

**COURSE SYLLABUS**  
Southeast Missouri State University

**Department:**History

**Course No.** UI457

**Revision:** \_\_\_\_\_ **New:**  x  **Date:** 9/3/2013

**Perspective(s):** Human Institutions; Individual Expression

**Category(ies):** Development of a Major Civilization & Social Systems; Artistic Expression & Literary Expression

**Title of Course:** African Americans during a Time of Slavery

**I. Description and Credit Hours of Course:**

A study of Africans in America, both slave and free, from 1619 to 1865, 3 credit hours

**II. Prerequisite (s):** None

**III. Purposes or Objectives of the Course:**

- A. Analyze the African-American experience from its beginnings in the seventeenth century to general emancipation in 1865 in order to identify ways in which developments during that time period, including developments in African-American music, have influenced contemporary American culture and events;
- B. Place African-American slavery and the struggle for African-American freedom and equality within the general historical context of the development of the United States;
- C. Demonstrate an understanding of the interplay of politics, economics, and cultural changes;
- D. Exhibit competence in using the historical method as a means of critical thinking. This process includes the evaluation of conflicting testimony in assessing historical fact and analyzing issues and events through the lens of particular historical perspectives;
- E. Draw from disparate materials and experiences to form historical conclusions about the African-American struggle to sustain community and seek equality in the face of slavery, oppression and discrimination;
- F. Demonstrate competence in oral and written communication through class discussions, oral presentations, and written projects.

**IV. Student Learning Outcomes**

- A. Students will be able to give examples of, describe, and explain ways in which enslaved African Americans worked to resist oppression, obtain equality, and build and sustain community in the face of widespread and systematic oppression.
- B. Students will be able to give examples of, describe, and explain ways in which free African Americans worked to resist oppression, obtain equality, and build and sustain community in the face of widespread and systematic oppression.
- C. Students will be able to identify a song, research its origins and role in or significance to the African-American community, and use it to explain ways in which music was used by African Americans to express aspects of African-American life, such as oppression, community building, or resistance.

**V. Expectations of Students:**

- A. Regular class attendance.
- B. Participation in class discussion in a manner that reflects understanding of the readings/subject matter.
- C. Reading all materials assigned.
- D. Timely completion of all written and oral assignments, including a research paper.
- E. Demonstration of mastery of course content in three critical analysis papers.
- F. Demonstration of computer skills in word processing and location of information.

**VI. Course Outline:**

- A. Africa, Africans and the Transatlantic Slave Trade
  - a. African Societies 1hour
  - b. The Transatlantic Slave Trade 2 hours
  - c. Enslavement and the Middle Passage 3 hours
- B. Slavery in Colonial North America
  - a. Transition to African Labor 3 hours
  - b. Development of North American Slave Societies 3 hours
  - c. Responses to Bondage 3 hours
- C. Slavery in Nineteenth Century America
  - a. Migration, Work and Social Conditions 5 hours
  - b. Church and Religion 2 hours
  - c. Slave Family Life 3 hours
  - d. Slave Resistance 4 hours
  - e. Music and the African-American Experience 6 hours
- D. Free Blacks
  - a. Slaves without Masters 2 hours
  - b. Free Blacks in the North 2 hours
  - c. Free Blacks in the South 2 hours
- E. The Civil War and the Struggle for Freedom
  - a. African Americans and the War 2 hours
  - b. Emancipation 2 hours

Total: 45 hours

**VII. Textbook(s) and Course Materials:**

- A. Mintz, Steven, ed. *African American Voices: A Documentary Reader, 1619-1877*, 4th Edition, Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- B. Eltis, David. *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- C. Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998.
- D. Schwartz, Marie Jenkins. *Born in Bondage: Growing Up Enslaved in the Antebellum South*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- E. Ely, Melvin Patrick. *Israel on the Appomattox: A Southern Experiment in Black Freedom from the 1790s Through the Civil War*. New York: Random House/Vintage Paperback, 2005.

