

AMH 4930: History Research Seminar

Black Abolitionism

Spring 2024

T 7 (1:55 – 2:45 p.m.), R 7-8 (1:55 – 3:50 p.m.)

Keene-Flint 111

Instructor: Prof. Jon Sensbach, Dept. of History

Office: 025 Keene-Flint (main History Dept. office)

Office hours: TR 9:30 – 12

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This class offers an introduction to the role of Black activists, intellectuals and everyday people in the movement to abolish slavery in the United States between the age of revolution and the Civil War. The story of abolitionism has often focused on the efforts of influential white abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison, Lucretia Mott and Lewis Tappan while undervaluing the efforts of Black abolitionists in the struggle. While such names as Frederick Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet and Harriet Tubman are well known, the legions of lesser-known African American figures who kept the movement going in hundreds of cities and towns across the country remain largely overlooked. By studying the voluminous collection of Black abolitionist papers along with interpretations of modern historians, students will gain insight into the ways Black antislavery advocates conceived of, theorized and acted upon the goal of liberation for four million enslaved people in the U.S.



Elizabeth Freeman (“Mumbet”), c. 1781

The goals of the course are:

1. To study the causes, effects, and historical context of Black abolitionism.
2. To gain an introduction to the theory, methodology, and practice of history.
3. To write a major research paper using the techniques of the historian's craft.

The course is designed to satisfy the senior seminar requirement for history majors. In addition to learning about the subject matter of the course, students will gain experience in the philosophy, methodology, and practice of history. By studying primary and secondary documents and by writing several short papers as well as a longer research paper, students will become equipped to undertake advanced work in history or in other research-related fields.

Requirements: The principal requirement of the course will be an 18-20 page final paper (16-18 pages of text, plus endnotes and bibliography) of high literary merit based on original research in primary sources on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor. You will present a three-page prospectus of the project midway through the semester of the problem to be addressed, methodology and primary sources to be used, and bibliography of at least half a dozen books and articles. You will turn in a rough draft of at least nine pages of the research paper about two weeks before the end of the semester. There is an additional 5-page paper consisting of an analysis of a selected issue of a nineteenth-century African American newspaper; the specific assignment will be announced early in the semester. There is no midterm and no final exam.

The course is designed to be more demanding than the average lecture-based history course. As a seminar, the course requires consistent preparation before class and active participation by students during class every week.

Attendance: Because class will not be held during several weeks to allow for research time, there is an attendance policy for the remaining weeks. Beyond excused absences for medical reasons, family emergencies, religious holidays and other contingencies, each student is allowed two unexcused absences. Subsequent unexcused absences will be deducted from the participation grade.

Research project:	70%
Final paper	40%
Rough draft	20%
3-p. prospectus	10%

5-page document analysis **15%**

Class participation **15%**

Required texts:

Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolitionism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

Mary Lyn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 9th ed., 2017).

Schedule

Week 1. Jan. 9-11. Introduction. Abolition: “Black Lives Matter” for the Nineteenth Century?

Week 2. Jan. 16-18. Early Antislavery

Reading: *The Slave’s Cause*, Intro and Part 1 (1-191).

Week 3. Jan. 23-25. The Rise of “Immediatism”

Reading: *The Slave’s Cause*, 195-265.

Visit Library West for source demo

Week 4. Jan. 30 – Feb. 1.

Reading: *The Slave’s Cause*, 266-420

Week 5. Feb. 6-8. Analyzing evidence

5-page document analysis due Feb. 8

Week 6. Feb. 13-15. Defining the research problem

Reading: *The Slave’s Cause*, 420-542.

Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*, 1-7, 83-89

Individual conferences with instructor

Week 7. Feb. 20-22. No class, work on prospectus

Week 8. Feb. 27-29. **3-page prospectus due**

Week 9. March 5-7. Thinking like a historian

Reading: Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*, 8-25, 90-103

American Historical Association, “Historical Thinking Skills”

Week 10. Spring Break, March 11-15

Week 11. March 19-21. Developing the research paper

Reading: Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*, chap. 4 (52-82)

Week 12. March 26-28. Writing the research paper

Reading: Rampolla, *Pocket Guide*, 104-55.

Week 13. April 2-4. No class, work on papers

Week 14. April 9-11. No class, work on papers.

Second round of individual conferences with instructor

Week 15. April 16-18. Student presentations.

Rough drafts due (at least 9 pages, hard copy, please) April 18

Week. 16. April 23. Student presentations.

Final papers due by 5 p.m. Monday, April 29.

The Department of History is working to inform students about events and funding opportunities. You can learn about these opportunities by following @UFHHistory on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Facebook](#).