

## American Slavery and Abolition

AMH 3674

Tuesdays 11:45AM-1:40 p.m.; Thursdays 12:50-1:40 p.m.

FLI 0105

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Office Hours: Tues. 9-10 a.m., Wed. 9-11 a.m., or by appointment

**Description:** Participants in this course will wrestle with some of the most complex and haunting questions of American history: What did it mean to own a person, and what did it mean to be owned? Why did American slavery last so long—and why did it end? And how were American slavery and American freedom entwined? Beginning with North American colonization and culminating in the aftermath of emancipation in the U.S. South, this course will examine the rise and entrenchment of racial slavery as a system of coerced labor; its local, national and transnational contexts; the lives of masters and slaves; and the many conflicts—political, intellectual, social and military—waged for its abolition.

**Objectives.** By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Think more historically about American slavery, why it ended, and its legacy.
2. Appreciate the complexity of historical change and human motivation, and the relationship between the two.
3. Speak more intelligently and write more clearly about the themes of the course.

### Course Readings:

Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (Penguin Books, Reprint edition, 2008)  
ISBN: 978-0143114253

Schafer, Daniel L. *Zephaniah Kingsley, Jr. and the Atlantic World: Slave Trader, Plantation Owner, Emancipator* (University of Florida Press, 2013)  
ISBN: 978-0813044620

Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Harvard University Press, 2001)  
ISBN: 978-0674005396

Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (Dover Thrift Editions)  
ISBN: 0486789624

Steven Ash, *A Year in the South: 1865* (Harper Perennial, 2004)  
ISBN: 978-0060582487

Selected primary sources; [links or PDFs will be available on the course website.](#)

## Assignments and Grading:

1. *Two Primary Source Analyses, 20% (10% each)*: Over the course of the semester you will write two primary source analyses, 3 double-spaced pages each. In one paper, you will analyze two or more of the assigned primary sources of your choice. In another, you will “follow the footnote”: find a citation of a primary source (or two) in one of the assigned secondary works, locate a copy of the primary source (in a published book or electronic database, with the aid of a librarian if necessary), and compare that primary source to the author’s analysis where you found the footnote. You may complete these two assignments in any order, but I encourage you to complete them early in the semester. The hard deadlines are **Thurs., Mar. 12 and Thurs., Apr. 16**.

2. *Midterm and Final Exams, 40% (20% each)*: Exams will consist of short-answer identifications and essays. You will receive a study guide in advance with a list of terms and questions drawn from the lectures and assigned readings. You must take notes and complete the readings in order to do well on exams.

3. *Reading Responses, 10%*: For the three discussion days when you are **not** a designated leader, you will write a blog post response, 300-400 words, due on the course website the night before class. The style may be less formal than a book review, but you should still use complete sentences and proper grammar. You may use the post to respond critically to a specific argument of the book, raise further questions, evaluate the book as a whole, or all of the above. This is an opportunity to prepare and refine a few thoughts to share during the upcoming discussion.

4. *Participation, 15%*: Your participation grade will be based on: (a) in-class comments; and (b) one turn as a discussion leader (with a written response) on a designated discussion day.

(a) Discussions of the assigned primary sources will take place regularly. Additionally, there are four days designated for discussing the four assigned secondary books. You are expected to complete the daily reading assignments and **bring them to class** in order to participate during class discussions.

(b) On your day as a discussion leader, you will **individually** write a short (1 p.) summary of the book’s thesis, arguments, and evidence, and a short (1 p.) critique of the book, which may raise questions or counter-arguments. You will print these out and turn them in to me. **Together**, your team will prepare questions and activities to guide the class discussion of the book. I encourage your team to meet together and with me in advance, if possible.

5. *Film Analysis, 15%*: After reading Solomon Northup’s *Twelve Years a Slave* and viewing the recent film based on his account, you will write a 5-page comparison paper. This paper should at some point address: (1) the faithfulness of the film, as a secondary source, to the tone and content of Northup’s text, and whether any interpretive license was necessary or merited; (2) an assessment of the benefits and drawbacks of these two media genres; (3) an analysis of each source as a form of rhetoric, that is, how each engages its respective audience as an argument about slavery; (4) how these works connect to what you’ve learned about slavery from other sources (you are encouraged to reference other primary and secondary sources).