## VIII. Basis of Student Evaluation:

### A. Grade Percentages

	<i>Percentage</i>
Class Participation	20%
Three Critical Analysis Papers	45%
Group Project	10%
Research Project	25%

Total: 100%

### B. Critical Analysis Papers

Drawing on the readings and class discussion, students will write 4-6 page essays critically examining the arguments of three of the four monographs discussed during the semester. Prompts will be handed out by the instructor. These critical analysis papers are the assessment for Student Learning Outcomes 1 and 2.

### C. Group Project

Working as part of a group students will choose a Slave Song, research its origins and role in or significance to the African-American community (to the extent possible), and make a presentation to the class as a whole in which they will teach the song to the class. This project is the assessment for the assessment for Student Learning Outcome 3.

### D. Research Project

*Option 1:* Write a 7-10 page original research paper on African Americans during the time of slavery in Missouri, Illinois, Tennessee or Arkansas. The research paper should incorporate material from primary sources, such as court records, probate, newspaper accounts, photographs, diaries, letters, etc., as well as secondary sources, such as books and articles from the library and interlibrary loan. Students will need to include copies of representative or significant primary source material in an appendix.

*Option 2:* Write a 10-15 page library research paper on some aspect of African-American life during the time of slavery. The research paper can rely entirely on secondary sources but should include both monographs and journal articles.

## US 1. Extensive Course Description

### *Course Content*

This course explores the history of African Americans from 1619-1865. Beginning with an examination of the Transatlantic slave trade and the perils of the Middle Passage, this course will examine the creation of African-American culture in North America, the establishment of race-based slavery throughout the North American colonies, the realities of slave life in the antebellum South, the role of music in African-American slave culture, African-American resistance to slavery and oppression, and the experience of free blacks in both the North and South.

### *Nature of Course*

Organized as a discussion seminar, this course examines the African-American community and its development, both slave and free, from the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in Virginia in 1619 through the general emancipation that occurred with passage of the Thirteenth

Amendment in 1865. This course will explore how African Americans interacted with and changed the major political and social systems of this country as well as the ways in which artistic and literary expressions have been instrumental in helping African Americans endure and overcome oppression and discrimination. By taking this interdisciplinary approach to the African-American experience during the period of institutionalized slavery in America, students will develop an enhanced understanding not only of the reality of the treatment African Americans received in this country and their ongoing struggle for freedom and equality, in itself a major development in our American civilization and an important change in our social system, but of the important role of music in sustaining community and fostering change in American society. By integrating knowledge from these various perspectives, students will develop an understanding of the interdependency of peoples and cultures in society.

### ***Student Expectations***

Students will be expected to participate in all class sessions, read all assigned materials, complete three critical analysis papers, participate in a group project, and complete a research paper. For the group project students will explore the history of a song that expresses one of the aspects of African American life during the time of slavery (oppression, community building, or resistance), research its origins and role in or significance to the African American community, and make a presentation to the class.

### **US 2. Interdisciplinary Nature of the Course:**

This course will integrate subject matter and approaches from *Perspective on Human Institutions* in the areas of Development of a Major Civilization and Social Systems by having students examine the African-American community and its development, both slave and free, from the beginning of the slave trade to the American colonies in 1619 to general emancipation following the American Civil War and how African Americans interacted with and changed the major political and social systems of this country. This course will also integrate material from *Perspective on Individual Expression* by examining the ways in which artistic and literary expressions have been instrumental in helping African Americans endure and overcome oppression and discrimination. This interdisciplinary approach will allow students to develop an enhanced understanding of the oppression directed towards African Americans in this country, the ongoing struggle for equality and civil rights, and the important role of the arts and individual expression in sustaining community and fostering change in American society. By integrating knowledge from these various perspectives, students will develop an understanding of the interdependency of peoples and cultures in society.

