HISTORY 43
ANTISLAVERY IN AMERICA
[A Writing Course]

This course is a research seminar in which students explore the history of antislavery, abolitionist, and emancipationist movements in North America from the earliest Atlantic World protests through slavery’s ultimate demise as a result of the American Civil War. Abolitionism was one of the most significant and controversial social movements of organized activism in the history of the modern world. The story of its ideas, strategies, literature, and participants is inextricably bound with the history of capitalism, nationalism, citizenship, race, gender, and sexuality. The course will therefore include a deep reading and analysis of antislavery thought and culture, African American protest and freedom movements, personal narratives, the popular culture of antislavery, and the historical memory of abolitionism and emancipation.

This research seminar is also a Writing (“W”) Course. As such, we will devote a considerable portion of the class to analyzing and practicing the craft of writing within the context of historical narratives. Students will have the opportunity to produce their own work of original historical scholarship, to revise and resubmit drafts of their writing, and to make verbal presentations and critiques of their own and fellow students’ research projects.

The semester will be divided into two parts. In the first part, the class will examine writings on diverse aspects of antislavery in America, including both primary source texts by antislavery activists and writers and recent scholarship (secondary sources) by historians of antislavery. These readings offer examples of distinctive ways in which authors use sources—documents, material culture, performances, and other forms of evidence—and historical imagination to create historical narratives, arguments, and interpretations. In the second part of the semester, students will design and execute individual research projects that culminate in a final paper (typically 15-20 pages) and a classroom presentation of their projects. These two parts reflect the seminar’s twin and interrelated goals: 1) to develop a deep understanding of the history of antislavery, and 2) to learn how historians practice the craft of research and writing, using sources to develop significant questions and interpretations.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class participation: Students are required to attend all class meetings, complete all assigned readings (purchased books & Moodle), and be prepared to discuss the readings each week. Thoughtful preparation on the part of all students is essential for a seminar to be a positive learning environment for everyone. Hence, a student’s participation in the seminar will be an important part of the final assessment by the professor.
Writing Assignments:
1) **Discussion questions and research topics**: Each week (weeks 2-8) you will post a question for discussion or a topic worth further research to a discussion board (“blog”) on Moodle. Posts should typically be 1-2 sentences.

2) **Short Analysis of Historical Writing**: In this assignment (about 3-4 double-spaced pages) you identify the following aspects of a class reading (a chapter or an article from the syllabus, required or suggested, your choice): statement of problem or topic, thesis and premise; what sources the author used, whether the author seemed to pursue a particular research strategy. Did the author treat historiography in this reading? Did the author develop a persuasive narrative/explanation based on the particular research/sources? Due anytime between Week 3 and spring break (Mar. 6).

3) **Document Analysis**: The document analysis essay (2-3 double-spaced pages) should be a narrative interpretation of a particularly revealing or challenging document that you find at the beginning of your research. The purpose of the assignment is to allow you to practice and showcase your skills in original historical interpretation. Think of this as the first draft of one small part of your larger research paper. Due: Mar. 24.

4) **Research Paper Assignments**:
   A) Preliminary Topic (one paragraph) and short Bibliography (including some primary sources). Due: Mar. 17.
   B) First Draft of Paper (at least 10 double-spaced pages). Due: Apr. 7.
   C) Class Presentation and Peer Critique. Due: Week 12 or 13.

Note: Students must complete all writing assignments and oral presentations to receive credit for the course.

Course Readings:
The following books have been ordered for you at the bookstore. They are also on General Reserve at McCabe Library.


Note: I have also ordered copies of James B. Stewart, *Holy Warriors* (rev. ed., 1997). This is the best brief survey of American abolitionism. This is an optional reading, but you will likely find it useful for getting an introduction to this topic.

All other required readings for the course will be available on Moodle.

Research Materials & Assistance
There is an abundance of primary-source research documents available for students on the shelves in McCabe Library, in the microfilm and digital database collections in McCabe/Tripod, in the Friends Historical Library, the Quaker Collection at Haverford College Library, and in Philadelphia’s rare book and historical libraries. In addition, Social Sciences Librarian, Sarah Elitchko, will assist us in creating a research guide for the course, and she will make a presentation on researching on Feb. 17. You will want to use her knowledge and guidance when conducting your research.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 [Jan. 20]: Introduction to the Course

Readings (in class):

Week 2 [Jan. 27]: Quakers & the Origins of Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic / The Antislavery (Capitalism) Debate

Readings:

Documents:
- John Woolman, Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes (1754).
- A. Benezet, A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies … (1767).
- A. Benezet, Short Observations on Slavery (1781).

Suggested:
- Maurice Jackson, Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism (2009), 52-137.

Week 3 [Feb. 3]: Early American Antislavery: Gradualism, Colonization, Revolution

Readings:
- Manisha Sinha, “To ‘cast just obliquy’ on Oppressors: Black Radicalism in the Age of Revolution,” William and Mary Quarterly 64.1 (2007), 149-60.

