History 367
Slavery in the United States

Brigham Young University
Fall 2010

Section 1 – MWF 11:00 – 11:50 a.m., 275 MARB

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Course Description:

This course will examine what I take to be the most important themes and developments in the history of slavery in the United States, from its uncertain origins in the 17th century to its fiery demise in the 19th. Our course readings feature some of the best work done recently by historians of American slavery. The lectures will examine the “main story” of American slavery, and many of the readings address specific people and places within that larger story. Much of our discussion will focus on how this attention to individual cases illuminates (or does not illuminate) the mainstream of this history.

Required Readings (all should be on sale at the bookstore and on reserve at the library):


Douglas R. Egerton, Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America (Oxford University Press, 2009)


Erskine Clarke, Dwelling Place: A Plantation Epic (Yale University Press, 2007)

Armstead Robinson, Bitter Fruits of Bondage: The Demise of Slavery and the Collapse of the Confederacy, 1861-1865 (University of Virginia Press, 2004)
Optional (see below under “Group Presentations”) Readings (all on reserve at the library):


Assignment and Grading Breakdown (for exam and due dates see class schedule below):

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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<td>Class participation</td>
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<td>Reading Responses</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam #1</td>
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<td>Research paper and such things</td>
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Class Participation and In-Class Reading Responses

This part of your grade is based on your attention to lectures and especially your contribution to our discussions of the assigned readings. The discussions will be an important part of the class and you all bear a responsibility to make them work. We will discuss the core issues involved in the readings rather than the details, so you should read for argument more than detail. I will grade your participation by looking at its general pattern across the semester. Thus one or two absences will not hurt you very much, but more than that will, for if you are not in class you obviously cannot participate. What you say will matter at least as much as how much you talk.

You should bring the readings to class with you on the days indicated. It will be on days we discuss readings that you will write brief responses to the readings. This should prepare you for discussion as well as reward you for engaging with the readings. These will be done in the first 5 minutes of class on those days; if you are late and miss them you cannot make them up.

Research papers and other such things

1) **GROUP PRESENTATIONS**: History Teaching majors are required to do this option and other majors should probably not; I could be convinced to let History Teaching majors out and others in, but the groups are capped at 4 members each. It involves joining one of two groups
The topics being Indian slavery / slave trade or Denmark Vesey’s conspiracy) on the first day of class. The assignments relative to this option that all three groups will do are:

A. Giving a lecture and leading a discussion for the whole class (for the relevant dates see the class schedule below). This will consist in part of laying out the key contents and argument of the readings in question for the benefit of those who have not read it. Each group will also lead a discussion of the topic and how it relates to the course. Both the lecture and the discussion will work best if you successfully connect the subject matter to the main themes and questions of the course. I will grade you for this exercise based on how well you contribute to the presentation and discussion. You will also help in grading by rating the contributions of every member of your group. This classroom activity will comprise 10% of your overall class grade.

B. A detailed lesson plan for how you would teach the subject matter involved for a non-college classroom. Specify what educational level you are tailoring these lesson plans for, and of course make them appropriate for that grade level. These lesson plans should be detailed and well-thought-out, and have to represent individual rather than group work. The lesson plan is due one week after your group presents in class. It is worth 15% of your overall class grade.

2) **RESEARCH PAPER**: This should require less description as you have likely done its like before, researching a particular question (that’s better than just researching “a topic”) from a variety of relevant sources both primary and secondary. The assignments relative to this option are:

A. A prospectus for your paper. The prospectus should lay out your question (not just a topic), then discuss how the sources proposed in the bibliography will help you answer that question. You do not need to provide even a tentative answer – just the question and how you propose to answer it. The prospectus is to be no shorter than 2 and no longer than 3 pages, not including the (required) bibliography with full cites of the sources involved. A note on sources: I am very skeptical of secondary sources from the internet. Past students have been overly reliant on these sources, which are by definition unreliable. **The prospectus will be due Oct. 8.** It will comprise 5% of your total course grade.

B. The final paper, which is to be no shorter than 8 and no longer than 11 pages. It must include either a bibliography (which would not be included in the page count) or full cites the first time you cite every source (short cites throughout are acceptable if you have a bibliography). **This paper will be due Nov. 29.** It will comprise 20% of your total course grade.

