity. It is also a course that listens to their voices through audio files, diaries, letters, actions, and silences. Centering the people of slavery rather than viewing them as objects shifts the focus to their commentary on slavery. In addition to listening to enslaved people, students will have the opportunity to engage some of the most cutting-edge scholarship on the subject. Although the early literature objectified enslaved people and hardly paid attention to their experiences, work published since the Civil Rights Movement and into the twenty-first century offers rich accounts of enslaved life. By approaching the institution of slavery in the United States from the enslaved perspective through firsthand accounts of their experiences, students will have the opportunity to engage a variety of sources, including narratives, plantation records, podcasts, short films, and other media. Some of the specific themes addressed include gender, sexuality, region, labor, resistance, pleasure, love, family, and community among the enslaved.

Course Readings


Course Requirements

- Contribute to nine discussion boards
- Complete five short papers (1–2 pages)
- Participate in at least three Q&As
- Complete a 15-page paper or project of appropriate rigor
**Learning Objectives**

1. To consider the diversity of the enslaved experience based on region, sex, crop, and other factors
2. To develop strategies for studying slavery without compromising the experiences of the enslaved
3. To study a host of primary documents relating the slavery and slave testimony

**Class Schedule**

**Week 1:** June 2: Course Introduction: Understanding Soul Values and the Process of Studying the Enslaved

**Readings**

- Williams, Introduction and Chapter 1
- Schermerhorn, Introduction and Chapter 6
- Berry, Introduction and Chapter 3
- Christen Smith, “Season 1 Episode 5: Interview with Dr. Daina Ramey Berry,” podcast, *Cite Black Women Podcast*, February 2019, accessed on Soundcloud. ([A link can be found in the Week 1 module.](#))

**Assignments**

- Discussion Board One

**Week 2:** June 9: Engaging Slave Narratives

**Readings**

- Norman R. Yetman, “An Introduction to the WPA Slave Narratives,” 2001, accessed in the Library of Congress. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week 2 module.](#))
- “The Limitations of the Slave Narrative Collection,” accessed on Library of Congress. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week 2 module.](#))
- John W. Blassingame, “Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems,” *The Journal of Southern History* 41, no. 4 (November 1975): 473–492. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 2 module.)

**Assignments**

- Discussion Board Two
Short Paper One due June 15
  Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Q&A Session One: Tuesday, June 14 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 3: June 16: Slavery in the Chesapeake

Readings

  ● Williams, Chapter 2
  ● “An Act Concerning Servants and Slaves,” 1705, accessed on Encyclopedia Virginia. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 3 module.)
  ● Ira Berlin, “Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America,” *American Historical Review* 85, no. 1 (February 1980): 44–78. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 3 module.)
  ● Jamestown City, Virginia, 1624 census. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 3 module.)

Assignments

  ● Discussion Board Three
  ● Final Paper/Project Question due June 22

      ● In roughly 1–2 pages, outline the question your final paper or project will attempt to answer. This should include a description of the paper or project you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic, a brief description of your research plan, and a justification for why your particular paper or project is worth pursuing.

Q&A Session Two: Tuesday, June 21 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 4: June 23: Slavery at Thomas Jefferson’s University

Readings

  ● Elizabeth Keckley, *Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House* (New York: G. W. Carleton and Co, Publishers, 1868), pp. 1–90, accessed on Documenting the American South. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 4 module.)
  ● Maurie D. McInnis, “How the Slave Trade Built America,” *New York Times*, April 3, 2015. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 4 module.)

Assignments
• Discussion Board Four
• Short Paper Two due June 29
  • Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

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**Week 5: June 30: Slavery in the North**

**Readings**

• Sojourner Truth, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (Boston: J. B. Yerrinton and Son, 1850), accessed on Digital UPenn Library. ([Link to this reading can be found in the Week 5 module.](#))
• Leslie Harris, “Slavery, Emancipation, and Class Formation in Colonial and Early National New York City,” *Journal of Urban History* 30, no. 3 (March 2004): 339–359. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 5 module.)

