

HISTORY 200: The Historian's Craft

Origins of the U.S. Civil War

Prof. Stephen Kantrowitz
Spring 2012
Lectures: Monday and Friday, 2:30 – 3:45
1221 Humanities

Office Hours:

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Goals and Expectations

Courses under the title “The Historian’s Craft” are designed to teach you a variety of skills essential to the practice of history. These include learning to *ask questions, find and evaluate sources, develop and present an argument, plan further research, and communicate your findings effectively*. Each assignment in the syllabus below is intended to help you develop one or more of those skills; as befits a “Comm-B” course, every assignment aims to help you learn how to communicate your findings effectively. The course develops those practices and skills through an exploration of the political, social, economic, and cultural origins of the U.S. Civil War. **Please note that this is not a course about the Civil War itself.**

Readings

Several required books have been ordered for purchase and will be available at Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative, 426 W. Gilman:

Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 7th edition (Bedford)
Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (Penguin)
William Freehling and Craig M. Simpson, eds., *Secession Debated* (Oxford)
Gabor Boritt, ed., *Why the Civil War Came* (Oxford)

A few readings will be available via learn@UW under the “content” tab. Numerous readings from scholarly journals, listed below in the syllabus, are all available electronically through the UW library system. We will teach you how to find them using the citations provided.

Unless informed otherwise, you should bring a printed copy of each week’s reading to your discussion section. If you wish, you may partner with another student in the course to reduce costs and paper use, but there must be at least one copy for each two students in the section.

Turning in Assignments

Assignments are due in the appropriate dropbox on the course Learn@UW page by 10 p.m. on Monday, the night before that week’s discussion sections meet. All assignments should be submitted as Word or RTF documents in a 12-point proportional font (such as Times or Cambria), double-spaced, with one-inch margins on each side. Each assignment (except bibliographies) must have a word count at the end of the document.

Discussion Sections

Discussion sections are a required and crucial element of the course; participation therein will account for 25% of your final grade. Regular attendance in section is necessary but not sufficient for success in the course; you must also come well prepared, having done the assigned readings and whatever other tasks have been assigned for that meeting. **Sections will begin meeting during the first week of classes.**

Lecture

During the first week of lecture, we will encourage you to obtain the email addresses of two students sitting near you. If you miss lecture, contact one of them to find out what was covered. Office hours are intended for follow-up questions and more intensive discussions of the course material, not as make-up sessions. I do not provide copies of my lecture notes.

Our Social Contract

Respect

The essential guideline for this course is respect for one another and for the teaching staff. We expect you to come to class prepared, to listen to each other, and to express yourself thoughtfully. It is *not* disrespectful to disagree with interpretations, comments, or analyses; this is an essential part of intellectual exchange. It *is* disrespectful to ignore or belittle what others are saying or to monopolize a discussion.

Communicating with Teaching Staff

Both I and Adam Malka will hold weekly office hours (see above) and will do our best to respond to email messages within 24 hours (with some exceptions: I do not generally check email during the weekend). Email communications should be formal and respectful, including a full salutation ("Dear Prof. Kantrowitz," not "Hi") and including all relevant information. Emails asking questions that can be easily answered by reading the syllabus will not receive a response.

Distractions in the Classroom

Do not read a newspaper, do a crossword, converse with classmates, or engage in other non-class activities during lecture or section meetings. Laptops, phones, and other devices must be switched off, not on silent or vibrate, and must remain out of sight. The logic of this with regard to phones should be obvious: if the message you are waiting for is so important that it can't remain unread or unanswered for another hour, don't come to class. The prohibition on laptops may dismay those of you who (like me) type more quickly than they can write. I have implemented this policy because I have determined that laptop use in class prevents students from developing the habit of sustained attention on a single question or problem, a practice essential to intellectual work. To put it another way: I ask you to be honest with yourself about how you use wireless networks. I have sat in many lecture halls on this campus, and I know that very few students who open their laptops in class use them only for taking notes; they also visit social media sites, do shopping, and engage in other activities. Extracurricular surfing is intensely distracting to the students themselves, to the those seated around and behind them, and—believe it or not—to your instructors, who can see your faces and hands and are keenly aware of the difference between attention focused on the course and on something else. As for keeping up with lecture: this course does not ask you to regurgitate facts, but to think about ideas. My lectures are outlined, with key concepts and other keywords highlighted to provide a roadmap to the day's topics.

