

Macalester College  
Peter Rachleff  
History/AMST 224-01

Old Main 316  
MWF 9:40AM - 10:40AM

X 6371

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[rachleff@macalester.edu](mailto:rachleff@macalester.edu)  
Old Main 010

### AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY: SLAVERY, EMANCIPATION, AND RECONSTRUCTION

What does it mean to engage “Slavery, Emancipation, and Reconstruction “ within a specifically *historical* framework? First and foremost, it means that we must be attentive to *change over time*. How did slavery begin? What culture and experiences did Africans bring with them into the fulcrum of slavery in the New World? How did slavery change as the economy, polity, and society developed? How did it change as “the colonies” became the United States and shifted geographically from the upper south to the southwest? We must also pay attention to *context*. How did, first, the transatlantic slave trade, and, then, the domestic slave trade shape and reshape the lives, communities, and culture of slaves? How did the growing of tobacco shape slavery (and, of course, how did slavery shape the growing of tobacco)? How did the growing of rice, indigo, hemp, cotton, and sugar cane shape life differently? How were slaves’ lives shaped by the system within which they lived? How was their ability to create and maintain a culture, to resist, to attain freedom shaped by these contexts? And how did slaves create *agency* for themselves in constructing families, communities, cultures, and, ultimately, resistance? How did these experiences shape the possibilities and limits of freedom in the Civil War and the post-war periods?

We will also be attentive to the *historiography* of slavery, emancipation, and reconstruction. How did historians change the questions they asked, the sources they pursued, and the arguments they constructed as they engaged this important element of our country’s history? How have popular *memories* of slavery, the war, and reconstruction been constructed, and what is their relationship to the scholarship produced by historians? These subjects have generated some of the most impassioned, insightful, and best written scholarship of any topic in U.S. history. These events, these stories, these memories, these representations of the past continue to shape the present, our present, and they continue to be contested in the present. This ongoing dance joining the past and the present will loom over all our conversations.

This will not be an easy course, despite the high quality of the readings. Much of the material will be difficult to engage, to understand how our lives have been shaped by this painful history, let alone how our country’s history has been shaped. We will often be uncomfortable, and it will take courage and compassion to work through this discomfort. While I will lecture from time to time, most of our in-class work will rest on discussions, so it is imperative that you come to class, faithfully, having done the reading and considered the questions I will post (pay attention to your email!), and with your own questions and comments in hand, prepared to participate. It is vital that we construct and maintain a community in our classroom where we can admit what we do not know, ask hard questions, and listen respectfully to each other.

Your class participation will be critical to the success of this class, and it will be a significant element of your grade. Grades will also depend on three paper assignments, all of which will involve the use of course readings, provided documents, and class discussions, with no expectation of additional research. I will welcome revised submissions of the first and second papers, with new grades, and I am also open to collaborative work on paper assignments. I’m going to ask you to make a serious commitment to this course, to work hard, and to risk being uncomfortable, but I am also going to provide you with support and opportunities to succeed.

The following books are available at the college bookstore and should be available on two hour reserve at the library:

Vincent Harding, THERE IS A RIVER  
 Marcus Rediker, THE SLAVE SHIP  
 Michael Gomez, EXCHANGING OUR COUNTRY MARKS  
 Ira Berlin, MANY THOUSANDS GONE  
 Walter Johnson, SOUL BY SOUL  
 Tiya Miles, TIES THAT BIND  
 Eric Foner, FOREVER FREE  
 David Blight, RACE AND REUNION

There will be additional readings and documents provided as pdf's or through links.

Daily syllabus (subject to change)

- M 1/23 Introduction to the course
- W 1/25 Thinking transatlantically  
 Read: CLR James, "The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery" (pdf)
- F 1/27 Frameworks for thinking about slavery and emancipation  
 Read: THERE IS A RIVER, Intro, 1 & 2, pp. xi-xxx, 3-51
- M 1/30 Enslavement, agency, culture, and resistance  
 Read: THERE IS A RIVER, 3, 4 & 5, pp. 52-116
- W 2/1 Enslavement, agency, culture, and resistance  
 Read: THERE IS A RIVER, 6, 7 & 8, pp. 117-171
- F 2/3 Enslavement, agency, culture, and resistance  
 Read: THERE IS A RIVER, 9, 10, 11 & 12, pp. 172-257
- M 2/6 Enslavement, agency, culture, and resistance  
 Read: THERE IS A RIVER, 13, 14, 15 & 16, pp. 258-332
- W 2/8 The Middle Passage  
 Read: THE SLAVE SHIP, Intro, 1 & 2, pp. 1-72
- F 2/10 The Middle Passage  
 Read: THE SLAVE SHIP, 3 & 4, pp. 73-131  
 \*\*Hand out essay assignment #1, due 2/27
- M 2/13 The Middle Passage  
 Read: THE SLAVE SHIP, 5, 6, 7 & 8, pp. 132-262
- W 2/15 The Middle Passage  
 Read: THE SLAVE SHIP, 9, 10 & Epilogue, pp. 263-355

