

The Lives of the Enslaved

Professor Daina Ramey Berry

Fall 2023

Course Description

This course is a study of enslaved people. It is a course about the ways human beings coped with captivity. It is also a course that listens to their voices through audio files, diaries, letters, actions, and silences. Centering the people of slavery rather than viewing them as objects shifts the focus to their commentary on slavery. In addition to listening to enslaved people, students will have the opportunity to engage some of the most cutting-edge scholarship on the subject. Although the early literature objectified enslaved people and hardly paid attention to their experiences, work published since the Civil Rights Movement and into the twenty-first century offers rich accounts of enslaved life. By approaching the institution of slavery in the United States from the enslaved perspective through firsthand accounts of their experiences, students will have the opportunity to engage a variety of sources, including narratives, plantation records, podcasts, short films, and other media. Some of the specific themes addressed include gender, sexuality, region, labor, resistance, pleasure, love, family, and community among the enslaved.

Course Readings

1. Berry, Daina Ramey. *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2017.
2. Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: The Story of Harriet Jacobs*. New York: Oxford, 1988. (For younger readers: Lyons, Mary E. *Letters from a Slave Girl: The Story of Harriet Jacobs*. New York: Scribner, 1992.)
3. Schermerhorn, Calvin. *Unrequited Toil: A History of United States Slavery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
4. Williams, Heather A. *American Slavery: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Course Requirements

- Contribute to nine discussion boards
- Complete five short papers (1–2 pages)
- Participate in at least three Q&As
- Complete a 15-page project of appropriate rigor or paper

Learning Objectives

1. To consider the diversity of the enslaved experience based on region, sex, crop, and other factors
2. To develop strategies for studying slavery without compromising the experiences of the enslaved
3. To study a host of primary documents relating the slavery and slave testimony

Class Schedule

Week One: September 21: Course Introduction: Understanding Soul Values and the Process of Studying the Enslaved

Readings

- Williams, Introduction and Chapter 1.
- Schermerhorn, Introduction and Chapter 6.
- Berry, Introduction and Chapter 3.
- Christen Smith, "Season 1 Episode 5: Interview with Dr. Daina Ramey Berry," podcast, *Cite Black Women Podcast*, February 2019, accessed on Soundcloud. ([A link can be found in the Week One module.](#))

Assignments

- Discussion Board One
 - o First post due: Sunday, September 24
 - o Second post due: Wednesday, September 27
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Week Two: September 28: Engaging Slave Narratives

Readings

- Ted Koppel, *Nightline*, "Found Voices: The Slave Narratives," Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 2003. ([Watch before class; a link can be found in the Week Two module.](#))
- Norman R. Yetman, "An Introduction to the WPA Slave Narratives," 2001, accessed in the Library of Congress. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Two module.](#))
- "The Limitations of the Slave Narrative Collection," accessed on Library of Congress. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Two module.](#))
- John W. Blassingame, "Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems," *The Journal of Southern History* 41, no. 4 (November 1975): 473–492. (A link to this

reading can be found in the Week Two module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Two
 - First post due: Sunday, October 1
 - Second post due: Wednesday, October 4
 - Short Paper One due: Wednesday, October 4
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week Three: October 5: Slavery in the Chesapeake

Readings

- Williams, Chapter 2.
- "An Act Concerning Servants and Slaves," 1705, accessed on Encyclopedia Virginia. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Three module.](#))
- Ira Berlin, "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America," *American Historical Review* 85, no. 1 (February 1980): 44–78. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week Three module.)
- Jamestown City, Virginia, 1624 census. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Three module.](#))

Assignments

- Discussion Board Three
 - First post due: Sunday, October 8
 - Second post due: Wednesday, October 11
- Final Project/Paper Question due Wednesday, October 11
 - In roughly 1–2 pages, outline the question your final project or paper will attempt to answer. This should include a description of the project or paper you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic, a brief description of your research plan, and a justification for why your particular project or paper is worth pursuing.