Academic Responsibility

While I'm dwelling on the heavy stuff: all work that you turn in should be your own, and you are responsible for knowing what constitutes plagiarism; claiming ignorance will not help you after the fact. If you repeat someone else's words, you must use quotation marks and must cite the relevant author, work, and page numbers (either in parentheses or in a footnote). Likewise, if you closely paraphrase another writer or rely on his or her ideas, you must acknowledge your debt with an appropriate citation. Appropriation of another author's work without citation—whether or not you use direct quotations—always constitutes plagiarism. For an in-depth discussion of plagiarism and how to avoid it, see the relevant pages in Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. At least once a year I am forced to bring a student before the Dean of Students for academic misconduct. It is an awful experience, both for the student and for me. Please help make this the first year I don't have to do that.

Late Work and Missed Exercises

Absences or missed deadlines are only considered "excused" if you provides a note from a medical professional or dean confirming the personal or medical emergency. In the absence of such a note, late work will be reduced by a tenth of its total possible point value for each day past the due date (beginning, as in a taxi, the moment the "late" clock starts ticking).

Special Needs and Requests

We will make every effort to accommodate student needs. Students requiring accommodation must work through the McBurney Center and must alert their T.A. well before the first time they require such accommodation.

Grading

Students will be graded according to the following formula:

Section participation:	25%
Week 2 thesis assignment:	5%
Week 3 essay assignment:	5%
Week 5 revision:	7.5%
Week 6 narrative:	5%
Week 8 wikipedia essay:	7.5%
Week 9 oral presentation	5%
Week 10 bibliography	7.5%
Week 12 secession essay:	7.5%
Week 15 research question(s):	5%
Research Proposal:	20%

Schedule

The “week” in this course begins with Friday’s lecture, moves through the following Monday’s lecture, and concludes with the discussion sections on Tuesday. Readings should be completed as early as possible, but in any event before sections meet.

Each week is introduced by a question—either a historical question (the kind we historians ask when we seek to understand past events) or a question about the discipline of history itself. One of the goals of the course is to help you learn how to develop and refine such questions for yourself.

UNIT I: “Slavery” and “Liberty”

This unit explores various aspects of a broad historical question: In the eighteenth century, slavery had been a more or less commonplace aspect of life in the British North American colonies, challenged only by African American rebels and a handful of white dissenters; how, during the first half of the nineteenth century, did the conflict over slavery become a threat to the nation’s survival?

Week 1: 1/23 – 1/24: Introductions

There is no reading or writing assignment for this week, but sections *will* meet on 1/24.

Week 2: 1/27 - 1/31: What were the conditions of liberty in the early United States?

Readings:

- Rampolla, ch. 3, ch. 7 (section on “Using Quotations”)
- Edmund S. Morgan, “Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox,” *Journal of American History*, 59 (June, 1972): 5-29.

- Francois Furstenberg, "Beyond Freedom and Slavery: Autonomy, Virtue, and Resistance in Early American Political Discourse," *Journal of American History* 89 (March, 2003): 1295-1330.

Assignment: 5% of final grade

- 1) Find the Morgan and Furstenberg articles using the resources in the UW database library (as demonstrated in lecture).
- 2) Distill the thesis (the main argument) of each of the articles into one or two sentences, totaling no more than 50 words for each article. Remember to format this according to the syllabus requirements and submit it to the dropbox no later than 10 p.m. Monday, Jan. 30.