Here is a list of databases at BYU’s library website (lib.byu.edu) that relate to slavery; one or more of these could be invaluable to you in your research:

- **19th Century U.S. Newspaper Digital Archive**;
- **African American Music Reference**;
- **American Civil War Letters and Diaries**;
- **American Civil War Research Database**;
- **American Memory**;
Historical collections of the National Digital Library; American Song; Sabin Americana Digital Archive; Slavery and Anti-Slavery; Slavery, Abolition and Social Justice, 1490-2007

There are of course a multitude of other primary source collections online; some that I would recommend you investigate include:  
http://atlanticslaverydebate.berkeley.edu  
http://docsouth.unc.edu/  
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/

On all writing assignments, felicity and especially clarity of style matter, along with the logic and force of your argumentation. I will consider the quality of the writing as part of the grade. (See the writing hints at the end of this syllabus for what is expected.)

Staying within the page limit also matters; in doing so, you must use normal sized fonts and normal (1-inch) margins, and you are to double-space. You must number your pages, and be sure to staple them (no fancy folders desired, thanks).

Turning in all the written assignments on time is important: the late penalty for each is one half-grade per class day late. Papers turned in any time after the start of class on the due date will be considered one day late. So if a paper is due on a Monday, from the beginning of class that day until the beginning of class on Wednesday any paper turned in will be considered one date late, and so forth. And turning them in means giving me a hard copy – emailing me a paper is not turning it in. But emailing me outlines or drafts is highly recommended in the weeks leading up to the paper’s due date. (I will not read drafts within 2 class days of the due date, however.) You will likely do much better if you do this.

You have all signed the honor code, and I am not accusing anyone of cheating in advance, of course. But sad experience has made the following disclaimer necessary: while I do not care what form of citation you use (parenthetical references, footnotes, or endnotes), I do require that you cite your source every time you use words or ideas that are not your own. When in doubt, cite your sources – err on the side of too many citations rather than too few. If you have any questions about plagiarism and associated offenses, and even if you don’t, I recommend you review the definitions and examples provided at:  
http://campuslife.byu.edu/HONORCODE/Honor_code.htm#HONESTY. If I detect academic dishonesty on any written assignment or exam, the offender will face a range of sanctions ranging from a zero on the assignment to failing the course.

Exams
The exams will feature essays of various lengths. You will take the midterms in the Testing Center and the final in our usual classroom. The final will feature a comprehensive essay as well as non-comprehensive shorter essays. There will be only one makeup time for the midterms. If you miss one and have an excuse, you are welcome to make it up on Wed., Dec. 13, time and place TBA.
Preventing Sexual Discrimination or Harassment

Sexual discrimination or harassment (including student-to-student harassment) is prohibited both by the law and by Brigham Young University policy. If you feel you are being subjected to sexual discrimination or harassment, please bring your concerns to the professor. Alternatively, you may lodge a complaint with the Equal Employment Office (D-240C ASB) or with the Honor Code Office (4440).

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this course, you should get in touch with the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (1520 WSC). This office can evaluate your disability and assist the professor in arranging for reasonable accommodations.

Schedule of Classes and Readings (which can change at any time – stay posted):

Week 1:

Aug. 30      Introduction
Sept. 1      The Atlantic Plantation Complex
Sept. 3      The beginnings of British plantation slavery

Week 2:

Sept. 6      NO CLASS – Labor Day holiday
Sept. 8      Servitude in early Virginia
Sept. 10     The origins of slavery (and racism?) in the Chesapeake

Week 3:

Sept. 13     Early slavery in the Northern colonies
              READ by 9/13: Manegold, Ten Hills Farm, xi-96
Sept. 15     The rise of slavery in the Lowcountry
Sept. 17     The Atlantic slave trade to North America and its implications
Week 4:

Sept. 20  GROUP 1 PRESENTATION:
Slavery in Indian Country
The Indian slave trade

Sept. 22  From societies with slaves to slave societies

Sept. 24  The rise of slave societies, continued
READ by 9/24: Manegold, Ten Hills Farm, 97-155

