

University of Montana

## ScholarWorks at University of Montana

---

University of Montana Course Syllabi

Open Educational Resources (OER)

---

Summer 6-1-2020

### HSTA 342H.50E: African American History to 1865

Patrick J. O'Connor

*University of Montana, Missoula*, [patrick.oconnor@umontana.edu](mailto:patrick.oconnor@umontana.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi>

## Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

#### Recommended Citation

O'Connor, Patrick J., "HSTA 342H.50E: African American History to 1865" (2020). *University of Montana Course Syllabi*. 11562.

<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi/11562>

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Educational Resources (OER) at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Montana Course Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

# HSTA 342H: African American History to 1865

---

## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Instructor** Patrick O'Connor

**Email** [patrick.oconnor@umontana.edu](mailto:patrick.oconnor@umontana.edu)

- Per UM policy, email communications between students and faculty must be conducted via UM email accounts. Please use your official UM email account in all correspondence.

### **Office Hours (via phone and/or web conference)**

- By appointment only. I encourage you to schedule at least one meeting during the semester.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the history of African-descended people in colonial North America and the United States up to 1865. Its central premise is that American society since the colonial period has been predicated upon the intersections of race, economy, and society. Throughout the semester, we explore those intersections by interrogating several essential questions.

- How did enslaved people shape their own experiences within slavery and what does that tell us about their oppression and resistance?
- How did enslavers justify slavery, and to what extent did their justifications change over time?
- Why did slavery flourish in colonial North America and the early United States?
- How did enslaved people negotiate their dual identities as marketable commodities and as people with inherent “soul value”?
- In what ways did gender influence the experiences of enslaved people?
- How did free African Americans experience life in the colonies and the early United States?
- How did African Americans achieve emancipation?

## LEVEL

This is a general education elective taught in the History Department. It is intended for sophomores, juniors, and seniors. This is a reading- and writing-intensive course intended to support students as they enhance their strengths in both of these areas.

## GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENT

This course satisfies the Group IV: Historical Studies (H) requirement of the University of Montana’s General Education Program. To satisfy the general education requirement, students must earn a C- or better in this course.

As with all Group IV courses, students completing HSTA 342H will be able to critically analyze and evaluate primary sources, such as texts, pictorial evidence, oral histories, music, and artifacts, within their respective historical contexts. Students will also be able to synthesize ideas and information in order to understand problems, causes, and consequences of historical developments and events.

## HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

- Contribute to every discussion
- Complete readings and assignments on time
- Follow directions
- Look ahead and plan
- Maintain communication with me through email and office hours
- I will send you regular emails—make sure you read them
- Ask for clarification or help whenever necessary. It is my job to support you throughout the semester.

## SKILL OUTCOMES

Students will enhance cognitive and communicative abilities that are essential for success as learners, professionals, and free people. They will do this by practicing the skills of the historical profession:

- Creating context and meaning through engagement with a diverse array of primary and secondary sources
- Generating historical, analytical questions about sources
- Identifying change over time
- Drawing reasonable and persuasive conclusions from limited evidence
- Writing clearly and persuasively about complex issues

## CONTENT OUTCOMES

This course will introduce students to several of the major topics in African American History from the emergence of the transatlantic slave trade to Emancipation and the American Civil War. These topics include:

- The transformation of diverse African peoples into African Americans in the United States
- The formation and justification of slavery as a social, economic, and legal system in colonial North America
- The relationships between gender, sexuality, and slavery
- Enslaved people's responses to commodification
- The experiences of free African Americans in the United States
- Enslaved people's self-emancipation from the antebellum period to the Civil War

This course will not provide a complete content overview of our topic. This is because a truly

comprehensive overview is impossible for such a short semester and because attempting such an overview would divert our attention from historical skills development. If you are interested in topics that do not come up in our readings or discussions, I would be delighted to discuss them further with you.

## COURSE TEXTS

We will critically read, watch, and listen to a variety of sources throughout our course. You are expected to obtain copies of one course book, which is available through the University of Montana Bookstore and various online booksellers:

Barbara Krauthamer and Chad Williams, *Major Problems in African-American History, Second Edition* (New York: Cengage, 2018).