Goals: finding sources, summarizing and analyzing arguments

Week 3: 2/3 – 2/7: How did slavery shape free people's actions?

Readings:

- Rampolla, chs. 4, 6
- James L. Huston, "Property Rights in Slavery and the Coming of the Civil War," *Journal of Southern History* 65 (May, 1999): 249-286.
- Kenneth S. Greenberg, "The Nose, the Lie, and the Duel in the Antebellum South," *American Historical Review* 95 (Feb., 1990): 57-74.

Assignment: 5% of final grade

- 1) Provide a one-sentence summary of each article's argument.
- 2) Write an essay of 200-250 words describing one way in which the two articles either complement or contradict one another.

Goals: summarizing and analyzing arguments, developing and presenting arguments

Week 4: 2/10 – 2/14: How did enslaved people understand slavery?

Reading:

- Rampolla ch. 2
- Douglass, chs. 1-17

Week 5: 2/17 – 2/21: How and why did the debate over slavery evolve?

Reading:

Douglass, ch. 18 - end

Assignment: 7.5% of total grade

Revise the essay you wrote in week 3 by sharpening the thesis and prose and improving the choice and presentation of examples from the texts.

Goals: revision, thesis statement writing, developing and presenting arguments

Week 6: 2/24 – 2/28: How do historians synthesize and contextualize past events?

Reading:

- U.S. Senate Executive Document 51, 27th Congress, 2d Session [on Learn@UW]
- Walter Johnson, "White Lies: Human Property and Domestic Slavery Aboard the Slave Ship *Creole*," *Atlantic Studies*, 5 (Aug., 2008): 237-263.

Assignment: 7.5% of final grade

1. Read the U.S. Senate documents pertaining to the events aboard the *Creole* and, in no more than 250 words, summarize the main events of the shipboard revolt and its aftermath in Nassau harbor. This will require deciding which events are sufficiently important to deserve some of your precious words, which must be summarized or compressed, and which must be omitted outright. At several points it will also require you to make decisions about which version of events to credit.
2. After you have written your narrative, choose one moment or fact which has required you to choose among competing versions of the past; follow that sentence in your paper with a footnote in which you cite the competing versions in the document and explain (in a footnote paragraph of no more than 100 words) why you chose one version over the other, or how your text in some other way reflects your process of decision-making.
3. After you have completed and submitted this assignment, read Johnson, “White Lies,” and come to section prepared to discuss it.

Goals: evaluating sources, summarizing and analyzing arguments

UNIT II: Many Kinds of Politics

This unit explores the political crisis of the United States between 1830 and 1861, considering three big and important historical questions:

- 1) How did so many white Northerners, including those who believed African Americans could not or should not be equal citizens, come to see the expansion of slavery as a threat to their liberties?
- 2) How did white Southerners, most of whom did not own slaves, come to see a political movement opposed to the expansion of slavery as a threat to their liberties?
- 3) How did African Americans, almost all of whom lacked political standing and most of whom were enslaved, become important political actors in the crisis of the Union?

In order to explore these daunting questions at a human scale, and in order to understand what the study of individual lives can and cannot tell us about the past, we will assign each of you one of the historical subjects listed below. Over the next two months you will read a biography of this person, make an oral presentation about him or her, search for mentions in newspapers from the period, and represent his or her viewpoint in an in-class debate. A scholarly biography of each one has been placed on 3-day reserve at the Wisconsin Historical Society library. Since in most cases three of you (one in each discussion section) will be sharing one copy, you must cooperate with one another. A list of the biographies, including titles and call numbers, is appended to this syllabus.

Harriet Tubman
Sojourner Truth
John M. Langston
Henry Highland Garnet
Mary Boykin Chesnut
Sam Houston

John A. Quitman
James Redpath
Wendell Phillips
Abby Kelley
Hinton Helper
Stephen Douglas

Nathaniel Banks
Andrew Johnson
Robert Toombs
Edmund Ruffin

Your final assignment in the course will be a 1000-word proposal for a research project on some topic related to your subject’s life, career, or representation. This is not a research *paper*, but a description of a project that you would find interesting to explore, a discussion of the question(s) that would organize your approach, and a discussion of the sources available for research. This final project will be constructed

from elements that we will work on throughout the remaining weeks: a contextual biography, a bibliography, and one or more research questions.