**Assignments**

• Discussion Board Five
• Revised Question and Proposed Bibliography due July 6
  1. Revise your initial proposal to incorporate your section professor’s feedback AND
  2. Create an annotated bibliography containing at least five sources. Each of these sources should be followed by a short paragraph describing the source and what it will contribute to your final paper/project.

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**Week 6: July 7: Slavery in the North, continued**

**Readings**

• Schermerhorn, Chapters 1 and 2
• Daniel Horsmanden, *A Journal of the Proceedings in the Detection of the Conspiracy* (New York, 1744), accessed through Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04205.01. ([Link to this reading can be found in the Week 6 module.](#))

**Assignments**

• Discussion Board Six
• Short Paper Three due July 13
Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

**Week 7:** July 14: Slavery in the Deep South

**Readings**

- Schermerhorn, Chapters 3 and 4
- William Grimes, *Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave* (New York, 1825), accessed on Documenting the American South. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week 7 module.](#))

**Assignments**

- Discussion Board Seven
- Short Paper Four due July 20
  - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

**Q&A Session Three:** Thursday, July 14 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

**Week 8:** July 21: Slavery in the Deep South, continued: Auctions and Markets

**Readings**

- Williams, Chapters 3 and 4
- Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (all)
- Maurie D. McInnis, “Mapping the Slave Trade in Richmond and New Orleans,” *Building & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 20, no. 2 (2013): 102–125. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 8 module.)
- Maurie D. McInnis, “Slave Pens, Slave Jails, and Slave Markets,” from *World of a Slave: Encyclopedia of the Material Life of Slaves in the United States* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2010), pp. 463–468. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 8 module.)

**Assignments**

- Paper/Project Preview due July 27
  - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first five pages of your final paper
  - Project: Submissions of the project preview will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.
Week 9: July 28: Slavery in the West

Readings

- Daina Ramey Berry and Nakia D. Parker, “How US Westward Expansion Breathed Life into Slavery,” *History*, March 13, 2018. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week 9 module.](#))
- William Hillhouse, *The Crisis, No. 1 or Thoughts on Slavery, Occasioned by the Missouri Question* (New Haven: A. H. Maltby & Co, 1820), accessed on Adam Matthew Digital. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week 9 module.](#))
- Hezel B. Greene, “Interview with Silvina Williams Thompson Jones,” Indian Pioneer Papers, March 9, 1938, accessed on The University of Oklahoma Western History Collection. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week 9 module.](#))

Assignments

- Discussion Board Eight
- Short Paper Five due August 3
  - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Week 10: August 4: Resistance and Resilience in Urban and Rural Environments

Readings

- Schermerhorn, Chapter 8
- Nelson Allyn, letter to Joseph Allyn, September 25, 1831, accessed on the Gilder-Lehrman Institute, GLC05655. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Ten module.](#))
- Nat Turner, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (Baltimore: Thomas R. Gray, Lucas & Deaver, 1831), accessed on Documenting the American South. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week 10 module.](#))
- David Walker, *David Walker’s Appeal* (Boston: David Walker, 1830), accessed on Documenting the American South. ([A link to these readings can be found in the Week 10 module.](#))

Assignments

- Rough Draft due August 10
• Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first ten pages (at minimum) of your final paper.
• Project: Submissions of the project rough draft will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.

Week 11: August 11: Gender and Sexuality in Slavery Studies

Readings

• Schermerhorn, Chapter 7
• Thomas A. Foster, “The Sexual Abuse of Black Men Under Slavery,” Journal of the History of Sexuality 20, no. 3 (September 2011): 445–464. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 11 module.)
• Daina Ramey Berry and Nakia D. Parker, “Women and Slavery in the 19th Century” from The Oxford Handbook of American Women and Gender History, Ellen Hartigan O’Connor and Lisa G. Materson, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 11 module.)

Assignments

• Discussion Board Nine

Week 12: August 18: Synthesizing Slavery Studies

Readings

• Schermerhorn, Chapter 12
• James Oliver Horton, “Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue” in Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 12 module.)
• Deborah Gray White, Telling Histories: Black Women Historians in the Ivory Tower (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2008), Introduction and Chapter 5. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 12 module.)

Assignments

• Final Paper/Project due August 24