

African American History: 1619 to 1865

Dr. Alyssa P. Cole
cole.alyssa@ufl.edu
AFA 4222
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Online

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-4

Office: Turlington 1012C

Course Description:

This course explores the history of African Americans before their arrival in the United States in 1619 to the end of the Civil War in 1865. It examines the experiences of enslaved Africans and African Americans, their resistance to slavery, and the various social, economic, and political forces that shaped their lives during this time period.

Through readings, lectures, discussions, and research, this course fosters the development of a deeper understanding of the ways in which slavery and racism impacted the lives of African Americans, as well as the ways in which they created and maintained their own communities, cultures, and traditions in the face of oppression. Topics covered in this course include African empires, the transatlantic slave trade, plantation slavery, slave culture, maroon societies, Black military service, and resistance.

Using primary and secondary sources, this course examines the various interpretations and representations of this history, including the ways in which it has been written, taught, and memorialized. Through critical analysis and engagement with primary and secondary sources, this course strengthens analytical and research skills, and the ability to think critically about the complexities of race, power, and social justice in American history.

Overall, this course aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of African American history to 1865 and encourages ongoing analysis of the legacies of this history in contemporary American society.

Objectives

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and analyze the key elements, biases, and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

These general education objectives will be accomplished by:

1. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of African Americans from 1619 to 1865, including their social, cultural, political, and economic status under slavery and the ways in which they resisted and challenged this institution.
2. Analyze the historical context and impact of key events and figures, such as the transatlantic slave trade, Nat Turner's rebellion, and the Emancipation Proclamation.
3. Evaluate primary and secondary sources related to African American history, including speeches, letters, memoirs, and historical accounts.
4. Engage in independent research and writing, demonstrating proficiency in academic writing and citation styles.
5. Analyze the social, cultural, and economic contributions of African Americans, including their music, art, religion, and intellectual traditions.

6. Critically evaluate the role of race and racism in shaping American history and culture, and the ongoing legacies of slavery and discrimination in contemporary society.

Required Readings and Course Content

Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America, 1619-2019, 1e
Kendi (ed) & Blain (ed), 2021 **via Perusall**

All other required readings will be made available through Canvas and Perusall. Class resources, announcements, updates, and assignments will also be made available through Canvas.

Assignments:

Perusall Readings – 25%

Quizzes – 10%

Primary Source Analysis – 10%

Midterm Oral Exam – 25%

Final Oral Exam – 30%

<u>GRADE/POINT SCALE</u> Grading Scale Score	Percent	Grade	Grade Points
934-1000	93.4-100	A	4.00
900-933	90.0-93.3	A-	3.67
867-899	86.7-89.9	B+	3.33
834-866	83.4-86.6	B	3.00
800-833	80.0-83.3	B-	2.67
767-799	76.7-79.9	C+	2.33
734-766	73.4-76.6	C	2.00
700-733	70.0-73.3	C-	1.67
667-699	66.7-69.9	D+	1.33
634-666	63.4-66.6	D	1.00
600-633	60.0-63.3	D-	0.67
0-599	0-59.9	E	0.00

Assignments:

Perusall Readings: 25% of final grade

Perusall is an interactive social-annotation platform that enables collaborative reading and collective learning. In this course, Perusall assignments are designed to help you deepen your understanding of the readings, engage meaningfully with your peers, and prepare for class discussions and assessments. By annotating texts together, you will practice close reading, historical analysis, and evidence-based interpretation of both primary and secondary sources.

For each assigned reading, you must:

- **Annotate the text** with thoughtful comments, questions, insights, or connections to other course materials.
- **Engage with your peers** by responding to their annotations, asking follow-up questions, or offering clarification.
- **Demonstrate critical thinking** by analyzing arguments, identifying key themes, and drawing connections to larger historical processes from 1619 to 1865.
- **Contribute consistently** throughout the reading window (avoid posting all comments at the last minute).