### **US 3. Purposes or Objectives of the Course:**

- A. Analyze the African-American experience from its beginnings in the seventeenth century to general emancipation in 1865 in order to identify ways in which developments during that time period, including developments in African-American music, have influenced contemporary American culture and events; (4, 5, 6, 7, 8)
- B. Place African-American slavery and the struggle for African-American freedom and equality within the general historical context of the development of the United States; (4, 5, 6, 9)
- C. Demonstrate an understanding of the interplay of politics, economics, and cultural changes; (2, 4, 7, 9)
- D. Exhibit competence in using the historical method as a means of critical thinking. This process includes the evaluation of conflicting testimony in assessing historical fact and analyzing issues and events through the lens of particular historical perspectives; (2, 4, 5, 6, 9)
- E. Draw from disparate materials and experiences to form historical conclusions about the African-American struggle to sustain community and seek equality in the face of slavery, oppression and discrimination; (2, 6)

- F. Demonstrate the competence in oral and written communication through class discussions, oral presentations, and written projects. (1, 3)

#### US 4. Student Learning Outcomes

- A. Students will be able to give examples of, describe, and explain ways in which enslaved African Americans worked to resist oppression, obtain equality, and build and sustain community in the face of widespread and systematic oppression. (1, 2, 3, 6)
- B. Students will be able to give examples of, describe, and explain ways in which free African Americans worked to resist oppression, obtain equality, and build and sustain community in the face of widespread and systematic oppression. (1, 2, 3, 6)
- C. Students will be able to identify a song, research its origins and role in or significance to the African-American community, and use it to explain ways in which music was used by African Americans to express aspects of African-American life, such as oppression, community building, or resistance. (1, 3, 4, 5)

#### US 5. Course Outline:

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| A. Africa, Africans and the Transatlantic Slave Trade (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9) |         |
| a. African Societies   | 1 hour  |
| b. The Transatlantic Slave Trade   | 2 hours |
| c. Enslavement and the Middle Passage                                    | 3 hours |
| B. Slavery in Colonial North America (1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9)                  |         |
| a. Transition to African Labor   | 3 hours |
| b. Development of North American Slave Societies                         | 3 hours |
| c. Responses to Bondage  | 3 hours |
| C. Slavery in Nineteenth Century America (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9)           |         |
| a. Migration, Work and Social Conditions                                 | 5 hours |
| b. Church and Religion   | 2 hours |
| c. Slave Family Life   | 3 hours |
| d. Slave Resistance  | 4 hours |
| e. Music and the African American Experience                             | 6 hours |
| D. Free Blacks (1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9)  |         |
| a. Slaves without Masters  | 2 hours |
| b. Free Blacks in the North  | 2 hours |
| c. Free Blacks in the South  | 2 hours |
| E. The Civil War and the Struggle for Freedom (1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9)         |         |
| a. African Americans and the War   | 2 hours |
| b. Emancipation  | 2 hours |

Total: 45 hours

#### US 6. Justification for Inclusion in University Studies Program

##### US Objective I: Demonstrate the ability to locate and gather information.

##### Emphasis: Significant

- A. **Content:** For historians and social scientists, the locating and gathering of information and drawing conclusions from the findings is essential. Both primary and secondary sources, including

- oral histories, documents, newspaper accounts, letters, and census data on issues under consideration will be used to demonstrate (1) methods of location and (2) the variety of conclusions which might be reached from source material. Topical material will include information on various forms of individual expression, including dance, music and literature.
- B. **Teaching Strategies:** The process of information gathering is learned through demonstration of the tools and resources available and then through repetition to make the skill functional. The initial steps in the process will be handled through in-class demonstrations using conventional sources as well as computerized bibliographic and database materials followed by group discussions on research techniques.
  - C. **Student Assignments:** Students will be expected to continue their research throughout the semester to contribute to class discussions, prepare a bibliography for the research paper, work as part of a group to research the history and significance of a song, and present a research project. The most significant assignment related to the objective will revolve around the research project, but in several of the issue discussions and the group project students will be expected to locate and gather information related to the subject.
  - D. **Student Evaluation:** Assessment of student skills in the location and gathering of information is an important component in the research project. For historians, the gathering of information is as essential as the analysis, organization, and communication of the research. There is a wide range of sources that might be employed depending on the subject under analysis, ranging from oral interviews, folk tales, diaries, letters, contemporary periodicals, and secondary works.

