



SLAVERY AND ANTISLAVERY

[History Capstone Course: Senior Thesis]

HIST 4990 FALL 2008

Mondays, 4:30-7:00 p.m.

PROF. DANIEL J. McINERNEY

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(please state a specific "SUBJ" in all e-mail)

This course is designed for **senior History majors** as the capstone course for their undergraduate work. HIST 4990 offers students the opportunity to apply knowledge from survey classes and upper-division courses to a well-defined research project. The course emphasizes historiographical literacy, research, and writing skills in relation to a specific historical topic: slavery and antislavery.

The class has three objectives:

- First, students review the basic methods, skills, and tools of historical research.
- Second, class members examine the historiography of a particular issue, slavery and antislavery.
- Third, and most important, students write a major research paper based on a critical examination of varied primary sources. Students will first create a statement of their research topic, then construct a bibliography, then outline the project, and then compose the complete paper.

Your first task is to familiarize yourself with the requirements of the course. Read this syllabus carefully in order to understand the *assignments* you must complete, the *due dates* for your work, and the *penalties* for late submissions.

BASIC REMINDERS

► Research papers for this course will:

(a) focus on questions dealing with slavery and antislavery in the U.S. during the years 1800-1865; and

(b) rely principally on *primary source* materials.

Under *certain* circumstances, I may allow a student to expand the area of research to the broader Atlantic world. Under *certain* circumstances, I may also allow a student to expand the research to the broader community of reform in the early nineteenth century. But there *will* be limits on how far a student's work may depart from the stated topic.

► There is a waiting list of students trying to get in to this course so they can graduate in December. Priority admission to the course goes to History majors who will complete their undergraduate work at the end of the Fall 2008 semester.

► Attendance is **mandatory** during our first four meetings (Aug. 25, Sept. 8, Sept. 15, Sept. 22). No exceptions. If you do have schedule conflicts, it is best to drop the course now.

In subsequent weeks, I will be in the seminar room to field questions you may have about your work. I **STRONGLY** recommend that you attend – even if you do not have questions about your own project. You will receive a good deal of information about research techniques, learn from the work of your colleagues, and pick up useful tips along the way.

► Deadlines stated in this syllabus are firm. I impose stiff penalties for any written work submitted late. I do not make exceptions, regardless of the reason.

► That includes the equivalent of "My dog ate my hard drive." All through the composition of your paper, make back-up copies of your files. In December, on the day your paper is due, a system crash or lost disk will *NOT* be an acceptable excuse for late submissions.

► Understand the meaning of "plagiarism." ANY evidence of plagiarism--even a single sentence--will be grounds for automatic failure.

See: <http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html>

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Kirszner, Laurie G., and Stephen R. Mandell, *The Pocket Handbook for History*. 2nd ed. Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2004.

Kolchin, Peter. *American Slavery: 1619-1877*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1993, 2003 (10th anniversary edition with new preface).

Walters, Ronald. *American Reformers, 1815-1860*. Revised ed. New York: Hill & Wang, 1978, 1997.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: August 25

Introduction to the discipline and to historical research.

Initial discussion of possible topics.

Start reading both Kolchin, *American Slavery & Walters*, *American Reformers*

Week 2: September 1

Labor Day; no classes; continue reading Kolchin and Walters

Week 3: September 8

Library tour: meet in the ground floor lounge of the Merrill-Cazier Library.

After the library tour: a discussion of topic interests; be prepared to speak about the problem you wish to examine

Continue reading Kolchin, *American Slavery & Walters*, *American Reformers*

Week 4: September 15

Seminar: Kolchin, *American Slavery*; prepare for class discussion of the book

- ▶ TOPIC & THESIS DUE: 1-2 paragraph statement of subject and thesis; list general types of primary sources and key secondary sources

Week 5: September 22

Seminar: Walters, *American Reformers*; prepare for class discussion of the book

- ▶ BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE: list of primary and secondary sources; all citations must follow the Chicago documentation style

Week 6: September 29

NO CLASS MEETING – however:

- ▶ OUTLINE DUE: 2-3 page explanation of the paper's informing thesis, its methods, and the components of its argument; Email this document to me (daniel.mcinerney@usu.edu) by 5 pm, September 29

Week 7: October 6

Updates on progress of papers

Week 8: October 13

Updates on progress of papers

Week 9: October 20

Updates on progress of papers

Week 10: October 27

Updates on progress of papers

Week 11: November 3
Updates on progress of papers

Week 12: November 10
Updates on progress of papers

Week 13: November 17
Updates on progress of papers

Week 14: November 24
Updates on progress of papers

Week 15: December 1
Updates on progress of papers

Week 16: December 8
► Paper due, no later than 4:30 pm (BOTH electronic & hard copy versions)

Two versions of your paper due:

1. Electronic version: e-mail the file to: daniel.mcinerney@usu.edu
(time stamp on e-mail must be no later than 4:30 pm, Dec. 8)
2. Hard copy version: drop this off in our classroom, Main 323L.
Deadline, again, is no later than 4:30 pm on Dec. 8.