Annotations should show evidence of active engagement: highlighting significant passages, making interpretive claims, identifying historical arguments, or raising productive questions.

Annotations made using generative AI will receive zero credit.

Quizzes: 10% of Final Grade

Several quizzes will be given throughout the semester to provide low-stakes checks for understanding and to keep you engaged with course material. Quizzes cover key concepts from lectures, readings, and primary sources and may include multiple-choice questions, short IDs, or brief interpretive items. All quizzes are auto-graded and must be completed by the deadline.

Primary Source Analysis Worksheets: 10% of final grade

Throughout the semester, you will complete several primary source analysis worksheets designed to strengthen your skills in interpreting historical documents. Each worksheet asks you to examine a selected primary source, identify key themes or arguments, and connect the source to broader topics in African American history from 1619 to 1865. Responses should be clear, concise, and evidence-based. Worksheets must be submitted by the posted deadlines

Midterm Oral Exam: 25% of final grade

The midterm oral exam evaluates your ability to interpret and analyze the experiences of African-descended peoples in North America during the colonial and Revolutionary eras, from the arrival of Africans in 1619 through the American Revolution in 1779. This assessment measures both your historical understanding and your ability to communicate arguments clearly and effectively.

The exam emphasizes your mastery of:

- The formation, development, and regional variations of racial slavery
- Interpretation of 17th–18th-century primary sources
- African diasporic cultures in the early Atlantic world
- Forms of resistance, agency, and survival among enslaved people
- Transformations brought about by the Revolutionary era

You should be prepared to articulate clear historical arguments, reference relevant secondary scholarship, and connect specific evidence to broader themes and processes. The goal of this exam is not memorization but meaningful interpretation and synthesis of the period's key developments.

Final Oral Examination: 30% of final grade

The final oral exam assesses your ability to analyze, interpret, and communicate major developments in African American history from 1619 through the end of the Civil War. By this point in the semester, you should be able to integrate material from the entire course, lectures, discussions, readings, and primary sources, into cohesive and well-supported historical arguments.

This exam is designed to evaluate your ability to:

- Synthesize and connect key themes across the full chronological scope of the course.
- Interpret primary sources using historically grounded reasoning.
- Explain major transformations in African American life, politics, labor, medicine, culture, and resistance from the colonial era through emancipation.
- Demonstrate mastery of historiographical debates and the contributions of major scholars.
- Communicate arguments clearly, concisely, and with attention to evidence.

Rather than recalling isolated facts or dates, you will demonstrate how effectively you can connect specific examples to larger historical narratives, trace change over time, and articulate how African-descended people shaped and were shaped by the social, political, and economic forces of early America. The exam emphasizes depth of understanding, clarity of communication, and the ability to draw on evidence to craft historically meaningful interpretations.

Course Schedule

Module 1

Dates: January 12 – January 17

Topic: Four Hundred Souls by Kendi and Blain — Part I

Module 2

Dates: January 20 – January 24

Topic: Four Hundred Souls by Kendi and Blain — Part II

Module 3

Dates: January 26 – January 31

Topic: Medicine from 1619–1699

Module 4

Dates: February 2 – February 7
Topic: Four Hundred Souls by Kendi and Blain — Part III

Module 5

Dates: February 9 – February 14
Topic: Four Hundred Souls by Kendi and Blain — Part IV

Module 6 — Midterm Week

Dates: February 16 – February 21
Topic: Midterm Oral Exams

Module 7

Dates: February 23 – February 28
Topic: Medicine from 1700 through the Revolutionary War

Module 8

Dates: March 2 – March 7
Topic: Four Hundred Souls by Kendi and Blain — Part V

Module 9

Dates: March 9 – March 13
Topic: Medicine from 1779–1818

Module 10

Dates: March 23 – March 28
Topic: Four Hundred Souls by Kendi and Blain — Part VI

Module 11

Dates: March 31 – April 4
Topic: Civil War Service and Medicine

Module 12

Dates: April 6 – April 11
Topic: Four Hundred Souls by Kendi and Blain — Part VII

Module 13

Dates: April 13 – April 18
Topic: Colored Conventions

Module 14

Dates: April 20 – April 22
Topic: Course Summary and Final Review

Finals Week

Dates: April 26 – May 1
Topic: Final Oral Examinations

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#).