Week 5:

Sept. 27  Slave resistance in the 18th century

** 9/27: Group 1 Lesson Plan due **

Sept. 29  Comparative questions of slave treatment
READ by 9/29: Manegold, Ten Hills Farm, 125-194

Oct. 1  Slavery and antislavery in the 18th-century Northern colonies

** MIDTERM #1: Take in Testing Center anytime (although during our class time is not recommended!) Thurs. Sept. 30 or Fri. Oct. 1 **

Week 6:

Oct. 4  Slavery and the American Revolution (SAR), part I: 10 Hills Farm
READ by 10/4: Manegold, Ten Hills Farm, 197-265

Oct. 6  SAR, part II: Early abolitionism
READ by 10/6: Kornblith, Slavery and Sectional Strife, xi-11, 75-78

Oct. 8  SAR, part III: Abolition and anti-abolition
READ by 10/8: Kornblith, Slavery and Sectional Strife, 11-31, 78-104

** 10/8: RESEARCH PAPER PROSPECTUS DUE **

Week 7:

Oct. 11  SAR, part IV: Black folks’ perspectives, part I
READ by 10/11: Egerton, Death or Liberty, 3-92

Oct. 13  SAR, part V: Black folks’ perspectives, part II
READ by 10/13: Egerton, Death or Liberty, 93-147, 194-221
Oct. 15  Slavery and the Early National North and South  
READ by 10/15: Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 148-193

**Week 8:**

Oct. 18  Slavery and the Constitution, part I  
READ by 10/18: Kornblith, *Slavery and Sectional Strife*, 31-37, 104-113

Oct. 20  Slavery and the Constitution, part II  
READ by 10/20: Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 222-247

Oct. 22  Slavery and politics: 1780s-1800s  

**Week 9:**

Oct. 25  Slavery and politics: 1800s-1810s  

Oct. 27  The Missouri Crisis, part I  

Oct. 28-29  Conference: “Assisting Victims of Human Trafficking Through Research, Policy, and Practice” – for information and to register, go to [http://swevents.byu.edu/](http://swevents.byu.edu/)

**Week 10:**

Nov. 1  The Missouri Crisis, part II

Nov. 3  The Cotton Revolution and the Great Migration  
READ by 11/3: Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 248-270

Nov. 5  NO CLASS (catch your breath, focus on the midterm, etc.)

** ** MIDTERM #2: Take in Testing Center anytime between Wed. Nov. 3 (although during class time is not recommended!) and Fri. Nov. 5**

**Week 11:**

Nov. 8  Slave resistance in the early republic  
READ by 11/8: Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 271-281

Nov. 10  **GROUP 2 PRESENTATION: Denmark Vesey**

Nov. 12  The rise and impact of antebellum abolitionism
Slavery and politics: 1830s

Week 12:

Nov. 15 The Jones’ View, part I
READ by 11/15: Clarke, Dwelling Place, ix-96

Nov. 17 The Jones’ View, part II
READ by 11/17: Clarke, Dwelling Place, 97-232

** 11/17: Group 2 Lesson Plan due **

Nov. 19 Slavery and politics: 1840s-1850s

Week 13:

Nov. 22 Slavery and politics: 1850s

Tues., Nov. 23 The Jones’ View, part III
READ by 11/23: Clarke, Dwelling Place, 233-396

Nov. 24-26 NO CLASS – Thanksgiving holiday

Week 14:

Nov. 29 Slavery and Southern Secession, part I

** 11/29: RESEARCH PAPER DUE **

Dec. 1 Slavery and Southern Secession, part II
READ by 12/1: Clarke, Dwelling Place, 397-407; Robinson, Bitter Fruits, vii-36

Dec. 3 Slavery and the Civil War, part I
READ by 12/3: Robinson, Bitter Fruits, 37-133

Week 15:

Dec. 6 Slavery and the Civil War, part II
READ by 12/6: Robinson, Bitter Fruits, 134-219; Clarke, Dwelling Place, 408-442

Dec. 8 The End (of sorts)
READ by 12/8: Robinson, Bitter Fruits, 220-283; Clarke, Dwelling Place, 443-465