**Extension and Late Paper Policy:** In fairness to other students who abide by course deadlines, paper extensions will not be granted except in extreme cases, and may require documentation. You

are free to turn in a late paper, but with the understanding that the paper will be **docked a full letter grade for each day it is overdue.**

### **Attendance Policy:**

Students are responsible for locating notes and making up all work in the case of a missed class. When possible, please provide documentation of illness, extracurricular activities, family emergencies, and other approved excuses. More than two unexcused absences will result in a drop of a full letter grade. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities request accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### **Instructor Evaluations:**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

### **Academic Integrity:**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor of this class.

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **Week 1: The Prehistory of North American Slavery**

Tues. (Jan. 6): Course Introduction; Race and Slavery in the Ancient World

Thurs. (Jan. 8): The Atlantic Slave System

*Read:* Rediker, Introduction and Chaps. 1-2; primaries: “A Dutch Visitor Describes Benin City”; “Ottobah Cugoano”; “Journal of a Dutch Slaver”

*Question:* How did slavery entwine the civilizations of the Atlantic world?

#### **Week 2: The Rise of Racial Slavery in the New World, 1600-1776**

Tues. (Jan. 13): Colonial Profit-making and the Problem of Labor in North America

*Read:* Rediker, Chaps. 3-5; primary: “Slavery Becomes a Legal Fact in Virginia”

*Question: Was the turn to racial slavery an “unthinking” decision?*

Thurs. (Jan. 15): Slavery and Racism

*Read:* Rediker, Chaps. 6-7; primaries: “Maryland Establishes Slavery for Life”; “South Carolina Slave Code of 1696”

*Question: What came first, slavery or racism?*

### **Week 3: Early Slave Culture**

Tues. (Jan. 20): Colonial Slave Life

*Read:* Rediker, Chs. 8-9; primaries: “Benjamin West Sympathizes with Slaves in South Carolina”; “A Description of an Eighteenth-century Virginia Plantation”

*Question: What were the components of early slave culture?*

Thurs. (Jan 22): **Student-led discussion: *The Slave Ship***

*Read:* Rediker, Ch 10 and Epilogue

**\*\*Blog posts due\*\***

### **Week 4: Forging the Slaveholding Republic**

Tues. (Jan. 27): Slavery, Freedom, and the American Revolution, 1776-1791

*Read:* Schafer, Introduction-Ch. 3; primary: “Boston’s Slaves Link their Freedom to American Liberty”

*Question: The American War of Independence: revolution or counter-revolution?*

Thurs. (Jan. 29): Comparative Emancipations

*Read:* Schafer, Chs. 7-9; primaries: “Virginia Authorizes Private Manumission”; “Richard Randolph Explains His Act of Manumission”; “Citizens of Halifax Co. Petition Against Emancipation”

*Question: Why did some early antislavery efforts succeed and others fail?*

### **Week 5: Regional Varieties of Slavery**

Tues. (Feb. 3): The Florida Case

*Read:* Schafer, Chs. 4-6; primaries: selections from *No Man's Yoke On My Shoulders: Personal Accounts of Slavery in Florida*

*Question: How did Florida compare to other slaveholding regions in the Atlantic World?*

Thurs. (Feb. 5): **Student-led discussion: *Zephaniah Kingsley, Jr. and the Atlantic World***

*Read:* Finish Schafer

**\*\*Blog posts due\*\***

### **Week 6: Building the Cotton Empire**

Tues. (Feb. 10): Slavery and American Capitalism

*Read:* Johnson, Introduction-Ch. 1; Supplementary reading: Sven Beckert, “Slavery and Capitalism” in *The Chronicle Review*

*Questions: How profitable was slavery? How did slavery shape American capitalism?*

Thurs. (Feb. 12): The Antebellum Politics of Slavery

*Read:* Johnson, Chs. 2-3; primary: TBA

*Question: How did slavery politics shape party politics?*

### **Week 7: Life as a Commodity**

Tues. (Feb. 17): Planation Economics and Slave Management

Read: Johnson, Chs. 4-5; primaries: Frederick Law Olmsted, "Labor and Discipline on a Mississippi Cotton Plantation"; "Master Bruce Inventories His Slave Property"; "Governor Hammond's Instructions to His Overseer from MS Manual of Rules"