## **US Objective 2: Demonstrate capabilities for critical thinking, reasoning and analyzing.**

### **Emphasis: Significant**

- A. **Content:** The development of critical thinking skills will be integrated into all elements of the course. The nature of the theme chosen will provide a background for issue analysis of conflicting interpretations and evidence. Students will not only have to deal with their values and assumptions, but those of people in different circumstances. An example involves focusing on various forms of resistance to oppression, including malingering and running away. By examining the debate and the “proof” used to bolster various positions and events, students will develop an appreciation for the complexities surrounding significant issues.
- B. **Teaching Strategies:** Discussions focused upon specific problems faced by enslaved African Americans will be used to stimulate critical thinking about a wide range of problems. In a group setting, for example, students will examine issues and try to posit as many options as possible. It is an important strategy to demonstrate that there are always alternatives and that simply because a decision was made, there were other options available. For example, the decision to remain in slavery or run away to freedom in the North was a complex one laden with both hope and fear.
- C. **Student Assignments:** Students will be expected to display critical thinking skills as they progress in their research and discussion. An important focus of the research project lies in moving beyond information gathering to independent conclusions. Throughout the semester students will be given discussion assignments related to information analysis and critical thinking.
- D. **Student Evaluation:** The ability to demonstrate critical and analytical skill will be a factor in the evaluation of the research paper, critical analysis papers, and the cogency of the arguments used in class discussions. These will be evaluated on the depth of analysis exhibited and the logic of the arguments used.

### **US Objective 3: Demonstrate Effective Communication Skills.**

#### **Emphasis: Significant**

- A. **Content:** The content of the course will provide the material students will use to develop their communication skills.
- B. **Teaching Strategies:** To assist student verbal communication skills, various problem-oriented questions will be posed for discussion and interaction. Various writing exercises will help develop students' written communication skills, including critical analysis papers and the final research project.
- C. **Student Assignments:** Students will be expected to communicate to the class in discussions and in the presentation of their research. Written communication will be expected in the research project, and an oral presentation of the project will be required. Students will submit a prospectus and preliminary bibliography early in the semester in order to get feedback on the project as a whole.
- D. **Student Evaluation:** Students will be evaluated on the clarity and precision of their expression as well as their ability to communicate an integrated understanding of the material. The critical analysis papers and the research project will emphasize written communication as well as content. Oral presentation of the group project will provide an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of student communication skills. Verbal communication in class discussions will also be a factor in the final grade.

### **US Objective 4: Demonstrate an understanding of human experiences and the ability to relate them to the present.**

#### **Emphasis: Significant**

- A. **Content:** Since the African-American struggle to sustain community and seek equality in the face of systematized oppression and discrimination encompasses such a wide diversity of people and experiences, the ability to understand the broad range of human experiences and the ability to relate them to the present is an essential component of the course. The present as well as the past will be under constant focus. Topics for consideration were carefully selected so they would relate to this objective and promote a clearer understanding of the problems faced by Americans today. One example demonstrating this objective relates to examining social and economic discrimination and the various ways human beings are able to respond to it. Music and song have long been used as tools to resist oppression. Discussing the ways in which music was crucial in the African-American struggle to sustain community in the face of oppression will help students identify the ways in which music today is used to comment on perceived social and economic inequalities.
- B. **Teaching Strategies:** Numerous audio-visual aids including video and film will be employed to help meet this objective. Using material from readings, videos and student research, discussions will aid students in understanding human experiences and how they shape societal patterns.
- C. **Student Assignments:** Various readings will be assigned throughout the semester relating to the objective as well as videos detailing the experiences of African Americans during this time period. These readings and videos will form the basis for class discussions exploring not only the historical event or experience but its relationship to society today. It is difficult to understand contemporary race relations, particularly in light of the election of America's first black president, without an understanding of the African-American past. Discussing the events of the past allows students to dialogue about the ways in which American society has changed, and the ways in which it remains the same, particularly in regard to discrimination and other forms of racial oppression.

