

History 600: American Anti-Slavery Movements

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Fall 2007

Prof. Steve Kantrowitz

Wednesdays, 1:20-3:20

Humanities 5257

The Seminar

We are a community of scholars. You are not in competition with each other, and it is possible for everyone in the seminar to earn an A. Please help each other succeed.

Over the next 15 weeks you will:

- Learn how historians analyze, interpret, and write about primary sources;
- Prepare for and participate in discussions of the common readings;
- Turn in several short writing assignments, including revisions;
- Research and write a substantial, original work of historical interpretation.

Readings

Our common texts are available at Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative, 426 W. Gilman:
Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism After 1830*
Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol*
John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race*

Several other items will be made available online via Learn@UW.

Grading

Preparation for and participation in seminar meetings – 50%

This includes discussion and assignments other than the research paper. You cannot absent yourself from class, turn in a paper at the end, and expect to pass. Unexcused absences are not acceptable; you will receive a reduction of one full letter grade for each such absence after the first.

Seminar paper – 50%

This includes work refining your topic and writing drafts, as well as the paper itself.

All assignments are due at the beginning of the seminar meeting and may not be turned in late. You Are Warned.

Written work

- All written work--unless otherwise indicated--must be submitted in hardcopy, 12-point and double-spaced, with reasonable margins, **and** an accurate word-count at the end of the last page of text.
- All pages must be securely fastened to one another.
- All written work must be carefully proofread by hand, not just by a spell-check.

Research and Writing

For much of the semester, each of you will be working on a research paper. You will identify a topic, locate sources and the existing scholarship, and write several drafts.

Topics

In general, you should expect to write a state- or community-level study of some aspect of anti-slavery activity in American history. You may focus as early as the Revolutionary era (though sources are somewhat thinner here) and as late as December 1865, when the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified and legal slavery ended.

The choice of a research topic—especially determining a) whether primary sources are available at UW, and b) whether another historian has already answered your question—is perhaps the most important phase of the project. Choosing a topic will be a process of working back and forth between topics that interest you, the resources available for studying that topic, and the existing literature on the subject. A workable topic will help you at every step; a difficult one will frustrate you. We'll do our best to make sure everyone has a workable one.

The paper

In order to write an original research paper, you must:

- Identify a question that you'd like to answer,
- Confirm that it has not been asked and answered by a previous historian
- Identify sources that may help answer it
- Read the appropriate secondary literature
- Write several drafts of a research paper.

The final product should be about 25 pages plus notes, approximately the length of a short article in a historical journal such as the *Journal of American History*.

Polished drafts of these research projects will be due **before** the end of the semester. You will comment on each other's drafts (and receive comments from me) before producing a final draft.

Resources

For secondary literature on specific topics, check basic sources such as bibliographies (e.g. the *Harvard Guide to American History*); MADCAT and the card catalog; the stacks (shelf-reading is how historians find a lot of their sources); and the periodical literature, using electronic search tools such as Proquest Research Library, ISI Web of Knowledge, and America: History and Life (all available through the E-Resource Gateway at UW Libraries), as well as Google's "Books" and "Scholar" searches.

Some types of primary sources you'll want to consider using:

- **Newspapers on Microfilm:** The State Historical Society has a vast collection of anti-slavery newspapers, but do not assume they have the specific issue(s) you need. Some of the papers available here on microfilm, in whole or in part, are:

Immediatist:

The Liberator (Boston, MA; 1831-1865) [American Periodicals Series online]

Pennsylvania Freeman (Philadelphia, PA; 1838-1854)

Anti-Slavery Bugle (New Lisbon, OH; 1845-1861)

Political antislavery:

National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York, 1840-1872; bound volumes)

Radical Abolitionist (New York, NY; monthly, 1855-1858, reprint 1969)

Emancipator & Republican (Boston, MA; 1848-1850)

Black abolitionist:

Freedom's Journal (New York, NY; 1827-1829; WHS has placed pdfs online)

Colored American (New York, NY; 1837-1842)

Weekly Anglo-African (New York, NY; 1859-1865)

This is not a complete list. Many other antislavery newspapers were produced and diligent searching will uncover scattered issues here or at other libraries.

You can search for all known African-American historical newspapers in the guide produced by our own James P. Danky, *African American Newspapers and Periodicals: A National Bibliography*, which is available in the microforms room at the WHS. Note, though, that most of the periodicals listed in the guide are not available in Madison. Interlibrary Loan can sometimes obtain items, but you cannot count on this happening in time for your purposes this semester.

- **"Slavery" Microfiche Series:** A vast array of pamphlets and tracts produced during the conflict over legal slavery in the Americas. There is a finding aid available, and the collection is broken down into broad topical areas.

- **The Black Abolitionist Papers:** A collection of documents by or about black anti-slavery activists, stretching from the Revolutionary era and 1865, including activity in Canada and the British Isles. The microfilm set is 17 reels, with a rudimentary finding aid that is indexed by name but not much more. A small percentage of the material on these reels has been transcribed and published in five volumes as *The Black Abolitionist Papers* by the University of North Carolina Press. These volumes provide extremely useful and detailed footnotes and indices; they can provide crucial context for the documents in the microfilm set.

- **Minutes, Journals, and Proceedings:** Many antislavery organizations and parties published records of their debates and other meetings, either in newspapers or in annual reports. Some of these are still available in their original forms, and others have been preserved on microfilm or republished (mostly between 1969 and 1971 by Arno

Press/The New York Times). There are also extensive transcriptions of the state and national meetings of black abolitionists in several volumes of *Proceedings* edited by Philip Foner and George Walker.