Documents:
- Samuel Hopkins, A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans (1776).
- Resolutions and Remonstrances of the People of Colour against Colonization to the Coast of Africa (1818).

Suggested:

Peter P. Hinks, To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance (1997).

Week 4 [Feb. 10]: Moral Crusade of Immediate Abolitionism

Readings:
Beth Salerno, Sister Societies: Women’s Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America (2005), 79-118.

Documents:
[W.L. Garrison], “To the Public,” The Liberator, Jan. 1, 1831.
[W.L. Garrison], “Truisms,” The Liberator, Jan. 8, 1831.
T. D. Weld, American Slavery As It Is (1839).
Lydia M. Child, An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans (1833).
Sarah Moore Grimke, An Epistle to the Clergy of the Southern States (1836).

Suggested:
Lawrence Friedman, Gregarious Saints (1982), ch. 2.

Week 5 [Feb. 17]: Gender & Sexuality in Antislavery Activism & Writing / Workshop on Library Resources & Research Tools

Readings:

Documents:
Maria W. Stewart, Lecture Delivered at Franklin Hall (1832).
Angelina Grimké, An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States (1838).

Suggested:
C. Faulkner, Lucretia Mott’s Heresy (2011), ch. 4-5 & 7.
Week 6 [Feb. 24]: “Radical Abolitionism,” Race, and Black Activism

Readings:

Documents:
Henry Highland Garnet, Address to the Slaves of the United States (1843)
Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the 4th of July?” (1852)

Suggested:
Lewis C. Perry, Radical Abolitionism (1973; rept. 1995), ch. 3, 6, 8.

Week 7 [Mar. 3]: Vigilance & Resistance - The Underground Railroad

Readings:

Documents:
Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1860).

Suggested:
Graham Hodges, David Ruggles: A Radical Black Abolitionist and the Underground Railroad in New York City (2010), ch. 3 or 4.

Short Analysis of Historical Writing Due. [Due anytime between Feb. 3 and Mar. 6]

Spring Break

Week 8 [Mar. 17]: Politics & the Antislavery Origins of the Civil War

Readings:
James Oakes, The Scorpion’s Sting: Antislavery and theComing of the Civil War (2014), 13-76.

Documents:
“Abolition at the Ballot-Box,” The Liberator, June 28, 1839.
Charles Sumner, “Freedom National, Slavery Sectional” (1852).
Abraham Lincoln, Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act in Peoria, Ill. (1854).
Suggested:

Preliminary Topic and Short Bibliography Due.

Week 9 [Mar. 24]: Document Analyses

Readings:
Patrick Rael, Bowdoin College, “How to Read a Primary Source.”
http://www.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/
Student’s choices of primary source documents

Document Analysis Essay Due.

Week 10 [Mar. 31]: Individual Conferences with Professor

Week 11 [Apr. 7]: Independent Research

First Draft of Research Paper Due.

Week 12 [Apr. 14]: Presentations of Student Research & Peer Critiques

Week 13 [Apr. 21]: Presentations of Student Research & Peer Critiques

Week 14 [Apr. 28]: Individual Conferences with Professor

Final Paper Due at end of the semester. [May 16]
POLICIES:

Evaluation/Grading:
Class participation, Blog Posts, & Peer Critique  20%
Short Analysis of Historical Writing  15%
Document Analysis  15%
Research Paper (topic, draft & final version  50%

Note: Students must complete all writing assignments to pass this course.

Attendance & Communication: The following is the History Department policy on attendance & communication: “Students are required to attend all classes. Unexcused absences will result in a lower grade for the course. If you are having a medical or personal emergency, please contact the Dean’s Office as well as the instructor of the course. It is your responsibility to inform your instructor as soon as possible. It is essential that you check your email on a regular basis since History professors will contact you via email. We also expect you to use email to contact History professors.”

Laptops & Electronic Devices: Electronic devices are a distraction from careful listening and engaging conversation that are essential for a good seminar. Since we will use some ebooks and scanned pdfs for course readings, it’s okay to bring a laptop or tablet to class, but such devices should be closed whenever we are discussing other readings or course materials. Refrain from internet searches, email, or social networks. Please silence and put away your cellphone before class.

Accommodations for disability: If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Leslie Hempling in the Office of Student Disability Services (Parrish 113) or email lhempli1@swarthmore.edu to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs. As appropriate, she will issue students with documented disabilities a formal Accommodations Letter. Since accommodations require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact her as soon as possible. For details about the accommodations process, visit the Student Disability Service website at http://www.swarthmore.edu/student-life/academic-advising-and-support/student-disability-service.xml. You are also welcome to contact me privately to discuss your academic needs. However, all disability-related accommodations must be arranged through Leslie Hempling in the Office of Student Disability Services.