- D. **Student Evaluation:** Class discussion and critical analysis papers will provide students the opportunity to reflect on the ways in which the past informs contemporary American society, particularly as it relates to race and the struggle against discrimination.

**US Objective 5: Demonstrate an understanding of various cultures and their interrelationships.**

**Emphasis: Some**

- A. **Content:** Course materials will be carefully chosen so that students will be forced to deal with various cultures by stepping outside their cultural bias. By fostering the idea that other cultures have to be examined from a neutral position, the course will enhance the University Studies objectives. For example, the oppression of people and the denial of equal rights is an issue that concerns not just African Americans, but gays, lesbians, Latinos, Asians and others as well, and includes an examination of both oppressors and the oppressed. In many ways, the resistance to oppression and the struggle for freedom and equality by African Americans is part of the broader tradition of rights expansion in America, which continues today.
- B. **Teaching Strategies:** Through readings, musical selections, plays, documentary films, lectures, and discussion, America's cultural diversity will be explored and explained.
- C. **Student Assignments:** The readings and course materials will reinforce student understanding of the interrelationship between minority and majority cultures in America, particularly as they come into conflict over the issue of expanding human rights in this country.
- D. **Student Evaluation:** Class discussion and critical analysis papers will provide students the opportunity to reflect on the ways in which the minority African-American and majority white European cultures in America have interacted over time and influenced each other.

**US Objective 6: Demonstrate the ability to integrate the breadth and diversity of knowledge and experience.**

**Emphasis: Significant**

- A. **Content:** Given the broad interdisciplinary nature of American history and the arts, material covering a wide range of knowledge will be presented. Through the semester, students will be encouraged to analyze the African American community and its relationship with the majority culture, in all of its manifestations, including politics, economics and the arts. By exploring the diverse range of responses, students will be able to see how the struggle to sustain community in the face of oppression and to seek equality cuts across many aspects of American life, and the role that individual artistic expression played in furthering the movement.
- B. **Teaching Strategies:** In class presentations and discussions it will be essential to expand topics to their larger dimensions. For example, students will be challenged to ponder the larger implications of how a society which prided itself on championing individual liberty simultaneously embraced slavery as an important part of its economic and social structure. These results will not be "spoon-fed" in a lecture, but "discovered" by students through the prompting of well-crafted, well thought-out questions. In all class presentations there will be attempts to place the material under discussion into a broader framework by using various audio-visual materials, popular literature, and scholarly works.
- C. **Student Assignments:** The breadth and diversity of knowledge and experience will be reinforced through the assigned readings. These will range from scholarly works to poetry, music and personal narratives. One element in all the assigned readings will be the problem of perspective. For example, the tension enslaved African-American parents felt between exerting their own parental authority over their children while at the same time trying to keep their children safe by

teaching them about the absolute authority of slave masters reveals complex human responses to extraordinarily challenging and dangerous situations. Only by integrating perspectives discussed over the course of the semester will students be able to perceive the multiple possibilities inherent in understanding the experience of African Americans during the time of slavery and the implications it holds for us even today.

- D. **Student Evaluation:** In both the research project and critical analysis papers, students will be evaluated on the extent to which they demonstrate knowledge of the breadth of experience of African Americans as they struggled to sustain community and seek equality in the face of oppression and discrimination. This approach would integrate aspects of both perspectives on human institutions and individual expression. In a question or project dealing with slave songs, for example, students could be expected to discuss how music could be used both to express enslaved peoples' apparent acceptance of their situation in life while simultaneously promoting resistance and the pursuit of freedom and equality.

