

History 401: Digital History and the Black Atlantic
University of Wisconsin Madison, Fall 2021

Instructor: Dr. Justine Walden

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Time: Wed 11am-12:55pm

Location: 5245 Mosse Humanities

Office Hours: By appointment in person or via Zoom

Course Description and Overview

This course will follow two tracks simultaneously: the exploration of digital history and an exploration of the space referred to as the Black Atlantic. Thus you will simultaneously learn key themes, debates, and concepts in African diasporic history along with digital methods used in historical analysis. As in any history course, you will be expected, to ask, answer, and engage in historical questions, and you will be exposed to diverse resources, in particular primary sources, that are used to create cogent and relevant history.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes

In this course, you will learn about national, political, economic, intellectual and religious factors relating to the Black Atlantic and about key agents, actors and loci (geographies) of diasporic development. You will learn about the beginnings and progress of the Transatlantic slave trade, ways in which black Africans responded to enslavement and resisted enslavement, and theories about the transmission of African religion and culture throughout the Atlantic.

In this course you will build two sets of skills, namely those of historical analysis and writing—including the ability to ask historical questions, critically analyze primary and secondary sources, develop a persuasive argument, conduct research on primary sources, and present your findings in written, verbal, and online format—and also the ability to manipulate digital formats and utilize digital methods to process information. All of these skills, whether technical-digital or of the more traditional humanities-history variety, will behoove you in realms far beyond the classroom, for the ability to parse arguments, read sources closely and critically, observe key points of interest, articulate your thoughts and observations, organize and visualize information using digital tools, and develop and present arguments accurately and persuasively whether orally or in writing are all skills that attend the development of mature and productive human beings everywhere.

Course Structure and Rhythm

Most of our course meetings will follow a roughly similar format: a 20-30-minute presentation upon that week's theme in lecture format accompanied by PowerPoint slides; a 20-30-minute

tutorial introducing you to a digital skill which you are expected to follow along with, and a 30-45 minute discussion of course readings along with considerations of how you might use these readings to craft your final research project.

Each week, you must arrive in class having read, digested, and reflected upon the assigned primary and secondary readings. Each course will begin with a few minutes devoted to 'housekeeping', or basic administrative matters and updates. We will then have a segment of lecture and a tutorial and will devote the bulk of our time to discussing the readings; in particular their main themes and arguments; what they tell us about the Black Atlantic; the specific ways in which our sources use and present evidence; and how we might build or advance arguments on their basis.

Over the course of the semester, you will develop your skills as historians, working your way toward a final research assignment that you will also represent digitally.

Credit hours and Work Expectations

This is a 3-credit course, meaning that you are expected to engage in the course's primary learning activities for a minimum of 135 hours. This translates to about 9 hours per week. Thus in addition to the 115-minutes (or almost 2 hours) of weekly meeting, you can expect to devote an additional 7 hours to other course activities such as reading, writing, completing the short assignments and researching, writing, and designing the presentation of your longer assignment.

Course Materials, Absences, and Study Groups

All course materials, including the PowerPoint presentations that will accompany our short lectures, will be made available on Canvas. Lectures will not, however, be recorded. For this reason, you will be randomly assign you to peer groups of roughly four people each. Then, if you must be absent for a course meeting, you can turn to this group of fellow students to reconstitute what you missed. You should therefore consult among yourselves and develop strategies to ensure that all or at the very least some of you are taking good notes (and at bare minimum, rotate this responsibility between yourselves weekly) so that there is always a safety net of assistance should one or more of you be indisposed.

Digital Devices

You are free to use a laptop or tablet to take notes upon lectures. However if I observe that too many of you are absorbed in your screens during class, I may ask that all digital devices be put away out of sight. In relation to the readings we will discuss, you are expected to arrive in class each week **with a printed out and marked-up a hard copy of that week's text**. Referring to these texts will form the basis of classroom discussion, and reading and marking up text is part of learning how to conduct analysis, and so again, you must print out and underline or annotate the

readings and bring them to class.