Q&A Session One: Thursday, October 5 - 8:00–9:30 p.m. ET

Week Four: October 12: Slavery at Thomas Jefferson's University

Readings

- Elizabeth Keckley, *Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House* (New York: G. W. Carleton and Co, Publishers, 1868), pp. 1–90, accessed on Documenting the American South. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Four module.](#))
- Maurie D. McInnis, "How the Slave Trade Built America," *New York Times*, April 3, 2015. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Four module.](#))

Assignments

- Discussion Board Four
 - First post due: Sunday, October 15
 - Second post due: Wednesday, October 18
- Short Paper Two due: Wednesday, October 18
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Q&A Session Two: Tuesday, October 17 - 8:00–9:30 p.m. ET

Week Five: October 19: Slavery in the North

Readings

- Sojourner Truth, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (Boston: J. B. Yerrinton and Son, 1850), accessed on Digital UPenn Library. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Five module.](#))
- Leslie Harris, "Slavery, Emancipation, and Class Formation in Colonial and Early National New York City," *Journal of Urban History* 30, no. 3 (March 2004): 339–359. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Five module.](#))
- Wendy Ann Warren, "Episode 170: New England Bound: Slavery in the Early New England," podcast, *Ben Franklin's World*, January 23, 2018. ([A link can be found in the Week Five module.](#))

Assignments

- Discussion Board Five
 - First post due: Sunday, October 22

- Second post due: Wednesday, October 25
 - Revised Question and Proposed Bibliography due Wednesday, October 25
 1. Revise your initial proposal to incorporate your section professor's feedback AND
 2. Create an annotated bibliography containing at least five sources. Each of these sources should be followed by a short paragraph describing the source and what it will contribute to your final paper/project.
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Week Six: October 26: Slavery in the North, continued

Readings

- Schermerhorn, Chapters 1 and 2.
- Daniel Horsmanden, *A Journal of the Proceedings in the Detection of the Conspiracy* (New York, 1744), accessed through Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04205.01. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Six module.](#))

Assignments

- Discussion Board Six
 - First post due: Sunday, October 29
 - Second post due: Wednesday, November 1
- Short Paper Three due: Wednesday, November 1
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Q&A Session Three: Wednesday, November 1 - 8:00–9:30 p.m. ET

Week Seven: November 2: Slavery in the Deep South

Readings

- Schermerhorn, Chapters 3 and 4.
- William Grimes, *Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave* (New York, 1825), accessed on Documenting the American South. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Seven module.](#))

Assignments

- Discussion Board Seven
 - First post due: Sunday, November 5
 - Second post due: Wednesday, November 8
 - Short Paper Four due: Wednesday, November 8
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week Eight: November 9: Slavery in the Deep South, continued: Auctions and Markets

Readings

- Williams, Chapters 3 and 4.
- Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (all).
- Maurie D. McInnis, "Mapping the Slave Trade in Richmond and New Orleans," *Building & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 20, no. 2 (2013): 102–125. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week Eight module.)
- Maurie D. McInnis, "Slave Pens, Slave Jails, and Slave Markets," from *World of a Slave: Encyclopedia of the Material Life of Slaves in the United States* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2010), pp. 463–468. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week Eight module.)

Assignments

- Project/Paper Preview due: Wednesday, November 15
 - Project: Submissions of the project preview will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.
 - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first five pages of your final paper
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Week Nine: November 16: Slavery in the West

Readings

- Daina Ramey Berry and Nakia D. Parker, "How US Westward Expansion Breathed Life into Slavery," *History*, March 13, 2018. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week 9 module.](#))
- William Hillhouse, *The Crisis, No. 1 or Thoughts on Slavery, Occasioned by the Missouri Question* (New Haven: A. H. Maltby & Co, 1820), accessed on Adam

- Matthew Digital. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week 9 module.](#))
- Hezel B. Greene, "Interview with Silvina Williams Thompson Jones," Indian Pioneer Papers, March 9, 1938, accessed on The University of Oklahoma Western History Collection. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week 9 module.](#))