- F 2/17 The African Roots of African American Culture  
Read: EXCHANGING OUR COUNTRY MARKS, 1 & 2, pp. 1-37
- M 2/20 The Making of African American Cultures  
Read: EXCHANGING OUR COUNTRY MARKS, 3, 4, 5 & 6, pp. 38-153
- W 2/22 The Making of an African American Culture  
Read: EXCHANGING OUR COUNTRY MARKS, 7 & 8, pp. 154-243
- F 2/24 The Making of an African American Culture  
Read: EXCHANGING OUR COUNTRY MARKS, 9 & 10, pp. 244-293
- M 2/27 Film  
\*\*Hand in essay assignment #1
- W 2/29 The Transformation of Slavery Within the US  
Read: MANY THOUSANDS GONE, Prologue, pp. 1-14
- F 3/2 The Transformation of Slavery Within the US  
Read: MANY THOUSANDS GONE, "Societies with Slaves," 1-4, pp. 15-92
- M 3/5 The Transformation of Slavery Within the US  
Read: MANY THOUSANDS GONE, "Slave Societies," 5-8, pp. 93-216  
\*\*Hand out essay assignment #2, due 3/26
- W 3/7 The Transformation of Slavery Within the US  
Read: MANY THOUSANDS GONE, "Slave and Free," 9 & 10, pp. 217-289
- F 3/9 The Transformation of Slavery Within the US  
Read: MANY THOUSANDS GONE, "Slave and Free," 11, 12 & Epilogue, pp. 290-365
- 3/10 - 3/18 SPRING BREAK  
Take SOUL BY SOUL with you
- M 3/19 The Domestic Slave Trade  
Read: SOUL BY SOUL, Intro, 1, 2 & 3, pp. 1-77
- W 3/21 The Domestic Slave Trade  
Read: SOUL BY SOUL, 4 & 5, pp. 78-134
- F 3/23 The Domestic Slave Trade  
Read: SOUL BY SOUL, 6, 7 & Epilogue, pp. 135-221
- M 3/26 Film  
\*\*Hand in essay assignment #2

- W 3/28 Slavery Through a Micro Lens  
Read: TIES THAT BIND, Intro, 1 & 2, pp. 1-43
- F 3/30 Slavery Through a Micro Lens  
Read: TIES THAT BIND, 3 & 4, pp. 44-84
- M 4/2 Slavery Through a Micro Lens  
Read: TIES THAT BIND, 5, 6 & 7, pp. 85-148
- W 4/4 Slavery Through a Micro Lens  
Read: TIES THAT BIND, 8 & 9, pp. 149-178
- F 4/6 Slavery Through a Micro Lens  
Read: TIES THAT BIND, 10 & Epilogue, pp. 179-206
- M 4/9 Reconsidering slavery  
Read: FOREVER FREE, xi-xxx, 1, pp. 1-40
- W 4/11 The Civil War and Emancipation  
Read: FOREVER FREE, 2, pp. 41-75  
\*\*Hand out essay assignment #3, due 5/4
- F 4/13 Presidential Reconstruction  
Read: FOREVER FREE, 3 & 4, pp. 76-127
- M 4/16 Radical Reconstruction  
Read: FOREVER FREE, 5 & 6, pp. 128-188
- W 4/18 The Abandonment of Reconstruction  
Read: FOREVER FREE, 7 & Epilogue, pp. 189-238
- F 4/20 How Our Culture Came to Remember Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction  
Read: RACE AND REUNION, Prologue and 1, pp. 1-30
- M 4/23 Making History, Making Memory  
Read: RACE AND REUNION, 2, 3 & 4, pp. 31-139
- W 4/25 Making History, Making Memory  
Read: RACE AND REUNION, 5 & 6, pp. 140-210
- F 4/27 Making History, Making Memory  
Read: RACE AND REUNION, 7 & 8, pp. 211-299
- M 4/30 The Dance of the Past and the Present  
Read: RACE AND REUNION, 9 & 10, pp. 300-398
- F 5/4 \*\*Hand in final paper by 4PM

