Public History of Slavery (HIST 7250)
Spring, 2015, Wednesdays, 4:30 – 7:00
Kariotis Hall 204

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Office hours: Tuesday, 2:00 – 4:00 or by appointment.

Course Description

W.E.B. DuBois made the notable statement in 1903 that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line.” This declaration had much resonance for the 20th century and still is highly relevant in the 21st century. James and Lois Horton identify the “nation’s most enduring contradiction: the history of American slavery in a country dedicated to freedom.”

This course will examine the difficult challenges in addressing slavery in public history venues. We will examine an overview of the history of slavery in the United States but concentrate on how that history has been interpreted and distorted. We will look at the public history of slavery over time and assess several case studies involving commemorations, educational programming, tours, exhibits, and films (both documentary and fictional). Several guest speakers will enhance the course content.

By the end of the course students will have developed an understanding of how slavery has been treated in public history contexts; will have a clear picture of how critical a role race plays in the American narrative; will have a solid grasp of controversies with respect to slavery and public history; will have been exposed to a variety of approaches to address slavery in public history; will have themselves participated in a significant Boston project addressing the history of slavery.

REQUIRED BOOKS
David Blight, Beyond the Battlefield – Race, Memory and the American Civil War (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002)

Martin Blatt, Thomas Brown, Donald Yacovone, editors, Hope and Glory: Essays on the Legacy of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001)


COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Attendance and participation in discussions are critical and required points of evaluation and class discourse will be an important learning experience for all students. Participation consists of being on time for class, having completed all assignments prior to the beginning of class, and being an active member in discussion sessions. Most class periods will be split between lectures/presentations and class discussions based on readings/assignments. The instructor will suggest one or two main topics for discussion to give focus to your weekly reading assignment. Your response to that issue or issues and your ability to raise other questions based on the assignment will be the bases of evaluation of your class participation. Each of you should be prepared to make a five minute presentation on the topic of the class as a way of starting each session.

There will be four writing assignments. You will provide three (2-3 pages) interpretive essays providing your analysis of a particular reading/assignment. These will be discussed in class and will be due in hard copy in class on the due date. Be prepared to help facilitate a conversation about what you have been assigned. For each book or article that you are assigned to write about, you should summarize the major arguments, indicate what you found most compelling and why, and discuss the strengths and weaknesses. Weaknesses could include poor clarity of expression or omissions of important arguments or material. If you strongly agree or disagree with an argument, please indicate that and provide an explanation. For films or the Ken Burns segment, you should summarize the plot or, with Burns, the major points he is trying to make. You will be reading critical essays with most of the films so please reference these. Do you find these films to be good public history or ineffective? What worked or did not work for you with the film? What are strengths and weaknesses?

The fourth written assignment will be produced in pairs and will be approximately 2,000 words and most will focus on an aspect of the Middle Passage. If the instructor feels it is of high enough quality, it will be posted on the website accompanying the Middle Passage marker being developed for Boston. These will be blog posts and so less comprehensive than an academic article. Your posts should be informed by academic knowledge and analysis but not written in a scholarly manner that excludes a wider readership. Plan to use the apparatus of the web more than the apparatus of the journal – links rather than footnotes. You can provide links to primary sources through archives.org. Where helpful, use supplementary evidence from images, audio, and video. Express expertise but also curiosity. Be conclusive but also suggestive. Your blog post should be written for both people with special interest and an intelligent general audience. Please avoid academic jargon. Plan to list the works that you have cited. This discussion of the blog post assignment is drawn from Ryan Cordell’s 2014 grad course – Texts, Maps, Networks: Digital Literary Studies
http://f14tmm.ryancordell.org/assignments/essay/

Potential topics include those who profited greatly from the slave trade in New England, including the DeWolfs or Browns of Rhode Island, or Peter Faneuil. Another topic could be a discussion of the slave ship Desire, which arrived in 1638. Yet another option would be an examination/assessment of slave ships that arrived on Long Wharf in the 18th century. Marcus Rediker’s book is a rich source of potential topics, including the reign of terror on the slave ship; the sexual exploitation of women; multiple forms of resistance; summary/assessment of Olaudah Equiano’s account of the Middle Passage. Another topic could include the current phenomenon of many universities examining their historical connections to slavery. If you want to address a topic not identified here, please speak with me to ensure that it will work on the website.
COUSe AsSESSMEnT
Grades will be based on the following formula:
Class preparation and participation – 35%
Three short papers – 30%
Final essay – 35%

COURSE OUTLINE

1. Jan. 14. Brief introduction to public history and examination of challenges regarding public history interpretations of slavery. We will also review the course and assignments.
   Readings
   Hortons, Slavery and Public History, chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 11

