HIS 301: Race and Slavery
Course Syllabus

Between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, twelve million Africans were forcibly transported to the Americas. This class explores how one strand of this diaspora developed in what would eventually become the United States. We will examine how people of African descent struggled against their bondage to reconstitute their lives. We will also analyze how the African American identity, born in bondage, changed with the rise and fall of slavery in the United States.

Course Requirements: The requirements for this course include assigned readings for each class, periodic assignments and quizzes on the assigned readings, one paper, and two exams.

Assigned Readings: There are two books assigned for this class: Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (1998) and Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (2000). Both books can be purchased at the University Bookstore. Additional readings are on Canvas and the internet. These readings will be listed under Files on Canvas as they become available. The assigned reading list may undergo minor changes, including the addition of primary source readings; students should be sure to consult the most current version of the syllabus on Canvas.

Electronic Devices: The use of laptops, tablets, cellular phones, or any other type of electronic device is prohibited during class.

Attendance: Attendance in class is mandatory. The door will close ten minutes after class starts. After ten minutes, students will no longer be admitted to the class and will be considered absent. Each student is allowed two absences. After two unexcused absences, students will receive a zero for participation for that day. The instructor will excuse absences with a doctor’s note or legitimate documentation of other emergencies. After ten absences, students will receive an automatic F.

Late Assignments: All assignments must be submitted in hard copy. Unless otherwise specified on the syllabus, papers are due in class at the beginning of the class period. Students who submit assignments after the deadline will be penalized with a grade deduction based on the lateness of the assignment: one-third of a grade per day. No assignments will be accepted one week after the due date. If a student leaves a paper in
the professor’s mailbox, it is the student’s responsibility to check that the professor has received the paper.

**Plagiarism:** The University defines plagiarism as “representing the words, thoughts or ideas of another, as one's own in any academic exercise.”¹ (See the University’s [Academic Integrity Policies](https://osrr.uncg.edu/academic-integrity/violations-and-sanctions/plagiarism/) for further information.) All sources (books, articles, documents, internet sites, etc.) used in any paper or assignment must be properly cited or will be considered plagiarism. Any instance of plagiarism will receive a zero and will be referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for appropriate action, including suspension or expulsion from the University.

**Final Grade Composition**

- Participation: 10%
- Assignments: 20%
- Midterm Exam: 20%
- Final Exam: 20%
- Paper: 30%

Participation: Participation in discussion is mandatory. **Students should be prepared to discuss the readings on the day that they are assigned.** Attendance alone is not sufficient for full participation credit.

Assignments: Students will be given brief in-class and take-home writing and research assignments based on the assigned readings. Students will also be periodically quizzed on readings and lectures.

Exams: There will be two exams in this class: one midterm exam on October 9 and one final exam on December 4.

Papers: Students are required to write an eight- to ten-page paper based on assigned readings and lectures, due on November 1. All sources in the papers should be properly cited according to the guidelines laid out in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, which is available on-line.

**Class Schedule**

**Week 1 (August 21): Introduction**

**Wednesday:** Introduction

**Week 2 (August 26, August 28): Africans and the Early Atlantic World**

**Monday:** West Africa and the Development of Early Commerce

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¹ [https://osrr.uncg.edu/academic-integrity/violations-and-sanctions/plagiarism/](https://osrr.uncg.edu/academic-integrity/violations-and-sanctions/plagiarism/)

**Wednesday**: The Rise of the Plantation Complex  
**Reading**: John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, pp. 72-97 on Canvas (Part III)

**Week 3 (September 2, 4): The Atlantic Slave Trade**

**Monday**: Class Cancelled – Labor Day

**Wednesday**: The Atlantic Slave Trade  
**Readings**: John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, pp. 98-127 on Canvas (Part IV); Contemporary Views of Slaving and Slavers on Canvas

**Week 4 (September 9, 11): Early North American Slave Societies**

**Monday**: Chesapeake and New England  
**Readings**: Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 1-63; *Testimony from Virginia Court Records* (1681) on Canvas; *New Netherlands Petition*, 1661 on Canvas

**Wednesday**: Lowcountry and Louisiana  
**Reading**: Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 64-92

**Week 5 (September 16, 18): Maturation of the Plantation Complex**

**Monday**: Chesapeake and Lowcountry  
**Readings**: Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 93-176; *Virginia Slave Code* (1705) on Canvas; *The Stono Rebellion in South Carolina, 1739* on Canvas

**Wednesday**: North and Louisiana  
**Reading**: Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 177-217

**Week 6 (September 23, 25): Slavery and Freedom in the Age of Revolution**

**Monday**: A War for Liberty?  

**Wednesday**: The Haitian Revolution
Reading: Laurent Dubois and John D. Garrigus, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 1789-1804*, pp. 7-42 on Canvas

Week 7 (September 30, October 2): The Aftermath of Independence

Monday: “All Men are Created Equal”

Wednesday: Constitutional Debates over Slavery
Reading: Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, pp. 290-365

Week 8 (October 7, 9): Creating the Cotton Kingdom

Monday: Expanding the Borders of Slavery
Reading: Claudio Saunt, *A New Order of Things*, pp. 111-135 on Canvas

Wednesday: Mid-Term Exam

Week 9 (October 14, 16): The Internal Slave Trade

Monday: Class Cancelled – Fall Break

Wednesday: The Internal Slave Trade
Readings: Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life*, pp. 245-274 on Canvas; Excerpts from Charles Ball, *Fifty Years in Chains, or Life of an American Slave*, on Canvas

Week 10 (October 21, 23): Life on the Plantation

Monday: The “Quarters”
Readings: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, chapters I-IX; *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, chapters I-VII

Wednesday: Plantation Labor

Week 11 (October 28, 30): Life in Town

Monday: Urban Slavery
Readings: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, chapter XI and Appendix; *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, chapters XVIII-XXVIII
**Wednesday**: Free Blacks


*Paper due at noon on Friday, November 1*

**Week 12 (November 4, 6): The Controversy over Slavery**

**Monday**: Abolitionism


**Wednesday**: The Political Crisis of the 1850s


**Week 13 (November 11, 13): The Civil War and Emancipation**

**Monday**: The End of Compromise

**Reading**: W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, pp. 55-84 on Canvas

**Wednesday**: Black Soldiers in Blue


**Week 14 (November 18, 20): A New Beginning?**

**Monday**: Rehearsals for Reconstruction

**Reading**: Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction*, pp. 76-106 on Canvas

**Wednesday**: Presidential Reconstruction


**Week 15 (November 25, 27): The Rise of Radical Reconstruction**

**Monday**: Radical Reconstruction
Reading: Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South*, pp. 216-264 on Canvas

Wednesday: Class Cancelled – Thanksgiving Break

Week 16 (December 2, 4): Reconstruction’s End

Monday: A Failed Revolution
Reading: Martha Hodes, “The Sexualization of Reconstruction Politics: White Women and Black Men in the South after the Civil War,” in *American Sexual Politics: Sex, Gender, and Race since the Civil War*, pp. 59-74 on Canvas

Wednesday: Final Exam