Week 7 – 3/2 – 3/6: What is the relationship between history and biography?

Reading:

Make contact with the other readers of your biography (in the other two sections); make arrangements to share the biography on reserve at WHS; begin reading. If the biography is less than 250 pages (without notes), read the entire work before the end of week 8; if it is longer, read and take notes on at least the portion that carries your subject to the end of 1861. ***Make sure to look ahead in the syllabus and consider the kinds of notes that will be helpful as you use this information for later assignments.***

Goals: Asking questions

Week 8 – 3/9 – 3/13: How did territorial expansion and capitalist development transform mid-century American society?

Reading:

finish reading biography

Assignment: **5% of final grade**

Search for your biographical subject on wikipedia. If a substantial entry (not a “stub”) exists, use your knowledge to write a 300-word analysis of that entry, explaining its emphases, omissions, and interpretation or tone. If there is no entry or only a very brief one, write a 300-500 word entry covering the portion of his/her life up to 1861.

Goals: evaluating sources, developing and presenting arguments

Week 9 – 3/16 – 3/20: How did women shape the politics of slavery and the sectional crisis? How did ideologies and experiences of gender shape the politics of slavery and the sectional crisis? How are these things different?

Readings:

- Glenna Matthews, “Little Women,” in Boritt
- Stephanie McCurry, “The Two Faces of Republicanism: Gender and Proslavery Politics in Antebellum South Carolina,” *Journal of American History* 78 (Mar., 1992): 1245-1264.

Assignment: **5% of final grade**

Prepare a 2-minute oral presentation on your biographical subject’s life prior to 1860 for presentation in your discussion section. Focus on your subject’s significance to the themes and topics we have been discussing in class rather than on biographical specifics for their own sake; that is, explain to your classmates how this person’s life reflects important dynamics or transformations in the pre-Civil War United States.

Goal: formal oral presentation, developing and presenting arguments

Week 10: 3/23 – 3/27: How did people without formal political power or legal standing shape national political life?

Readings:

- Blight, “They Knew What Time it Was,” in Boritt
- Steven Hahn, “Slaves at Large” [on learn@UW]

- Rampolla, ch. 7 (section on “Documenting sources”)

Assignment: 7.5% of final grade

Following the 5 steps below, prepare a bibliography of primary and secondary materials related to your biographical subject.

1) Read the footnotes (or endnotes) of the biography and determining what manuscript collections or other primary materials exist for study of your subject’s life. List these collections, including their physical locations.

2) Plug your subject’s name into WorldCat and limit your results to “Archival Materials.” This will show you most of the existing manuscript collections that include material produced by or about your subject. Sort through these and include at least five, particularly those which seem to include more than a few items. Those of you working on African American subjects may find that this produces comparatively meager results; if so, you should supplement these findings by searching within the Black Abolitionist Papers, also part of the Database Library, and including a sampling of references from that resource.

3) Search for your subject on Madcat. This will yield secondary works, some (but not all) of them scholarly in nature; include these on your bibliography. This search may also yield some printed primary materials. Include these as well.

4) Plug your subject’s name into JSTOR and Project Muse under the “title” field. If fewer than ten scholarly articles appear, include these. If there are more than ten, limit your search to History journals and to the last 20 years of scholarship. If this still yields more than ten, include the ten most recent articles.

5) Plug your subject’s name (with surrounding quotation marks) into Google Books and sort for materials produced before 1862. If this yields nothing, widen the date range to the entire 19th century. Include up to five items that did not appear through the foregoing searches.