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, December 15, 2:30 - 5:30 p.m.
HELPFUL WRITING HINTS

Clarity and felicity of expression are things that I, your gentle reader, value highly. I know “this is not an English course, blah, blah,” but still, let me stress this point. Writing skills are among those I hope you all will hone in this course, so I hope you’ll take these tips to heart. The WRITING CENTER (1010 JKHB, 422-4306) can often also help with these and other matters, and you could benefit from showing them a draft before you turn it in. Be assured there is no stigma attached to getting help on writing – we all need help, or we’d be living large off our book sales profits. To this end, here are some specific suggestions:

1) Strive for simplicity in your writing. Short, direct sentences and phrases are much better than high-falutin’ fancy-pants oratory, even in an academic paper. Trying to be fancier than necessary will almost always earn you an “AWK” (for awkward). Most problems can be avoided by being simple and direct.

2) Remember that the point of language is to communicate, not to obscure, meaning. Read back over what you’ve written to make sure you are saying what you think you are saying. Don’t assume a spell check can catch everything – it just doesn’t work that way. You may feel like a fruitcake when you do it, but if you read a paper out loud you can often catch some of the most egregious or nonsensical errors.

3) You should also enlist someone else to proofread and read for meaning, to make sure you are not leaving unsaid what needs to be said. I would also be delighted to read over drafts, outlines, etc., to help in this and other regards. (I will not read and comment on papers sent to me within two working days before a paper is due, however.)

4) Having someone else read your paper will also help you clarify points that you think are self-evident because you are closer to the subject. Keep in mind that you should assume your audience knows next to nothing about the subject.

5) Be sure your paper is a coherent essay with an introduction, body, and conclusion. You should present your argument clearly and then support it with relevant evidence. Be sure, as you construct and then read back over the essay, that one point leads logically to another, you transition between points well, etc. Logical presentation and flow will really help you present your points clearly (if you don’t, why bother?).

6) Strive for coherence within as well as between paragraphs. Remember the basics: each paragraph should have ONE (1) main idea, introduced well by a topic sentence. Topic sentences can also help in transitions between paragraphs / main ideas. The inventor of the paragraph sought to bless all our lives; honor his / her legacy in your writing.
Here are some very common problems that I trust you will look out for to keep me, your grader, friendly to your cause:

1) **The passive voice**: Avoid this like the plague. The passive voice is when the subject of your sentence has something “done to” it/him/her. A classic example of the passive voice is used in government, because it obscures the actor: “Mistakes were made.” The active voice is much better and clearer: “The CIA [or whoever] made mistakes.”

2) **Noun-verb disagreement**: When the noun is plural or the verb refers to more than one noun, the verb should be plural. Same with singular. And throughout the *whole sentence*.

3) **Incomplete / run-on sentences**: Having a natural voice in writing doesn’t *always* mean you write like you talk. Each sentence should have a noun and a verb. (For good examples of incomplete sentences, see the second and third sentences just above in #2.) Perhaps a more common problem is the run-on sentence, which can often be avoided simply by keeping your sentences simple and direct.

4) **Tense inconsistency**: Oh, the whiplash I’ve gotten over the years reading sentences or paragraphs that switch from the past to the present tense and then back again! The easiest way to avoid this in a history paper is to write in the past tense for past events. But whatever tense you choose to describe past events, *pick a tense and stick with it!*

5) **Apostrophe and quotation mark confusion**: Caused by confusing possessives with plurals. The plural does not require an apostrophe, while the possessive does. The same goes for plural possessives. Keep these things straight. So for instance, you are taking Matt Mason’s course, but are not Masons yourselves. But if you go over to the Masons’ house, . . . you get the picture, I hope. Related problems come when people aren’t clear on how we use quotation marks in the United States. Get clear on this.

6) **Overuse / underuse of the comma**: I thought this was basic stuff before I started grading student papers. Be sure you know the rules on when to use and not use a comma.

In short, English can be a nutty language, and it takes some work to keep it from being an instrument of torture for your reader. So while this is far from an exhaustive writing guide, from a purely selfish perspective I hope it will keep you from repeating some of the mistakes that have put me on the rack in times past.