History 502

Topics in African American History

Professor Schweninger

Examining America’s great paradox—slavery in a land of liberty—the aim of this course is to discuss important issues involving race and slavery in American history. Beginning with West Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade, we will consider slavery during the colonial and national periods, emphasizing the years between the American Revolution and the Civil War. We will ask, among other questions, how and why the "peculiar institution," as it was called, endured for nearly two_and_a_half centuries.


In addition to the required reading, graduate students should photocopy, read, and be prepared to discuss one essay, article, or book chapter relating to each week’s assignment. Many scholarly articles now can be found on line through Jackson Library’s "Journal Finder"; others can be found in books and periodicals on the 7th and 8th floors of the Library. The bibliographies in the books cited above are a place to begin. You should choose refereed scholarly writings. The outside readings should be compiled into a twelve-chapter anthology complete with a table of contents, a fifteen- or twenty-page introduction discussing the themes and contents of the selected readings, and a bibliography.

At each class session, undergraduate students should be prepared to summarize briefly one of the assigned chapters. Undergraduates should also write a five-page-page paper analyzing and critiquing one of assigned chapters.

Both the completed anthologies and papers are due on April 28.
During each class session, following a lecture, time will be set aside for a discussion of the required and outside readings.

There will be a mid-term and a final examination. Both will include objective and essay questions. At least one question on the final exam will be comprehensive.

Attendance is required. Missing more than one class could result in the lowering of your final grade. One third of the final grade will be the midterm, one third the final, and one third your class participation and the anthology or paper.

My office is 2105 in the Moore Humanities Research Administration Building [MHRA} and my hours are Mondays 4:30_6:30, or by appointment.

Schedule of Assignments

First Week: January 14 Housekeeping matters
Lecture: Historians and African-American History

Second Week January 28
Lecture: West Africa
Reading Assignment: Chapter 1 AACE; Chapter 2, FSTF

Third Week February 4
Lecture: The Atlantic Slave Trade
Reading Assignment: Chapter 2 AACE; Chapter 3, FSTF

Fourth Week February 11
Lecture: Colonial America
Reading Assignment: Chapters 3 AACE; Chapter 4, FSTF

Fifth Week February 18
Lecture: Revolutionary America
Reading Assignment: Chapter 4 AACE; Chapter 5, FSTF

Sixth Week February 25
Lecture: Blacks in the New Republic
Reading Assignment: Chapter 1 AAER; Chapter 6, FSTF

Seventh Week March 3
Lecture: The Great Uprooting
Reading Assignment: Prologue, Chapter 1 ISPL; Chapter 7, FSTF

Eighth Week March 17 mid-term examination

Ninth Week March 24
Lecture: The South’s Peculiar Institution
Reading Assignment: Chapter 2 AAER; Chapter 8, FSTF

Tenth Week March 31
Lecture: Slaves’ Reaction to Bondage
Reading Assignment: Chapter 3 AAER; Chapters 2, 3, ISPL

Eleventh Week April 7
Lecture: Free Blacks: North and South
Reading Assignment: Chapter 4 AAER; Chapter 4, ISPL

Twelfth Week April 14
Lecture: Pan Africanism and Colonization
Reading Assignment: Chapter 5, ISPL

Thirteenth Week April 21
Lecture: The Sectional Conflict
Reading Assignment: Chapter 10, FSTF; Epilogue, Chapter 6, ISPL

Fourteenth Week April 28 (anthologies and papers due)

Lecture: Freedom During the Civil War

Reading Assignment: Chapters 11, FSTF

Fifteenth Week May 5 final examination