Goals: Finding evaluating sources, developing a bibliography

Week 11: 3/30 – 4/10: Did party politics reflect the tensions that led to secession, or did they cause it?

Note: no lecture on 3/30

Reading:

- Gienapp, “The Crisis of American Democracy,” in Boritt
- Gary J. Kornblith, “Rethinking the Coming of the Civil War: A Counterfactual Exercise,” *Journal of American History* 90 (June 2003): 76–105.

Assignment:

Using online newspaper databases (as demonstrated in lecture), search for your biographical subject during the 1850s and come to section prepared to report on what you found or did not find.

Week 12: 4/13 – 4/17: How did Secessionists understand their movement? What forces led white Southerners in other directions, and why were those people not dominant by 1860-61?

Reading:

Freehling and Simpson, eds., *Secession Debated*

Assignment: 7.5% of final grade

Write an essay of 250-300 words explaining **one** major axis of conflict or disagreement among the debaters at the Georgia secession convention. Remember that your essay must have a sharp and clearly worded thesis and must provide telling examples (with very limited quotation) from the text.

Goals: thesis statement writing, evaluating sources, developing and presenting arguments

Week 13: 4/20 – 4/24: Why did so many white Northerners reject Secession and volunteer to suppress it?

Note: no lecture on 4/20

Reading:

- Rampolla, ch. 5
- Boritt, “‘And the War Came’?,” in Boritt
- Summers, “Freedom and Law Must Die Ere They Sever,” in Boritt

In section: Be prepared to explain the secession crisis—why it has occurred, and who should do what--from the vantage point of your biographical subject.

Goals: informal oral presentation, developing and presenting arguments

Week 14: 4/27 – 5/1: How did the prewar decades shape the war?

Assignment:

Preparation for final project (TBA).

Goals: formal and informal oral presentations, developing and presenting arguments, asking questions

Week 15 – 5/4 – 5/8: Should we strive for a “useable past”?

Assignment: **5% of final grade**

Research question(s) related to your biographical subject (we will discuss this assignment at great length during week 13).

Goals: Asking questions

FINAL ASSIGNMENT: 1000-word research proposal, plus bibliography, due in the dropbox by 2:25 p.m., May 14.

Goals: Asking questions, developing a bibliography, plan further research

Biographies on Reserve at WHS

Catherine Clinton, *Harriet Tubman: The Road to freedom*
E444.T82 C57 2004

Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol*
E185.97 T8 P35 1996

William F. and Aimee Lee Cheek, *John Mercer Langston and the Fight for Black Freedom, 1829-1865*
E185.97 L27 C48 1989

Joel Schor, *Henry Highland Garnet: A Voice of Black Radicalism in the Nineteenth Century*
E449 S294

Elizabeth Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut: A Biography*
CT275 C548 M84

Randolph B. Campbell, *Sam Houston and the American Southwest*
PAM 94- 154

John R. McKivigan, *Forgotten Firebrand: James Redpath and the Making of Nineteenth Century America*
E415.9.R43 M38 2008

James Brewer Stewart, *Wendell Phillips, Liberty's Hero*
E449 P56 S74 1986

Dorothy Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time: Abby Kelley and the Politics of Anti-Slavery*
E449 K29 S74 1991

David Brown, *Southern Outcast: Hinton Rowan Helper and the Impending Crisis of the South*
E449 H48344 2006

James Huston, *Stephen A. Douglas and the Dilemmas of Democratic Equality*
E415.9.D73 H87 2007

James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., *Pretense of Glory: The Life of General Nathaniel P. Banks*
E467.1 B23 H65 1998

Hans Trefousse, *Andrew Johnson: A Biography*
E667 T74 1989

Robert E. May, *John A. Quitman, Old South Crusader*
F341 Q84 M39 1985

William Y. Thompson, *Robert Toombs of Georgia*
E415.9 T6 T45

David F. Allmendinger, *Ruffin: Family and Reform in the Old South*
F230 R932 A45 1990