- *Major Problems* contains most of our primary sources. Primary sources that are not in this book will be posted to the Moodle page.

Students should also plan to rent the film *12 Years a Slave* from the streaming platform of their choice.

We will not use a content-based textbook. If you have questions about the broader historical context of the topics we study, I encourage you to reach out to me or explore reputable digital sources, such as [The American Yawp](#), a digital textbook created by dozens of talented historians.

## GRADING

Assignments in this course are meant to cultivate your knowledge and abilities. In order to best support your growth, I will provide written feedback for all of your work. Your subsequent grades will be based on your response to feedback.

## LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments submitted after the due date will be marked down one-third of a grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day late.

## ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS AND DUE DATES

### Moodle Tutorial (2.5%)

*Due date:*

- Tuesday, July 7

### Course Expectations Assignment (2.5%)

*Due date:*

- Tuesday, July 7

### Primary Source Appraisal (2.5%)

*Due date:*

- Wednesday, July 8

### Discussion Questions (15%)

#### *Grade breakdown*

- First assignment (July 13) full credit for turning in on time
- Later assignments graded for improvement and quality – *begins week of July 20*

#### *Due dates*

Note that you will always post questions for Tuesday discussions. I will be responsible for the questions for Thursday discussions and will post them one day in advance.

- Monday, July 13
- Monday, July 20, 5:00 pm
- Monday, July 27 19, 5:00 pm
- Monday, August 3, 5:00 pm
- Monday, August 10, 5:00 pm

#### *Assignment Expectations*

For primary source weeks, each student will post two analytical questions to the forum discussion. In groups of (approximately) six, you will use your colleagues' questions to guide your forum discussion.

Good historical questions provoke discussion. They should be interpretive and help you and others achieve a deeper understanding of the text. They should not ask your classmates to simply recall facts or restate elements of the text. Please see the article "What Makes a Question Good?," which we will read for the week of July 6, for more information.

I will provide feedback on discussion questions by highlighting successful ones and elaborating on their strengths. I will also work with you to understand why some questions do not work. Your ability to show feedback-informed improvement will determine this grade.

### Forum Discussion Participation (20%)

*Note: this assignment is meant to build discussion. It won't work if you post late on Tuesday or Thursday. For this reason, you should post at least once before 1:00 pm on the due date.*

#### *Due dates*

- Thursday, July 9 (I will post questions to guide this discussion and all future Thursday discussions)
- Tuesday and Thursday, July 14 and 16
- Tuesday and Thursday, July 21 and 23
- Tuesday and Thursday, July 28 and 30
- Tuesday and Thursday, August 4 and 6
- Tuesday, August 11

#### *Assignment expectations*

For each group of readings, students will create a minimum of three original posts, at least one of which should be in response to a classmate's post.

In order to make this process meaningful, take the time to reflect on the readings. You must consider your colleagues' perspectives carefully and respond thoughtfully. Please complete your work on time so your colleagues can respond.

### **Weekly quizzes (15%)**

*Due dates (quizzes will open on Sunday and remain open until midnight of the due date, except for the first week of class. That quiz will open on Monday and remain open until Wednesday).*

- Wednesday, July 8
- Monday, July 13
- Monday, July 20
- Monday, July 27
- Monday, August 3

#### *Assignment Expectations*

Students will answer multiple choice questions based on the content of weekly lectures.

### **Roundup discussions and synopsis paragraphs (12.5%)**

*Dates: (times to be decided by your group)*

- Friday, July 10
- Friday, July 17
- Friday, July 24
- Friday, July 31
- Friday, August 7
- Wednesday or, August 12 & 13 (whichever works best for your group)

#### *Expectations:*

Each week, students will join a small group in a Zoom meeting to discuss the week's content. These meetings should last about 30 minutes. I will provide questions to guide the discussion, but you are not obligated to address those questions. I will likely join your meeting for at least part of its duration. After the meeting, students should submit a brief, informal paragraph describing the meeting's big questions, insights, dynamics, etc.