Assignments

- Discussion Board Eight
 - First post due: Sunday, November 19
 - Second post due: Wednesday, November 22
- Short Paper Five due: Wednesday, November 22
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Q&A Session Four: Thursday, November 16 - 8:00–9:30 p.m. ET

Week Ten: November 23: Resistance and Resilience in Urban and Rural Environments

Readings

- Schermerhorn, Chapter 8.
- Nelson Allyn, letter to Joseph Allyn, September 25, 1831, accessed on the Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC05655. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Ten module.](#))
- Nat Turner, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (Baltimore: Thomas R. Gray, Lucas & Deaver, 1831), accessed on Documenting the American South. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Ten module.](#))
- David Walker, *David Walker's Appeal* (Boston: David Walker, 1830), accessed on Documenting the American South. ([A link to these readings can be found in the Week Ten module.](#))

Assignments

- Rough Draft due: Wednesday, November 29
 - Project: Submissions of the project rough draft will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.
 - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first ten pages (at minimum) of your final paper.
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Week Eleven: November 30: Gender and Sexuality in Slavery Studies

Readings

- Schermerhorn, Chapter 7.
- Thomas A. Foster, "The Sexual Abuse of Black Men Under Slavery," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 3 (September 2011): 445–464. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week Eleven module.)

Recommended further reading

- Daina Ramey Berry and Nakia D. Parker, "Women and Slavery in the 19th Century" from *The Oxford Handbook of American Women and Gender History*, Ellen Hartigan O'Connor and Lisa G. Materson, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week Eleven module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Nine
 - First post due: Sunday, December 3
 - Second post due: Wednesday, December 6
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Week Twelve: December 7: Synthesizing Slavery Studies

Readings

- Schermerhorn, Chapter 12.
- Deborah Gray White, *Telling Histories: Black Women Historians in the Ivory Tower* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2008), Introduction and Chapter 5. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week Twelve module.)

Recommended further reading

- James Oliver Horton, "Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue" in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week Twelve module.)

Assignments

- Final Project/Paper due: Wednesday, December 13

Q&A Session Five: Thursday, December 7 - 8:00–9:30 p.m. ET

Course and Program Policies

It is the responsibility of students to know, understand, and abide by course and program policies.

For a full overview of program policies, review the Gettysburg College–Gilder Lehrman Institute Student Handbook.

Course correspondence

Correspondence with faculty and administrators should be formal. Include a subject line, addressee, and closing. Put the name and number of your course in the subject line.

Plagiarism and AI

This program uses Turnitin to check for instances of plagiarism and AI. Plagiarism and papers composed fully or in part by AI will not be tolerated. This includes self-plagiarism. A student caught plagiarizing or composing papers with AI for the first time may receive a zero on the assignment. A student caught plagiarizing or composing with AI for a second time may be permanently removed from the program.

Your section professor will set the policies for use of AI for research or purposes other than composing your papers.

Late work

Assignments should be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time on the due date unless otherwise specified by your section professor. If you think you will be unable to submit an assignment on time, it is your responsibility to contact your section professor to ask for an extension before the assignment's due date. Late assignments will be docked 5% if less than a week late, 10% if one week late, and an additional 10% for each subsequent week.

Grading scale

Letter Grade	Number Grade	Grade Points
A	95%–100%	4
A-	90%–94%	3.67
B+	87%–89%	3.33
B	84%–86%	3
B-	80%–83%	2.67

C+	77%–79%	2.33
C	74%–76%	2
C-	70%–73%	1.67
D+	67%–69%	1.33
D	64%–66%	1
D-	60%–63%	.67
F	0%–59%	0

Assignment Descriptions

Short Papers (25% of grade – 5% per short paper)

Students will complete five short papers. Each should be approximately 500 words long. The purpose of these papers is not to merely summarize weekly readings but to demonstrate that you have read them analytically and contextually. Students have the option of responding to a prompt created by their section professor or to one of their own design. Prompts should reflect the themes discussed in course readings. If you need help getting started, you can complete one of the options listed below.

Complete a thesis identification - Select one of your assigned readings and focus on identifying the thesis as well as the evidence the authors use to support that thesis.

