

Carleton University
Winter 2020
ENGL 2700, American Literature I
Thursday: 2:35-5:25
Location: 3101 Canal Building
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Office Hours: Tuesday, 12-2, and by appointment

BLACK FREEDOMS FROM ABOLITION TO BLACK LIVES MATTER

This course explores the demand for black freedom that courses through U.S. culture from the movement to abolish slavery in the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. If the subjection of African Americans continued after emancipation in the form lynching, school segregation, denial of the right to vote, police brutality, the growth of the prison-industrial-complex, literature and other forms of culture have played an important role in the ongoing struggle for justice and equality. Throughout, we will pay special attention to the formal strategies of writers who have shaped the modern world by resisting forms of racial hierarchy and violence and ask what does literature (and, to a lesser degree, music and film) bring to a politics of resistance? We will consider the fight for racial equality in historical context and consider as well how that history expresses itself in our current moment.

Reading and Viewing:

Books for the course will be available from *Haven Books*, and on reserve at the library. Because ours is a device free classroom, you will need to buy the books or plan to read them at the library. Readings and viewings marked with a * will be available on CU Learn.

Books

James Baldwin, *Fire the Next Time* (1963)

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845)

The Confessions of Nat Turner and Related Documents, ed. Kenneth Greenberg

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (1973)

Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the 21st Century* (2018)

Films

Ava DuVernay, "Selma" (2014)

Raoul Peck, "I Am Not Your Negro" (2016)

Edward Zwick, "Glory" (1989)

Assignments and Evaluation:

In-Class Writing

Over the course of the semester, there will be five unannounced in-class writing assignments. These may take the form of brief responses to the reading, or of reading quizzes. They are designed to ensure that you attend class, keep up with the reading, and give the reading some thought in advance of our class meetings. For this reason, you will not be allowed to make up these assignments.

Essay

You will write one 5-6 page essay this semester. The assignment will be posted on CU Learn and discussed in detail in class. When reading these essays, we will look for clear, communicative writing, as well as original and convincing analysis of the text/s in question.

Timeline

Each of you will produce a timeline that orders and interrelates the texts and events that we have studied over the course of the semester. These can take many different forms: you might design a website, a map, a structure, a musical composition, a more traditional graph, and on. As these examples suggest, the timeline does not need to be linear. It does need to demonstrate a thorough and original interpretation of how the struggle for freedom unfolds over time. Your timelines are due on the last day of class.

Class Participation

Class participation will make up 25% of your grade. This grade will reflect not only your contribution to our conversations, but also your ability to listen and respond to the ideas of others in the class, and your attendance record.

Your final grade will be based on class participation, five in-class writing assignments, one essay (5-6 pages), and a timeline. Each will count for 25% of your grade.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

POLICIES

Attendance

I will take attendance each day in class. You can miss one class with no penalty. For every additional class that you miss your class participation grade will be lowered by one letter grade. If you have a perfect attendance record at the end of the semester, you will receive extra credit.

Devices

We will sometimes use laptops and e-readers in class, but more often than not our classroom will be device-free (no laptops, e-readers, or cell phones) in order to enable concentration and collaboration. To that end, please buy hard copies of all the books on order from Haven Books. Students with permission from the Paul Menton Centre may use laptops in class.

Request For Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: <https://carleton.ca/equity/contact/form-pregnancy-accommodation/>

Religious obligation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: <https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/discrimination-harassment/religious-spiritual-observances/>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, visit the Paul Menton Centre Website: carleton.ca/pmc

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/focus/sexual-violence-prevention-survivor-support/>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

Plagiarism

Academic honesty is considered the ground rule of any university level course. Plagiarism is defined in the “Instructional Offences” section of the *Carleton Undergraduate Calendar* as “using and passing off as one’s own ideas the work of someone else” without giving proper credit and documentation or submitting the same assignment in more than one class. This means using someone else’s ideas in any format, printed or online (whether from a scholarly essay, a student essay, a website, or even just a blog commentary). If you find

yourself tempted to use someone else's ideas or words because of stress, illness, anxiety about your own ability, personal crisis, time crisis, or any other issues, I urge you to let me know about these circumstances, so that we can work together to make sure you do work of the highest integrity. The penalties for plagiarism are severe, ranging from a disciplinary meeting with the Associate Dean of the faculty, failure on the assignment, failure in the course, and/or suspension from the university. If I suspect that an essay or portion of an essay has been plagiarized, I am required to submit the essay to the Associate Dean of the Faculty with documentation.

Class Schedule

January

9 Introduction

Alex Horwitz, "Hamilton's America" (2016, watch documentary in class)

Freedom and the Politics of Memory

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*Nikole Hannah-Jones, The 1619 Project

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/black-history-american-democracy.html>

*Robert Trent Vinson, "Remembering Race in Virginia"

<https://www.processhistory.org/vinson-remembering-race-in-virginia/>

*Jazma Sutton, "Beyond Harriet"

<https://www.processhistory.org/sutton-beyond-harriet/>

23

*Thomas Jefferson, "Declaration of Independence" (1776) and "Laws" from *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787)

*Lin Manuel Miranda, "Alexander Hamilton," "What'd I Miss" and "Cabinet Battle #1" from *Hamilton: An American Musical* (2015)

"Charlottesville" (2018, watch documentary in class)

Fighting for Freedom

30

Nat Turner and Thomas Gray, *Confessions of Nat Turner* (1831)

February

6

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845)

13

*Frederick Douglass, "Men of Color to Arms" (1863)

*John Copeland, Last Letter (1859)

*Kirk Savage, "Freedom's Memorial," (Ch. 4 in *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America*, 1997)
Edward Zwick, "Glory" (1989)

WINTER BREAK

Freedom Dreams: The Utopian Imagination

27

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (1973)

March

5

*Martin Luther King, selected speeches (1963-68)

*James Baldwin, "The Dangerous Road Before Martin Luther King" (1961)

12

Ava DuVernay, "Selma" (2014)

Common and John Legend, "Glory" (2014)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9MKXR4gLjQ>

Freedom Now

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James Baldwin, "Fire the Next Time" (1963)

Raoul Peck, "I Am Not Your Negro" (2016)

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Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the 21st Century* (2018)

J. Cole, "Be Free" (2014)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXEvsUYfXoI>

Teju Cole, "The Superhero Photographs of the Black Lives Matter Movement" (2016)

www.nytimes.com/2016/07/31/magazine/the-superhero-photographs-of-the-black-lives-matter-movement.html

Janelle Monae, "Hell You Talmbout" (2015)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fumaCsQ9wKw>

April

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Last Class

