

HST414 African American History Survey to 1865

Shennette Garrett-Scott
TTh 1:00p-2:15p | Bishop 324

This course (crosslisted as AAS325) explores a simple but profound question: “In what sense is African-American history the story of the quest for freedom?” Perhaps we should first ask, “What did it mean to be free?” In the first part of a two-part survey of African American history, we will explore these questions together as we consider the dramatic changes the lives of African Americans in the United States from the colonial period to the end of the Civil War. The nature of a survey course is to provide a broad overview, and we will explore the social, political, economic, and cultural history of African Americans’ experience within three broad contexts: The Making of an African American Identity (African Origins to 1820); Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition (1800 to 1850); and The Civil War: The Second American Revolution (1850-1865). Through thought-provoking course readings, primary sources (including music, images, and literature), lectures, and discussions, we will explore the fundamental tensions within the paradox of slavery and freedom, which marked the making of “America” from its very beginnings and continue to trouble and shape ideas about “Americanness,” citizenship, and opportunity even today. The course will privilege free and enslaved African Americans’ independent economic activities; Afro-Mississippi history; and the intersections of race, gender, and class within the African American experience.

Method of Evaluation

Midterm Exam	20 points
Final Exam	25 points
Primary Source Analyses	30 points (three 5-7-page analyses at 10 points each)
Group Presentation	15 points
Class Participation	10 points
Extra credit opportunities available	

Learning Outcomes

- Engage in sound intellectual inquiry, analysis, and interpretation of key political, economic, social and cultural events and issues
- Evaluate, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary historical sources and make learned and historically sound arguments based on these sources
- Apply historical context in the interpretation of recent events, ideas, and cultural production
- Develop an appreciation for the complex societal forces at play during the formation of the transatlantic economy and the United States as a nation, paying particular attention to the role of African Americans in those processes
- Appreciate the unique institutions, organizations, and strategies developed by transplanted Africans to America that aided in their survival and adaptation to a new environment and culture from the Middle Passage to the end of the Civil War
- Understand the political economy of the United States during key periods in its transformation from the colonial period through the Civil War

Books

(Note: this list is subject to change and does not include shorter works, like blogs, Twitter hashtags, book chapters, and video clips.)

White, Bay, and Martin, *Freedom on My Mind: A History of African Americans*, with Documents, Vol 1: To 1865, 1st ed.

T. H. Breen and Stephen Innes, “*Myne Owne Ground*”: *Race and Freedom on Virginia’s Eastern Shore, 1640-1676*

Melton A. McLaurin, *Celia, A Slave*

James McBride, *The Good Lord Bird* (a novel)