### **Freedom on the Move runaway advertisement analyses (20%)**

#### *Grade breakdown*

- Paper 1: full credit for completion on time (25% of total)
  - DUE FRIDAY, JULY 17
- Paper 2: credit based on quality (37.5% of total)
  - DUE FRIDAY, JULY 24
- Paper 3: credit based on quality (37.5% of total)
  - DUE FRIDAY, JULY 31

#### *Assignment expectations*

The purpose of this assignment is to practice analyzing primary sources. This is historians' most important skill: we read historical evidence critically so that we may create new knowledge about the past. This can be difficult because the people we study rarely, if ever, directly reveal their intentions, interests, biases, or motivations. It's even more difficult when we study so-called "subaltern" people—those who were marginalized, dehumanized, and exploited, and thus left little record of their own perceptions. Often, we find enslaved people in the words of their enslavers. This means we need to read "with the grain"—identifying the obvious or intuitive details of an author's point of view—as well as "against the grain," identifying what the document unintentionally reveals. Reading against the grain asks us to be reasonably speculative. Reasonable, because we use the evidence to guide our conclusions; speculative, because we can never truly understand recapture the world that produced our source (this is especially true for

brief sources like runaway ads, and even more so for those, like enslaved people, who left little written record).

For these assignments, you will find at least three ads (see my instruction video for tips on finding ads) on the *Freedom on the Move* database. You will then produce three short papers (roughly two pages each) that show your analysis of advertisements for enslaved people who escaped.

These are not formal, thesis-driven essays. Instead, they are an opportunity for you to read several primary sources “with” and “against” the grain, offering potential conclusions about the enslaved people these ads describe, the enslavers who wrote the ads, and the context in which these ads appeared.

Conclude each paper with a brief paragraph synthesizing your discoveries. Can you make any conclusions about slavery in the period these ads came from? Have the ads disrupted any of your assumptions? Have they revealed something you hadn’t known?

### ***Freedom on the Move* Essay (10%)**

*Due dates*

- First draft: Friday, August 7
- Final draft: Friday, August 14

This assignment asks you to build upon your analyses of *Freedom on the Move* advertisements by crafting and defending a thesis. Your final paper should be between 750 and 1000 words.

### **Extra Credit Opportunities (2.5% each, 5% total)**

*Due date*

- *Friday, August 14 or any prior date*

*Assignment Expectations*

Students may select one or both of the following assignments. For each assignment, students must provide the following:

- A brief summary or description of the film, exhibit, or object
- A brief statement of the film’s, exhibit’s, or object’s potential significance. What can we learn from this source? To what extent does this source complement or conflict with what we have learned in this course?
- Explicit connections to course readings and discussions

Opportunity one: Write a short (maximum 500 words) review of a film that is relevant to the content of our course. Students can find their own film or choose from the following:

- *The Retrieval* (2013)
- *Django Unchained* (2012)
- *Nat Turner: A Troublesome Property* (2003)
- *Amistad* (1997)
- *Glory* (1989)
- *The Last Supper* (1976)
- *Gone with the Wind* (1939)

Opportunity two: Write a short (maximum 500 words) analysis of a [digitally available] museum exhibit or object that is relevant to the content of our course. Students can choose exhibits or objects from the following institutions:

- Avery Center for African American Research
- Smithsonian Museum of African American History

## DISCUSSION FORUM DECORUM STANDARDS

- Be sensitive to the perspective of others when expressing ideas.
- Stick to the topic and contribute with comments/questions that move the dialogue forward or into deeper reflection.
- Base comments on the assigned readings and make sure to refer to them consistently.
- Engage others in the discussion. Respond to comments and encourage responses. Student-to-student interaction is essential.
- Debate and humor are welcome here, but not at each other's expense.

## OFFENSIVE MATERIALS DISCLAIMER

The topics we will discuss in this course include racism, sexual assault, murder, torture, and other forms of violence. Students may find some course materials offensive. Views expressed in course materials do not reflect my own personal opinions.