   Readings
   Mariners’ Museum, Captive Passage, Chapters 1-5.
   Rob Heinrich, Marking the Slave Trade at Boston’s Long Wharf
   Rob Heinrich, The Desire and the Beginnings of Slavery in Boston
   Rediker, The Slave Ship
   www.middlepassageproject.org

   Readings
   Blight, Beyond the Battlefield, Introduction, chapters 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, Epilogue
   www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Lost_Cause_The#start_entry
   cwmemory.com/2014/06/13/confederate-defeat-and-the-lost-cause/
   thecolbertreport.cc.com/videos/fzwwcp/the-word---the-lost-cause

4. Feb. 4. The Tracing Center on Histories and Legacies of Slavery
   Guest speaker: James DeWolf Perry
   Readings
   www.tracingcenter.org
   http://www.tracesofthetrade.org/film/

5. Feb. 11. Centennial of Civil War
   Readings
   Cook, Troubled Commemoration
   Mary Munsell Abroe, Observing the Civil War Centennial – Rhetoric, Reality, and the Bounds of Selective Memory
Ed Ayers, We Will Do Our Best to Take Full Advantage of This Responsibility, History News, Winter 2012

Jon Wiener, Civil War, Cold War, Civil Rights, in Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh, The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture
www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/kennedys-and-civil-rights
www.nysm.nysed.gov/mlk/audio.html
www.neh.gov/about/awards/jefferson-lecture/drew-gilpin-faust-lecture

Roots of Liberty: The Haitian Revolution and the American Civil War – A Historical Pageant
Guest speaker: Debra Wise, Central Square Theater
Readings
www.freedomrising2013.com
View video of pageant
Roots of Liberty script
Freedom Rising program
Kevin Levin and Megan Kate Nelson, The Civil War at 150 – Memory and Meaning

Readings:
Blatt, Brown, and Yacovone, Hope and Glory, Essays by Greenthal, Savage, Vendler
Blight, Beyond the Battlefield, Chapter 7

Guest speaker: Ryan McNabb, Boston African American National Historic Site
Sign up for Black Heritage Trail Tour.
Readings
www.nps.gov/boaf
Blatt, Brown, Yacovone, Hope and Glory, Foreword, Essays by Horton, Redkey, Yacovone, Waugh

Readings:
Hortons, Slavery and Public History, Chapter 9
Tim Good essay in George Wright Forum
Martin Blatt essay in George Wright Forum
Civil War Sesquicentennial Vision Statement
Dwight Pitcaithley, Public Education and the NPS: Interpreting the Civil War, Perspectives, November 2007
https://www.academia.edu/5711863/Barbara_Kingsolver_and_the_Challenge_of_Public_History

10. March 25. Liberty Bell Center and President’s House.
Readings:
Hortons, Slavery and Public History, Chapter 5
Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, Special Issue on the President’s House in Philadelphia, October 2005, Editorial, Essays by Lawler, Pogue, Fanelli, Coard, Holt

   Guest speaker: Katherine Steven, Harvard University
   Readings
   Hortons, Chapter 6
   Report of the Brown University Committee on Slavery and Justice
   Choose one of the following (spend roughly two hours)-
   • Harvard and Slavery: Seeking A Forgotten History
   • University of Maryland: Knowing Our History
   • Lemon Project at College of William and Mary
   • President’s Commission on Slavery and the University – University of Virginia

12. April 8. Slavery in Feature Film. Glory, Burn, and Amistad.
   Different students will view and report on the films.
   Readings.
   Blatt, Brown, and Yacovone, Hope and Glory, Essays by Blatt and Cripps.
   Natalie Zemon Davis, Slaves on Screen, sections on Burn and Amistad, pdf
   Pontecorvo interview. FilmQuarterly (2).pdf
   http://www.theonion.com/video/the-onion-reviews-12-years-a-slave,34261/

   View final episode of series.
   Readings:
   Robert Brent Toplin, Ken Burns’s The Civil War, Preface, Introduction, Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9
   David Glassberg, Sense of History, Chapter 4, Watching The Civil War

14. April 22. Student Presentations

COURSE POLICY.
• Readings/viewings are to be completed before the class meeting on which they are due.
• Written assignments are due at the beginning of the class on the due date.
• Academic Integrity/Plagiarism – employing ideas or phrases that are not your own without explicitly and sufficiently crediting their creator – will not be tolerated. As a result, I urge you to err on the side of caution: take detailed notes, cite your sources carefully and consistently, and do not leave assignments to the last minute. If you plagiarize, the department’s chair will be notified and appropriate steps will be
taken. To ensure that this does not occur, please review the University's policy regarding academic integrity