



Slavery and the American South

HIST 4315, Fall 2014

Mondays, Wednesdays, 1-2:15pm, HUM 109

Instructor: Dr. Michael Landis E-mail: mlandis@tarleton.edu

Office hours: Tues & Thurs, 11am-12pm (and by appointment), Hum 360

<http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>

Overview: The history of slavery and the American South is crucial to understanding the evolution of the United States, as well as the maturation of American political culture. No study of the United States is complete without a careful analysis of slavery in the Southern states. Because of its importance to United States history, society, and politics, the history of slavery and the South has been much contested. The war over the *memory* of slavery is nearly as important and exciting as the war that was fought to protect the institution itself – the Civil War. The term “Old South” refers to the era of Southern history preceding the Civil War (1861-1865) and after the signing of the United States Constitution (1787). In those critical decades, the Southern slave states rose to become a “Slave Power” that dominated the federal government, and Southern slave-owners became the wealthiest citizens of the young nation. It was also the period in which a distinct slave culture solidified, white Southern politics and society became formalized, and a powerful Planter Class experimented with versions of white supremacy democracy. This course will explore, in detail, both the world of the slaves and the world of the masters. It will also examine the complex life of “poor whites,” as well as ever-changing concepts of “honor,” nationalism, democracy, and race.

Skills: This course will focus on improving your analytical and critical thinking skills. History is about evidence and argument. There is never *one* interpretation or *one* argument. You will be presented with a variety of views and interpretations of United States history, and you will be expected to draw your own conclusions. Understanding and recalling events and people is only the starting point. More importantly, you should be able to explain how and why events or movements occurred, and how they shaped national and local history. Also, by the end of the semester, you should be able to discuss the use and merit of primary sources, the nature of historiography, and make your own arguments about American history. Dealing with primary sources is particularly important, especially recognizing and using source bias.

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Expectations:

- Check the syllabus often to keep up with assignments and topics
- Complete the assigned readings by the assigned day
- Come to class prepared to discuss the readings
- Take and review notes regularly

Readings & Discussion: This course will blend lecture and discussion. The assigned readings will be discussed in class, and it is imperative that you complete the readings by the date they are assigned. The readings, lectures, discussions, and exams are all connected, and shirking one or more will result in an incomplete understanding of the material, as well as low grades.

Behavior: Talking in class, arriving late, using cell phones (including texting), surfing the web, or doing work for other courses will not be tolerated.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious violation of university rules that can be punished by suspension or expulsion. I prosecute all suspected cases of plagiarism and cheating. Borrowing someone else's words without giving them credit is plagiarism. Closely paraphrasing someone else's work without making substantive changes to the content is plagiarism. Handing in a paper written completely or in part by someone else or for another class is academic dishonesty. Using sources other than those specified for the assignment without permission is academic dishonesty as well. But keep in mind that well-known facts (as opposed to quotations) taken from the readings, lectures, or discussions do not need to be cited. If you are unsure of the rules, see me at office hours before you hand in your paper.

Assigned Books:

Cooper, William and Thomas Terrill. *The American South: A History*. Vol. 1. Fourth Edition. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.

Dusinberre, William. *Slavemaster President: The Double Career of James Polk*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Harris, J. William. *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah: A Free Black Man's Encounter with Liberty*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Topic Schedule

| Date | Topic | Reading |
|--------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Mon, Aug 25 | Intro / Myths of the "Old South" | |
| Wed, Aug 27 | Europeans in the New World | Cooper, 5-30 |
| Mon, Sept 1 | NO CLASS | |
| Wed, Sept 3 | Rise of the Plantations | Cooper, 31-56 |
| Mon, Sept 8 | Colonial Culture & Politics | Cooper, 57-76 |
| Wed, Sept 10 | Revolution | Cooper, 77-104; Excerpt from Jefferson's <i>Notes of the State of Virginia</i> (on BB) |
| Mon, Sept 15 | Case Study: Thomas Jeremiah | <i>The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah</i> , ALL |
| Wed, Sept 17 | A Pro-slavery Constitution? | Finkelman, "Slavery and the Constitutional |

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| | | Convention” (on BB) |
| Mon, Sept 22 | NO CLASS | |
| Wed, Sept 24 | In the New Nation | Cooper, 105-133 |
| Mon, Sept 29 | Gabriel’s Rebellion | Egerton, “Gabriel’s Conspiracy” (on BB) |
| Wed, Oct 1 | Rule of the Jeffersonians | Cooper, 135-162 |
| Mon, Oct 6 | Rise of the Jacksonians | Cooper, 163-190 |

Midterm Exam, on BlackBoard, available 5pm, Monday, Oct. 6 to 11pm, Tuesday, Oct. 7