The academic enterprise invites vibrant class discussion, which balances critical thinking with mutual respect. Students are expected to take responsibility for their experience in this course by examining their own reactions to material they consider offensive. At all times, our priority will be critical engagement with scholarly material. By continuing with this course, you are agreeing to be held academically accountable for all required materials in the syllabus.

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

All students must practice academic honesty. The work you do in this course must be your own. Plagiarism, cheating, or any other instances of academic misconduct will result in a failing grade for this course. The academic dean will also be notified and offenses could result in expulsion. All students need to be familiar with UM's Student Conduct Code. If you have questions about the integrity of your own work, please ask me before turning in an assignment.

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with documented disabilities will receive reasonable modifications in this course. Your responsibilities are to request them from me with sufficient advance notice and to be prepared to provide verification of disability from Disability Services for Students (DSS). Please contact me to discuss the details. For more information, visit [the DSS website](#).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

*All readings are in Major Problems unless otherwise noted*



## WEEK 1: JULY 6-10

### Monday and Tuesday

#### *To Watch:*

- Course introduction video
- *Freedom on the Move* project video
- Lecture 1

#### *To Read:*

- “How to Read a Primary Source”
- “What Makes a Question Good?”

#### *To Complete:*

- By Tuesday: Moodle tutorial
- By Tuesday: Course expectations assignment

#### *Other responsibilities:*

- Put all due dates in your planner
- Obtain course text
- Familiarize yourself with course site
- Familiarize yourself with *Freedom on the Move* database
- Reach out to me with questions

### Wednesday through Friday

#### *To Read:*

- Willem Bosman, a Dutch Trader, Describes the Details of Bargaining for Slaves, 1701 (31)
- William Snelgrave Describes the Business of Slave Trading, 1734 (34)
- Olaudah Equiano, an Ibo Boy, Describes the Middle Passage (39)
- Narratives of Ashy and Sibell, Two Enslaved Women in Barbados (43)

#### *To Complete:*

- By Wednesday: Primary Source Appraisal assignment
- By Wednesday: Take quiz on Lecture 1 content
- By Thursday, touch base with Zoom group to decide on time for roundup discussion
- On Thursday: Participate in forum discussion (make sure you have posted at least once by noon; post at last two more times during the rest of the day)
- On Friday: Participate in Zoom roundup discussion & submit synopsis paragraph

## WEEK 2: JULY 13-17

### Monday and Tuesday

#### *To Watch:*

- Lecture 2

#### *To Read:*

- Anthony Johnson, a Former Slave, Claims His Slave Property, 1655 (PDF on Moodle)
- Rose Davis is Sentenced to a Life of Slavery, 1715 (PDF on Moodle)
- An Act to Discriminate Between Africans and Others in Maryland, 1664 (PDF on Moodle)

## HSTA 342H: African American History to 1865 (summer 2020)

- Virginia Lawmakers Distinguish Slaves from Indentured Servants, 1705 (66)

### To Complete:

- On Monday: Take quiz on Lecture 2
- By Monday: Post two discussion questions to your group forum
- By Monday: select three sources (created between 1700 and 1774) from *Freedom on the Move* database
- On Tuesday: Participate in forum discussion

### Wednesday through Friday

#### To Read:

- Newspaper Notices for South Carolina Slaves Who Escaped (69-70)
- Lord Dunmore's Proclamation (67)
- Excerpts from the Constitution of the United States (128-129)
- Elizabeth Freeman, an Enslaved Woman in Massachusetts Sues for Her Freedom, 1781 (68-69)

#### To Complete:

- On Thursday: Participate in forum discussion
- On Friday: Participate in Zoom roundup discussion & submit synopsis paragraph
- By Friday: *Freedom on the Move* advertisement analysis

## WEEK 3: JULY 20-24

### Monday and Tuesday

#### To Watch:

- Lecture 3

#### To Read:

- Charles Ball Describes Cotton Plantation Labor (130-131)
- James Henry Hammond, a Slaveowner Instructs His Overseer on the Ideal Disciplinary Regime (131-136)
- Letters Showing Relations Between Husbands and Wives, 1840-1863 (136-139)