- **Memoirs, Autobiographies, and Personal Papers:** some topics may involve individuals who left their own published or unpublished record of events. The State Historical Society has (at a guess) ten thousand memoirs and autobiographies from all corners of North American history. If you are pursuing a Wisconsin topic, there may well be relevant personal papers in the Historical Society's Archives (on the 4th floor of the building). Some individuals' personal papers have been published, sometimes in their entirety, sometimes not. White Boston abolitionist leader William Lloyd Garrison's letters are available in six published volumes; abolitionist U.S. Senator Charles Sumner's published papers are bigger than that.

- **Congressional Record and Congressional Serial Set:** testimony, reports, and documents collected by committees of the U.S. House and Senate, and the records of debate in those chambers, published regularly under various titles since the early days of the republic. These include reports of federal activity in suppressing and investigating slave revolts (for example, official papers and depositions from the *Creole* revolt of 1841 and the senatorial investigation of John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859). The State Historical Society, like all great research libraries, has a complete set (thousands upon thousands of volumes) on stack level 5, arranged by session of Congress. Some (but not by any means all) of this material can be accessed in scanned, searchable form at the Library of Congress website "A Century of Lawmaking".

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Week 1: Sept. 5 - Introductions

Week 2: Sept. 12

READ: Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal*, entire book

ASSIGNMENT: ***Summarizing an argument***

Write and bring to class a <500-word essay explaining the overall argument of Walters's work and how the chapters support that argument.

Week 3: Sept. 19

READ: Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol*, to page 233

ASSIGNMENT: ***WHS boot camp, pt. 1***

Produce an annotated bibliography for the items Painter cites in chapter 13 (see p. 316), indicating which are available in Madison and which are not.

Week 4: Sept. 26

READ: John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men*, 1-44, 71-181, 224-285

ASSIGNMENT: ***Following the footnotes***

Find a letter exchanged between any two of Stauffer's characters using the microfilm set of *Black Abolitionist Papers*, since the finding aid (a bound volume, E449 B625 1981 Suppl) is organized by correspondents. Photocopy this letter on the reader-printers (you will need a copy card) and bring it to class.

WRITE: a one-paragraph explanation of how Stauffer used the source, assessing the degree to which the letter as a whole fits (or does not fit) into his argument.

Week 5: Oct. 3

ASSIGNMENT: Choose one city, state, or national antislavery organization and:

1) ***Analyzing primary sources, pt. 1***

Read the proceedings of one of its meetings (see "Minutes, Journals, Proceedings," above). Come to class prepared to make a 3-minute presentation on the major arguments you found in these proceedings. (Three minutes is approximately the time it takes to read aloud about one and a half pages of double-spaced 12-point.)

2) ***WHS boot camp, pt. 2***

Produce a bibliography of major works on its antislavery movement(s) between 1830 and 1860, using all resources available to you. This should include:

- Biographies of the major players;
- Secondary works dealing with the major issues touched on during the meeting;
- Locally available primary sources produced by the society or group and any of its members, whether in manuscript, microform, transcription, or electronic form;

Some things to consider: What work does a bibliography do? How can redefining the subcategories change how a bibliography reads?

Week 6: Oct. 10

READ: Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, selection TBA;
W. Caleb McDaniel, "The Fourth and the First: Abolitionist Holidays, Respectability, and Radical Interracial Reform," *American Quarterly* 57:1 (March 2005), 129-151

ASSIGNMENT: TBA

Week 7: Oct. 17

ASSIGNMENT: Choose a rough area of study: a moment of conflict or transformation; a particular place and time; an organization viewed from a particular angle. Identify the most important primary sources available at UW for research in that area. Spend **four hours** before the class meeting reading in those primary sources.

WRITE: Bring a written description of 3 potential paper topics for discussion; post them on the Learn@UW site before or after class.

Week 8: Oct. 24

No seminar meeting; one-on-one meetings with Prof. Kantrowitz.

ASSIGNMENT: Continue reading and refining topic ideas.

Week 9: Oct. 31

ASSIGNMENT:

- 1) Pick one of your three potential topics and spend AT LEAST four more hours searching for and reading primary sources.
- 2) Bring to class the following, compiled into a single document:
 - A revised list of primary sources;
 - A one-paragraph summary of your research topic;
 - A list of 3-4 published works that are directly relevant to this topic.

Week 10: Nov. 7

No seminar meeting; independent research and writing. These are critical weeks; make sure to put in the necessary hours.

Week 11: Nov. 14

ASSIGNMENT: Come to seminar with THREE COPIES of

- A revised topic statement that reflects what you have learned so far
- An outline of the research paper

Week 12: Nov. 21 **PARTIAL DRAFTS DUE**

No seminar meeting this week; independent research and writing

ASSIGNMENT: Via Learn@UW, turn in a **partial draft** of the research paper, including AT LEAST the following:

- Substantially revised opening paragraphs
- Ten double-spaced pages of writing from any part of the essay
- An outline of the rest of the essay

THIS PARTIAL DRAFT IS DUE NO LATER THAN 1:20 p.m., 11/21

Week 13: Nov. 28

No seminar meeting; meet one-on-one with Prof. Kantrowitz.

ASSIGNMENT:

- 1) Comment on partial drafts by two of your classmates, as arranged by Prof. Kantrowitz.
- 2) Return those comments to your classmates via email NO LATER than noon, Tuesday Dec. 3

Week 14: Dec. 5

ASSIGNMENT: Come to seminar prepared to discuss

- 1) What you learned from reading your classmates' drafts;
- 2) What you learned from their comments on your draft;
- 2) Your own most vexing writing problem.

Week 15: Dec. 12 – **LAST CLASS**

PAPERS DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.