Question: *Were slave owners (modern) capitalists?*

Thurs. (Feb. 19): **Student-led discussion: *Soul by Soul***

Read: Johnson, Chs. 6-7 and Epilogue

**\*\*Blog posts due\*\***

### **Week 8: Mastery and the Southern Household**

Tues. (Feb. 24): Masters of Small Worlds

Read: Stephanie McCurry, "The Two Faces of Republicanism: Gender and Proslavery Politics in Antebellum South Carolina," *Journal of American History*

Question: *What defined a southern master?*

Thurs. (Feb. 26): MIDTERM EXAM

Feb. 28-Mar. 8: SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS

### **Week 9: Resistance**

Tues. (Mar. 10): Slave Conspiracies, Revolts, and Escape

Read: Northup, Chs. 1-5; primary: "Arrest of Fugitive Slaves: A Slave Mother Murders Her Child Rather than See it Returned to Slavery," *The Antislavery Bugle*

Questions: *Why so few slave revolts? How did some slaves justify violent resistance? Did such methods hasten the end of slavery?*

Thurs. (Mar. 12): Slave Community and Everyday Resistance

Read: Northup, Chs. 6-10; primaries: "Bewitching Master and Mistress in South Carolina"; "Stealing from Old Master, Vicariously, in Louisiana"; "Sheep-stealing' and 'Lying Out' on St. Helena Island"; "Helping the Overseer Lose the Crop"; "Bereaved Father Avenges Himself by Self-Mutilation"

Question: *How much influence did slaves have over their daily circumstances?*

**\*\*Deadline for first primary source analysis\*\***

### **Week 10: The Mobilization of Antislavery and Proslavery Forces**

Tues. (Mar. 17): A Social History of American Abolitionism

Read: Northup, Chs. 11-15; primary: "The Anti-Slavery Movement," from Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855)

Question: *Who were the antislavery reformers?*

Thurs. (Mar. 19): Defending Republican Liberty and Christian Civilization

Read: Northup—finish; primary: Benjamin Morgan Palmer, "The South: Her Peril, and Her Duty"

Question: *How did the rhetorics of republican liberty and Christian civilization shape the antebellum debate over slavery?*

### **Week 11: Assessing the Abolitionist Slave Narrative**

Tues. (Mar. 24): Begin viewing of *Twelve Years a Slave*

Thurs. (Mar. 26): Finish *Twelve Years a Slave*

### **Week 12: War**

Tues. (Mar. 31): Secession and Slavery

*Read:* Ash, Prologue and Part I; primaries: Address of William L. Harris, commissioner from Mississippi, to the Georgia General Assembly, Dec. 17, 1860.

*Question:* *What caused secession?*

**\*\*Film analysis due\*\***

Thurs. (Apr. 2): Lincoln and the Wartime Politics of Emancipation

*Read:* Ash, Part II; primary: Abraham Lincoln, the *Emancipation Proclamation*

*Question:* *Who freed the slaves?*

### **Week 13: Emancipation**

Tues. (Apr. 7): Seizing Freedom

*Read:* Ash, Part III; primary: WPA Interview of Squires Jackson, Jacksonville, FL

*Question:* *Who freed the slaves?*

Thurs. (Apr. 9): **Student-led discussion: *A Year in the South***

*Read:* Ash, Part IV and Epilogue

**\*\*Blog posts due\*\***

### **Week 14: Reenslavement?**

Tues. (Apr. 14): Labor and Discipline in the Postwar South

*Read:* TBA; primaries: Jourdan Anderson, "Letter from a Freedman to His Old Master"; "Not Yet Free"; "Agreement between Landlord and Sharecropper"; "A Freedmen's Bureau Commissioner Tells Freed People What Freedom Means"

*Question:* *What did freedom mean?*

Thurs. (Apr. 16): White Supremacy and the Limits of African American Freedom

*Read:* TBA

*Question:* *Did American slavery survive the Thirteenth Amendment?*

**\*\*Deadline for second primary source analysis\*\***

### **Week 15: Course wrap-up**

Tues. (Apr. 21): Assessing the Moral Debt of American Slavery

*Read:* Ta-Nahisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*; Kevin Williamson, "The Case against Reparations," *National Review Online*;

Optional: Coates, "The Case for American History: A Reply to *National Review's* Kevin D. Williamson," *The Atlantic*

**\*\*Final Exam\*\*:** Wed., Apr. 29, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.