Complete a primary source evaluation - Evaluate a primary source from the Gilder Lehrman Collection or elsewhere. Primary sources must be relevant to that week's readings. Keep the following questions in mind:

- Who is the author of this document?
- Who was their intended audience?
- How might both author and audience impact the content of the document?
- For what reason was this document created?

Complete a book review - Focus on one of the secondary sources assigned in this course and critique it. Keep the following questions in mind:

- What is the author's argument?
- Does the author adequately support their argument?
- Are you convinced of their argument? If not, why not?
- How does this source fit into the larger discussion of its topic?

Discussion Board Posts (18% of grade – 2% per discussion board)

Students will interact in nine discussion boards in this course. Discussion boards are led by section professors, who will provide specific instructions for participation in their section. You are required to make at least one post to each discussion board and respond to **at least two other students**.

Question-and-Answer Sessions (15% of grade – 5% per reaction)

Throughout the semester the lead professor of each course will conduct five Q&As. Students **MUST** attend at least three of these sessions for each course they are taking. **In order to receive credit for attending each Q&A, you must complete a 1–2-paragraph Q&A Reaction within 24 hours of participation.** Note: If you cannot attend three of the five Q&As, you may receive credit by viewing archived Q&As and completing a 500-word review of topics covered for each missed Q&A. **Makeup assignments must be completed within two weeks of the missed Q&A.**

Final Project/Paper (42% of grade)

For the final assignment of each course, you will choose to complete either a research project or 15-page research paper. Research projects are a public-education tool designed for the general population, teachers, and/or students of varying ages. Sample projects include (but are not limited to) vodcasts and podcasts, documentary editing and transcription, websites, annotated readers, walking tours, or museum exhibits. Lesson plans *will not* be accepted. A 5-page paper narrative must accompany the project. Your section professor must approve research projects.

The research paper can be a traditional position paper that uses original research to prove a thesis statement or a historiography paper that critically examines how American historians have interpreted the same event differently and why shifts in historical debates may have occurred.

Both final assignment options require you to ask an open-ended historical question (something that does not have an easy yes or no answer) that you do not yet know the answer to. You will then use the research process (pulling from a variety of resources, mostly primary source documents) to explore that question and create a thesis-driven answer. Regardless of whether you choose to pursue a project or paper, finals are scaffolded throughout the semester. This method breaks up a large grade into smaller constituent grades and allows time to incorporate instructor feedback into assignments.

Scaffolded Assignments

- Final Project/Paper Proposal (2%)

In roughly 1–2 pages, you should outline the main question, topic, or purpose of your final project or paper. This should include a description of the project or paper you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic

(answer the questions who, what, where, and when), a brief description of your research plan (this does not need to be super specific, but should outline how many weeks you plan to research, if you need to schedule research trips or if your sources are published or available digitally, and when you plan to begin writing) and a justification for why your particular project or paper is worth pursuing (what is the significance of this topic? What does it add to our historical knowledge? Are you filling a gap that other historians have overlooked such as considering race, ethnicity, or gender?)

- Revised Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (3.5%)

This assignment will give you the opportunity to incorporate the feedback you received on the first draft of your proposal. In addition to incorporating your section professor's comments, you will also submit a proposed bibliography listing five sources you plan on utilizing in your research for your final product. Each of these sources should be followed by a brief summary (3–5 sentences) of the source and what it will contribute to your research process.

- Project or Paper Preview (5%)

This will give you the opportunity to show the progress you have made on your final project or paper and get some early-stage feedback from your section professor. For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final submission to turn in. For a final paper, this should be roughly the first five pages of what will ultimately be your final submission.

- Rough Draft (10.5%):

For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final submission to turn in. For a final paper, this should be, at minimum, the first ten pages of what will ultimately be your final submission.

- Final Product (21%):

Final Project: Much like the final paper option, a final project is meant to prove that you have mastered the content covered by this course. We encourage you to be creative in your approach to this project, though it should be equivalent in rigor and workload to a final paper.

Final Paper: Final papers should be at least fifteen pages in length. These can take the form of research papers or historiography papers.