Penalties imposed for papers submitted after 4:30 pm on Monday, December 8:
 -submitted 4:31 - 5:00 pm on Monday: one full letter grade penalty
 -submitted 5:01 pm Monday-4:00 pm Tuesday: two full letter grades
 -submitted 4:01 pm Tuesday-4:00 pm Wednesday: three full letter grades
 -submitted 4:01 pm Wednesday-4:00 pm Thursday: four full letter grades
 -submitted 4:01 pm Thursday-4:00 pm Friday: five full letter grades

Evaluation of the final paper:

The following factors “count” in the evaluation of your paper:

- Opening paragraphs (strong, precise statement of nature of the question and thesis; clear preview of the argument the paper will follow)
- Main argument (well-organized; coherent; logical sequence of points; plausible interpretation of sources; reasonable claims; significance and persuasiveness of arguments)
- Primary sources (their range and relevance to the topic)
- Secondary sources (range; interpretive choices; relation to your thesis)
- Citations (proper use and form)
- Mechanics (spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence and paragraph structure)

You will receive an evaluation form in advance in order to understand the components of your grade.

THE RESEARCH PAPER:

Bear in mind from the start that your central goal in this course is to demonstrate your skills as researcher who will:

- (1) tirelessly track down appropriate sources;
- (2) reflect on sources with a sophisticated, disciplined, and critical eye;
- (3) compose a paper that displays your mastery of expression and construction.

Since you will first tackle goal #1, understand what you face:

▶ Do NOT expect that the primary sources you need will be comfortably and conveniently identified with a few clicks on Google. If that is how you anticipate the work, you are in the wrong class.

▶ HIST 4990 requires extensive and time-consuming research legwork:

- You will spend much of your Fall semester in the library tracking, hunting, and exploring materials.
- You will be in contact with reference librarians.
- You may need to explore USU's Special Collections.
- You will have to use interlibrary loan to acquire necessary sources.
- You will work with those dreaded microfilm machines.
- You will probably have to arrange trips to the Marriott Library at the University of Utah.

▶ Success (i.e., a passing grade) will require:

- an understanding of the difference between a "topic" and a "thesis";
- a knowledgeable grounding in the key secondary sources;
- an appreciation of the interpretive questions scholars pose on the subject;
- an appreciation of the interpretive *debates* that have divided scholars;
- an ability to locate *your* interpretive question within this larger framework;
- an extensive effort to uncover all of the available resources that provide evidence for you interpretive questions;
- a subtle, skillful, sophisticated ability to read, interpret, and analyze sources within a historical context;
- an ability to express your arguments in a clear, well-organized, logical, and persuasive fashion;
- AND a recognition that you will do nearly all of these jobs on your own, on a schedule that YOU will have to construct and maintain.

That is what you are up against:

- Only those students who feel up to the task should stay in the class.
- Only those students mature enough to maintain a steady and productive rate of progress **on their own** (without the "stick" of conventional, upper-division class assignments) should remain.

As stated on page 2, research papers for this course will focus on questions dealing with slavery and antislavery in the U.S. during the years 1800-1865. Under certain circumstances, I may allow a student to expand the area of research to the broader Atlantic world. Under certain circumstances, I may also allow a student to expand the research to the broader community of reform in the early nineteenth century. But there *will* be limits on how far a student's work may depart from the stated topic.

You will work toward your final paper in stages:

- stage one: approval of a topic & thesis (due Sept. 15)
- stage two: approval of a bibliography (due Sept. 22)
- stage three: approval of an outline (due Sept. 29)
- stage four: completion of the research paper (due Dec. 8)

First drafts (OPTIONAL—completely voluntary):

- I will review first drafts of your papers—if *you choose to submit one*.
- The draft copy does not receive any credit, but you may find the commentary helpful.
- My review will focus on substantive issues: thesis, evidence, interpretation, analysis, organization.
- Please note that I will not make “editorial” corrections (involving spelling / grammar / sentences / paragraphs). You assume responsibility for following the standard rules of composition, grammar, and spelling. (Such rules are not “suggested” but required.)
- DEADLINE for submitting first drafts: Monday, November 17, 4:30 pm.**

Final version of your paper: submit in TWO forms:

- an electronic file (in Word format; if necessary, WordPerfect is acceptable)
- a hard copy (printed in 12 pt. font; 1” margins all around; double-spaced; pages numbered; no plastic or paper holders/covers; paper clip to hold pages together; 20-22 pages of text + 1-5 pages of endnotes + 1-2 page bibliography).

Back-ups: *All through the composition of your paper, make back-up copies of your files. At the end, a system crash or lost disk will NOT be an acceptable excuse for late submissions.*

COMPONENTS OF FINAL GRADE:

Your final grade for the course will be based on evaluations of:

- 10%: attendance and class participation
- 5%: TOPIC
- 5%: BIBLIOGRAPHY
- 10%: OUTLINE
- 70%: final paper