Late Work Policy

Students are expected to complete all assignments and assessments on time. If you miss a class, deadline, or assessment and wish to request to make up the work, you must **contact the Dean of Students Office via U Matter, We Care** to submit an **Instructor Notification** regarding your absence.

<https://care.dso.ufl.edu/instructor-notifications/>

All make-up work or extensions are granted **at the instructor's discretion** and **are not guaranteed**. Failure to follow the above process will result in ineligibility for make-up work or missed points. Please note that the **Final Oral Examination cannot be made up under any circumstances**. Students who miss the scheduled final exam without prior, documented accommodation approved through the Dean of Students Office (U Matter, We Care) will receive a zero for this assignment. It is the student's responsibility to schedule and attend the exam within the assigned exam window.

For issues with technical difficulties for Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (<https://it.ufl.edu/helpdesk/>) [Links to an external site.](#), 352) 392-HELP (4357), helpdesk@ufl.edu. **Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from the Help Desk when the problem was reported to them.** The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You **MUST** e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Course Communication

Effective and respectful communication is essential for a positive learning environment. Students are encouraged to contact the instructor with questions, concerns, or clarification about course materials, assignments, or policies. All course-related emails will receive a response **within 48 hours**, excluding weekends and after normal business hours. Emails should include a clear subject line, your full name, and relevant context to allow for an efficient response. All interactions, whether via email, discussion boards, or virtual meetings, should be professional, courteous, and respectful of varying perspectives. Students are expected to engage constructively with peers and the instructor, avoiding inappropriate language, personal attacks, or disruptive behavior. Maintaining professional and courteous communication helps ensure a productive and inclusive learning environment for everyone. Students are encouraged to plan ahead and seek clarification on assignments well in advance, as questions submitted shortly before a deadline will not receive an immediate response.

Netiquette

It is important to recognize that the online classroom is a classroom, and certain behaviors are expected when you communicate with both your peers and your instructors. These guidelines for online behavior and interaction are known as netiquette.

Security

Remember that your password is the only thing protecting you from pranks or more serious harm.

- Don't share your password with anyone.
- Change your password if you think someone else might know it.
- Always log out when you are finished using the system.

General Guidelines

When communicating online:

- Treat the instructor with respect, even via email or in any other online communication.
- Always use your professors' proper title: Dr. or Prof., or if you are unsure use Mr. or Ms.
- Unless specifically invited, don't refer to a professor by their first name.
- Use clear and concise language.
- Remember that all college-level communication should have correct spelling and grammar.
- Avoid slang terms such as "wassup?" and texting abbreviations such as "u" instead of "you."
- Use standard fonts such as Times New Roman and use a size 12 or 14 point font.
- Avoid using the caps lock feature AS IT CAN BE INTERPRETED AS YELLING.
- Limit and possibly avoid the use of emoticons like :) .
- Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm as tone is sometimes lost in an email or discussion post and your message might be taken seriously or be construed as being offensive.
- Be careful with personal information (both yours and others).
- Do not send confidential information via email.

Email

When you send an email to your instructor, teaching assistant, or classmates:

- Use a descriptive subject line.
- Be brief.
- Avoid attachments unless you are sure your recipients can open them.
- Avoid HTML in favor of plain text.
- Sign your message with your name and return email address.
- Think before you send the email to more than one person. Does everyone really need to see your message?
- Be sure you REALLY want everyone to receive your response when you click, "Reply All."
- Be sure that the message author intended for the information to be passed along before you click the "Forward" button.

Discussion Boards

When posting on the discussion board in your online class:

- Check to see if anyone already asked your question and received a reply before posting to the discussion board.
- Remember your manners and say please and thank you when asking something of your classmates or instructor.
- Be open-minded.
- If you ask a question and many people respond, summarize all posts for the benefit of the class.

