

AMH 3931  
African-American History to 1877/Slavery and Abolition

Spring 2016

T 4, R 4-5 (10:40-11:30 am, 10:40-12:35 pm)

Keene-Flint 117

Prof. Jon Sensbach

Office: 233 Keene-Flint, office hours Thursday 1-3:30 p.m. and by appointment

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Final exam: 29B: Friday, April 29, 10 a.m. - noon

“Would America have been America without her Negro people?”

W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903

This class will examine the history of African Americans through the end of Reconstruction. Beginning with an examination of precolonial Africa, the course will explore the rise of the Atlantic slave trade, the establishment of systems of slavery in colonial America, the rise of African-American cultures, the search for freedom during the age of revolution, African-American religion and resistance, the coming of the Civil War, and the transition to freedom. Through a combination of primary and secondary documents, we will focus on African Americans' active responses to often-harsh conditions and their attempts to gain and consolidate freedom in America.

These required books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore in Reitz Union or may be acquired from your favorite internet bookseller:

Robin D.G. Kelley and Early Lewis, eds., *To Make Our World Anew, Vol. 1: A History of African Americans to 1880* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

Daniel L. Schafer, *Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley: African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Slaveowner* (University Press of Florida, 2003).

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, ed. Houston Baker (Penguin, 1982).

Vincent Carretta, *Phillis Wheatley: Biography of a Genius in Bondage* (University of Georgia Press, 2014).

Marcus Rediker, *The Amistad Rebellion: An Atlantic Odyssey of Slavery and Freedom* (Penguin, 2013).

These readings will be supplemented occasionally with additional sources available online or by handouts. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/>

## Requirements

1. Two five-page papers (due Feb. 18 and March 24) on specific assigned questions handed out in advance by the instructor.
2. Two book quizzes on specific assigned questions (Feb. 4 and March 17).
3. Examinations. There will be one mid-term and a final exam, both consisting of a combination of essay and identification questions.
4. Class attendance and participation. Students will be expected to attend class regularly and to keep up with reading assignments, which average about 75 pages per week. Everyone is allowed two absences regardless of the reason; no excuse or physician's note is needed (except for a missed exam). Each subsequent absence, however, will result in a drop of half a letter grade in the final average for the term (students who are forced to miss more classes because of serious or chronic medical problems or family emergencies should consult with the instructor). The course will be lecture-based approximately two-thirds of the time, but there will also be a number of class discussions in which students should participate based on course readings. No digital devices in class, please.

Your final grade (based on a 10-point scale) will be determined as follows:

Final exam	30%
Midterm	20%
2 5-p papers	30% (15% ea.)
2 quizzes	15% (7.5% ea.)
Participation	5%

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## Schedule

Week 1. Jan. 5-7. Introduction: On the Uses of History

Week 2. Jan. 12-14. Ancient Africa

Reading: Colin Palmer, "The First Passage," chap. 1 in Kelley and Lewis,  
*To Make Our World Anew*

Week 3. Jan. 19-21. Africa and the Atlantic World

Reading: selections from “The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano”

Week 4. Jan. 26-28. Africans in Early America

Reading: Peter Wood, “Strange New Land,” chap. 2 in Kelley and Lewis,  
*To Make Our World Anew*

Week 5. Feb. 2-4. African Cultures in Exile: The Colonial Era

Reading: Carretta, *Phillis Wheatley*

**Quiz on Phillis Wheatley Feb. 4**

Week 6. Feb. 9-11. Era of the American Revolution

Reading: Daniel Littlefield, “Revolutionary Citizens,” chap. 3 in Kelley and Lewis,  
*To Make Our World Anew*

Week 7. Feb. 16-18. After the Revolution

Reading: Schafer, *Anna Kingsley*

**Paper due on Schafer, *Anna Kingsley* Feb. 18**

Week 8. Feb. 23-25. **Midterm Feb. 25**

**Spring Break Feb. 27 - March 5**

Week 9. March 8-10. The Second Middle Passage

Reading: Deborah Gray White, “Let My People Go,” chap. 4 in Kelley and Lewis,  
*To Make Our World Anew.*

Week. 10. March 15-17. Resistance and Abolitionism

Reading: Rediker, *The Amistad Rebellion*

**Quiz on *Amistad Rebellion* March 17**

Week 11. March 22-24. World of the Slave Labor Camps

Reading: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative*

**Writing assignment:** 5-page paper on Douglass due March 24

Week 12. March 29-31. War for Self-Emancipation

Reading: Noralee Frankel, "Breaking the Chains," chap. 5 in Kelley and Lewis, *To Make Our World Anew*

Week 13. April 5-7. Contested Freedom

Week 14. April 12-14. On the Uses of History, Part 2.

Reading: Peter H. Wood, "Slave Labor Camps in Early America: Overcoming Denial and Discovering the Gulag," in Carla Gardina Pestana and Sharon Salinger, eds., *Inequality in Early America* (Dartmouth, 1999), 222-38.

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

Week 15. April 19. Conclusions

**Final exam Friday, April 29, 10 a.m. - noon**