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| Wed, Oct 8 | The Plantation System | Cooper, 191-211 |
| Mon, Oct 13 | Spread of Slavery | Cooper, 213-231 |
| Wed, Oct 15 | Life in Slavery | Cooper, 233-256 |
| Mon, Oct 20 | Case Study: Harriet Jacobs | Jacobs, <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i> , Chapters I, II, IV, V, VI, VII, X (on BB) |
| Wed, Oct 22 | The Mind of the South | Cooper, 257-283 |
| Mon, Oct 27 | Southern Whites | Cooper, 285-313 |
| Wed, Oct 29 | Sectionalism & Politics | Cooper, 315-338 |
| Mon, Nov 3 | Case Study: James Polk | Dusinberre, <i>Slavemaster President</i> , Part 1: Slavemaster |
| Wed, Nov 5 | Case Study: James Polk | Dusinberre, <i>Slavemaster President</i> , Part 2: President |
| Mon, Nov 10 | Sectional Crisis | Cooper, 339-359 |
| Wed, Nov 12 | Secession | Cooper, 359-371 |
| Mon, Nov 17 | Group Activity: Georgia’s Secession Debates | Speeches posted on BB |
| Wed, Nov 19 | The Confederacy | Cooper, 373-412 |
| Mon, Nov 24 | Reconstruction I | Foner, “The Meaning of Freedom” from <i>Forever Free</i> (on BB) |
| Wed, Nov 26 | Reconstruction II | Foner, “The Tocsin of Freedom” from <i>Forever Free</i> (on BB) |
| Mon, Dec 1 | The New Slavery | Blackmon, “Green Cottenham’s World” & “The Arrest of Green Cottenham” from <i>Slavery by Another Name</i> (on BB) |
| Wed, Dec 3 | The Case for Reparations | Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/ |

Assignments

| DATE | ASSESSMENT | POINTS |
|---|-----------------------------|--------|
| Wed, Sept 24 | Extra Credit Opportunity | [+50] |
| Ongoing | TSU History Club assignment | 20 |
| 5pm, Monday, Oct. 6 to 11pm, Tuesday, Oct. 7 | Midterm Exam (on BB) | 100 |
| Negotiated | Semester Project | 100 |
| Wed, Dec 10, 3-5:30pm | Final Exam | 100 |

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| | Participation / Attendance | 25 |
| | Total | 345 |

“Tarleton History Club” Facebook Assignment, 20 points

Join Tarleton History Club on Facebook. Post something relevant to the course material and explain its relevance and importance (10 points), and reply to someone else’s post (10 points). Comments should be thoughtful, meaningful, and relevant. Once sentence statements are not acceptable.

Semester Project, 100 points

Choose one (1):

- Historians Against Slavery Essay: Research the organization “Historians Against Slavery” (<http://www.historiansagainstsavery.org/main/>). Conduct a phone interview with co-founder Stacey Robertson. Write an essay that explains the history and goals of the group, how the group’s content connects with class material, how slavery exists in the world today, and what people can do to stop it. This essay will require you to do some outside reading on slavery today (newspapers, journal articles, etc. Be smart and use Dr. Robertson as a guide / source). 8-10 pages.
- Impeachment of President Polk Essay: Having read an outstanding study of James Polk’s life and career, you should now be intimately familiar with his actions and motives. Consider the following question: Should President Polk have been impeached and removed from office? Answer that question in a detailed essay. If you believe that he should have been removed, then explain (in detail) what crimes he committed and why removal was appropriate (rather than censure). Same for the other way, defend Polk’s actions with specifics. You should use Polk’s diary as a source, as well as other books dealing with Polk’s career. 8-10 pages.
- Biography and Presentation: Choose three personalities from Southern history that we have or will have tackled in class. One black, one white, one female. They can be politicians, military people, slaves, thinkers, etc. Research their lives / careers, drawing on primary sources when possible. Create a presentation for the class in which you explain your three choices and why they are important. You will need to distribute to the class a list of your sources and defend your decisions. Don’t be afraid to voice your opinion and make this personal. If you choose someone you hate, say so and explain why! The more passionate the presentation, the better. You will also need to use visual aids (posters, powerpoints, etc.) 10-15 minutes. Presentations will be graded on mastery of the material, enthusiasm, use of visual tools, and how you handle questions.
- Museum Exhibit: Choose an important event / trend / issue from Southern history. Research that subject, drawing on primary sources when possible. Create a proposed museum exhibit on that subject. In a “proposed exhibit packet,” explain why you chose the event and its importance, what items / visuals your exhibit would include, and what message you want to impart to museum visitors. Be creative, artistic, and specific. Include item explanations and info blurbs – the closer to a real museum exhibit, the better.

Extra Credit, 50 points!

Go the FREE Project website: <http://thefreeproject.org/>

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Read about the organization, and, with your classmates, create a chapter at TSU. Once your chapter has been created, contact Historians Against Slavery (<http://www.historiansagainstsavery.org/main/>) to schedule a guest speaker. Participation in this activity and membership in the chapter will earn you fifty (50!) points added on to your class total. Must be completed by Wednesday, Sept. 24.

★ALL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS MUST CONFORM TO THE WRITING GUIDELINES PROVIDED ON BLACKBOARD★

Grade Scale

| Letter | Point Range |
|--------|-------------|
| A | 93-100 |
| A- | 90-92 |
| B+ | 87-89 |
| B | 83-86 |
| B- | 80-82 |
| C+ | 77-79 |
| C | 73-76 |
| C- | 70-72 |
| D+ | 67-69 |
| D | 63-66 |
| D- | 60-62 |

Disability

It is the policy of Tarleton State University to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other applicable laws. If you are a student with a disability seeking accommodations for this course, please contact the Center for Access and Academic Testing, at 254.968.9400 or caat@tarleton.edu. The office is located in Math 201. More information can be found at www.tarleton.edu/caat or in the University Catalog.