#### To Complete

- On Monday: Take quiz on Lecture 3
- By Monday: Post two discussion questions to your group forum
- By Monday: select three sources (created between 1791 and 1815) from *Freedom on the Move* database
- On Tuesday: Participate in forum discussion

### Wednesday through Friday

#### To Watch:

- *12 Years a Slave* (film)
  - You can rent this film from YouTube, iTunes, Amazon Prime, and other streaming services. Cost is between \$3 and \$5
  - If your local library is open, you may be able to check out the DVD for no cost

#### To Complete:

- On Thursday: Participate in forum discussion

## HSTA 342H: African American History to 1865 (summer 2020)

- On Friday: Participate in Zoom roundup discussion & submit synopsis paragraph
- By Friday: *Freedom on the Move* advertisement analysis

### WEEK 4: JULY 27-31

#### Monday and Tuesday

##### To Watch:

- Lecture 4

##### To Read:

- Frederick Douglass, selections from *My Bondage and My Freedom* (pages 1-9)

##### To Complete:

- On Monday: Take quiz on Lecture 4
- By Monday: Post two discussion questions to your group forum
- By Monday: select three sources (created between 1830 and 1861) from *Freedom on the Move* database
- On Tuesday: Participate in forum discussion

#### Wednesday through Friday

##### To Read:

- Frederick Douglass, selections from *My Bondage and My Freedom* (pages 10-18)

##### To Complete:

- On Thursday: Participate in forum discussion
- On Friday: Participate in Zoom roundup discussion & submit synopsis paragraph
- By Friday: *Freedom on the Move* advertisement analysis

### WEEK 5: AUGUST 3-7

#### Monday and Tuesday

##### To Watch:

- Lecture 5

##### To Read:

- The Emancipation Proclamation (254-255)
- Mother of a Northern Black Soldier Writes to President Lincoln (259-260)
- Spotswood Rice Seeks to Protect His Children (260-262)
- Charlotte Forten, "Life on the Sea Islands" (262-266)

##### To Complete:

- On Monday: Take quiz on Lecture 5
- By Monday: Post two discussion questions to your group forum
- By Monday: select three sources (created between 1830 and 1861) from *Freedom on the Move* database
- On Tuesday: Participate in forum discussion

#### Wednesday through Friday

##### To Read:

- Freedmen of Edisto Island Demand Land (293-294)

## HSTA 342H: African American History to 1865 (summer 2020)

- Attorney John Mercer Langston Calls for Black Voting Rights (266-268)
- Martin Lee Struggles to Reunite His Family (296)
- Susie King Taylor Recalls Her Service and Her Life after the War (268-270)

### To Complete:

- On Thursday: Participate in forum discussion
- On Friday: Participate in Zoom roundup discussion & submit synopsis paragraph
- By Friday: *Freedom on the Move* essay, first draft

## WEEK 6: AUGUST 10-14

### Monday-Tuesday

#### To Read:

- Nikole Hannah-Jones, “What is Owed,” *New York Times Magazine*, Jun. 24, 2020 (link on Moodle)
  - Note: In addition to considering the contemporary relevance of slavery, this article references historical developments that occurred after 1865. I do not expect you to understand every reference and would be happy to fill in any gaps.
  - Another note: Like most of the sources we read this semester, this article stakes political positions. It is okay if you disagree with some of these positions. I expect, however, that we will be able to discuss Nikole Hannah-Jones’s arguments by grounding your positions in the material we have studied this semester, as well as the evidence she uses in her piece. I also expect for us to maintain mutual respect despite our disagreements.

#### To Complete:

- By Monday: Post two discussion questions to your group forum
- On Tuesday: Participate in forum discussion

### Wednesday through Friday

- On Wednesday or Thursday: Participate in Zoom roundup discussion and submit synopsis paragraph
- By Friday: Complete final draft of your *Freedom on the Move* essay
- Friday: Final opportunity to submit extra credit assignments