**US Objective 7: Demonstrate the ability to make informed, intelligent value decisions.**

**Emphasis: Some**

- A. **Content:** Value dilemmas will be a focus of elements of the course. During the period of legal slavery in America, people of all races and political persuasions were confronted with the need to make choices based on their values. From the ordinary Americans, both black and white, who risked their lives and livelihoods to assist runaway slaves in the Underground Railroad to the countless whites who implicitly supported and condoned slavery by failing to oppose it in any meaningful way, the American system of race-based slavery forced all Americans to choose.
- B. **Teaching Strategies:** Throughout the semester, discussions devoted to examining the struggle of African Americans to sustain community and seek equality in the face of oppression will have a direct goal of exploring the valuing process of both the student and those people under consideration.
- C. **Student Assignments:** Readings, videos and class discussions will help students explore the dilemma all Americans faced as they struggled to make decisions about participation in or resistance to African American oppression or equality based upon their own value systems.
- D. **Student Evaluation:** Class discussion and critical analysis papers will provide students the opportunity to reflect on the value decisions of others, as well as their own responses to the various situations presented.

**US Objective 8: Demonstrate the ability to make informed, sensitive aesthetic responses.**

**Emphasis: Some**

- A. **Content:** Though making informed and sensitive aesthetic responses is not emphasized significantly in this course, exploring the richness of America's artistic heritage and its role in sustaining and promoting the African-American community will provide students the opportunity to better understand the human condition. The objective will be demonstrated to some degree in the readings, discussions and other course material.
- B. **Teaching Strategies:** Class discussions will be devoted to exploring the ways in which artistic expression can be perceived as both aesthetic and political. The emphasis of this course will be on the political aspects of art and music, although aesthetics will also be addressed. To be successful in motivating political or social change, art must be good as well as message laden. Exploring this dimension should help students make more informed aesthetic responses to art as politics.

- C. **Student Assignments:** Readings, images, acoustic recordings, and videos will be assigned to give students the opportunity to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the arts as a tool for sustaining community and effecting change, and thereby increase their ability to make more informed aesthetic responses to such material in the future.
- D. **Student Evaluation:** Class discussion and critical analysis papers will provide students the opportunity to reflect on the ways in which art can be perceived as both aesthetic and political, as well as their reactions to it.

**US Objective 9: Demonstrate the ability to function responsibly in one's natural, social, and political environment.**

**Emphasis: Some**

- A. **Content:** If one accepts the premise that by learning how people in the past have dealt with their natural, social, and political environments one can more effectively deal with those same problems today African Americans during a Time of Slavery achieves this objective to some degree. Throughout the period covered by this class, all Americans, North and South, black and white, male and female, rich and poor, had to confront the juxtaposition between their own beliefs about freedom and equality and society's treatment of African Americans. By exploring the range of choices individuals made during this time, from Frederick Douglass' spirited opposition to slavery, to the US Supreme Court's *Dred Scott* decision saying African-descended peoples were not entitled to the rights of citizenship, this course will demonstrate that individual actions have consequences, and that every individual, regardless of status, participates in the creation of social and political systems. By examining the reasons why these and other events happened, the course will foster an understanding of how the interplay of politics, economics, and culture really work and that even minor changes in one set of assumptions can change the direction of the society.
- B. **Teaching Strategies:** In class discussions, based on readings, video documentaries, their own research, and class presentations, students will explore such important issues such as how individuals in the past decided to support or oppose slavery, whether freed blacks should have migrated north or continued living in the South, or whether it made sense for individual slaves to remain in bondage or to run away.
- C. **Student Assignments:** Discussions related to readings and video assignments will ask students to evaluate how people in the past functioned in their social and political environments in regard to slavery, abolition and racial discrimination. Class discussions will reflect on how individual actions take place within a larger societal context, and that individual actions have larger societal consequences.
- D. **Student Evaluation:** Students will be expected to display an understanding of cultural and political issues and be able to relate them to similar problems they face today as Americans. In addition to class discussion, this objective will be evaluated on the research project and critical analysis papers.

**US 7. Background:**

Teaching this course requires an extensive background in and knowledge of African-American history and culture.

**US 8. Class Size:**

The optimum size for this course is 15 in order to allow for more meaningful discussion.