When posting:

- Make posts that are on-topic and within the scope of the course material.
- Be sure to read all messages in a thread before replying.
- Be as brief as possible while still making a thorough comment.
- Don't repeat someone else's post without adding something of your own to it.
- Take your posts seriously. Review and edit your posts before sending them.
- Avoid short, generic replies such as, "I agree." You should include why you agree or add to the previous point.
- If you refer to something said in an earlier post, quote a few key lines so readers do not have to go back and figure out which post you are referring to.
- Always give proper credit when referencing or quoting another source.
- If you reply to a classmate's question make sure your answer is correct, don't guess.
- Always be respectful of others' opinions even when they differ from your own.

- When you disagree with someone, you should express your differing opinion in a respectful, non-critical way.
- Do not make personal or insulting remarks.
- Do not write anything sarcastic or angry, it always backfires.
- Do not type in ALL CAPS, if you do IT WILL LOOK LIKE YOU ARE YELLING.

Zoom

When attending a Zoom class or meeting:

- Do not share your Zoom classroom link or password with others.
- Even though you may be alone at home, your professor and classmates can see you! While attending class in your pajamas is tempting, remember that wearing clothing is not optional. Dress appropriately.
- Your professor and classmates can also see what is behind you, so be aware of your surroundings.
- Make sure the background is not distracting or something you would not want your classmates to see.
- When in doubt, use a virtual background. If you choose to use one, you should test the background out first to make sure your device can support it.
- Your background can express your personality, but be sure to avoid using backgrounds that may contain offensive images and language.
- Mute is your friend, especially when you are in a location that can be noisy. Don't leave your microphone open if you don't have to.
- If you want to speak, you can raise your hand (click the "raise hand" button at the center bottom of your screen) and wait to be called upon.

Generative AI Policy

One of the key goals of this course is to help you develop and strengthen your writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills. To become a better writer, you must write, revise, edit, and write some more. Therefore, all assignments must be prepared by the student. AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism.

Work created by AI tools may not be considered original work and instead, be considered automated plagiarism. It is derived from previously created texts from other sources the models were trained on, yet doesn't cite sources.

AI models have built-in biases (i.e., they are trained on limited underlying sources; they reproduce, rather than challenge, errors in the sources). There are several reasons why AI systems can perpetuate discrimination:

- Bias in the training data: If the training data contains biases, the AI system may learn and replicate them in its decision-making.
- Lack of diversity in the training data: If the training data does not include a diverse range of examples, the AI system may not perform well on diverse inputs, which may lead to discrimination.
- Lack of transparency: Some AI systems can be difficult to understand and interpret, making detecting and correcting biases challenging.
- Lack of accountability: Identifying and addressing discrimination in AI systems can be challenging without proper oversight and accountability.
- It is important to remember that these biases can be unconscious, unintended, and hard to detect, but they can have serious consequences if not addressed.

AI tools have limitations (i.e., they lack critical thinking to evaluate and reflect on criteria; they lack abductive reasoning to make judgments with incomplete information at hand).

Finally, AI servers produce electronic waste. Each ChatGPT search uses significant amounts of electricity and water. It is essential to seriously consider the impact of AI use on the environment. As indicated on the [UN Environmental Programme website](#)[Links to an external site.](#), "They are large consumers of water, which is becoming scarce in many places. They rely on critical minerals and rare elements, which are

often mined unsustainably. And they use massive amounts of electricity, spurring the emission of planet-warming greenhouse gases.” An article by J. Coleman, "[AI's Climate Impact Goes Beyond Its Emissions](#)[Links to an external site.](#)," provides information on the environmental impact of AI and its potential for fighting climate change.

With these concerns in mind, any use of AI-generated content to complete assignments in this course is prohibited, constitutes academic dishonesty, and will result in an automatic zero on the assignment.