Disability Accommodations

If you need accommodations in this course, please contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center as soon as possible in order to register. The University's policy on disabilities is that it "supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility." Therefore, students should inform me of any needs for instructional accommodations as soon as possible or by the end of the third week of the semester, so that we can collaborate with McBurney to meet these needs. All disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Attendance

Course attendance is mandatory. You may miss class up to two times without an excuse and without it directly affecting your grade. Beyond these two absences, you must provide documentation for missed class, whether for illness, emergency, or religious holidays. If you will miss a seminar for religious reasons, please clear this with myself in advance.

Writing Resources

Even though this is a course about digital history, it is still about history, and therefore there are still writing requirements. A resource center specific to the History Department in which experts (current Ph.D. students) are trained to help you with your research papers is the History Lab. Regardless of what stage your work is in—whether you are deciding on a topic, formulating a thesis, outlining or sharpening your argument, or revising a draft—the staff at the History Lab will work with you to improve as a writer. To schedule an individual consultation, visit <http://go.wisc.edu/hlab>.

Academic Integrity

University policies on academic integrity are outlined here <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/>. We will discuss some questions that relate to academic integrity in class, such as correct citation and how to paraphrase an argument. Still, you must still inform yourself as to what constitutes plagiarism and when and how to cite works both visual and verbal. The rules of thumb for properly citing, however, are relatively straightforward. First, when in doubt, cite. Second, you must cite not only specific language, but ideas which you rely upon. Finally third, when you paraphrase an idea, you must change the language.

Assignments

Every week, you will submit a 500-word reflection on the key themes in that week's readings by uploading it to Canvas. Depending on that week's themes, you may be assigned a guiding question. These submissions will be assessed on a check, check-plus or check-minus scale. However it is worth reading carefully, taking notes on the readings, and doing a good job on these responses, since a) this is a good way to learn and b), the material covered in the readings will alert you to themes about which to write and are designed to provide fodder for your research projects.

Late Assignments and Extensions

Papers are due no later than 5 pm on their due date. It is possible to request an extension *four days before* a particular assignment is due. However you cannot request extensions three, two, or a single day before a project is due. For each day an assignment is late, it will lose third of a letter grade. This means that you **must** structure your time to successfully complete assignments by date they are due.

Assessment and Grade Breakdown

Final course grades are broken down as follows:

Research project draft 1 (8 pages)	15%
Presentation of research project digitally	15%
Oral presentation/discussion facilitation	15%
Revised and final research project	25%
Course participation and homework	30%*

** Course participation and homework consist of a combination of attendance; in-class discussion—including responding to the comments of fellow students and the depth of your engagement with the material—weekly written responses, and your digital homework assignments.*

Readings

All readings and assignments will be posted on Canvas, which is organized by week in the modules section.

Assignment Instructions

You will receive detailed guidelines for all assignments, including your oral presentation and longer research project. In general, the longer assignment will consist of developing an argument based upon a primary historical source or document and developing a way to represent that research online. This will most likely be in StoryMap format, but it is possible to use other formats and modalities, though these should be cleared with me prior to embarking. I will supply

you an array of primary and secondary documents from which you can draw to craft your research, and you will also be presented with an array of topics on which it is possible to write. Successful execution of the longer research project will consist of using these materials to develop a cogent and elegant argument that engages with course themes. It is possible to write on a topic of your own devising, but this topic must relate to course themes and must be approved by me in advance.

Emails and Communication

In the bulk of all cases, you can expect email responses from me within a few hours of receipt. However, given that I have competing teaching and research demands, there are times when email responses will arrive with greater delays. Such delays will rarely exceed 24 hours from receipt of your initial email.

DIGITAL HISTORY AND THE BLACK ATLANTIC

Week	Themes and Digital Tools
1 8-Sep	<p>Course Introduction; Theoretical Frameworks</p> <p>Film: <i>Herskovits: At the Heart of Blackness</i> (Vincent Brown documentary)</p>
2 15-Sep	<p>Transatlantic Slave Trade I: Origins</p> <p>Infographics</p> <p>Burnard, Trevor. "The Atlantic Slave Trade". <i>The Routledge History of Slavery</i>, Ed. Gad Heuman, and Trevor Burnard, Taylor & Francis Group, 2010, pp. 80-97.</p> <p>Thornton, John. "The Portuguese in Africa", in Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, Ed. <i>Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800</i> (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 138-160.</p> <p>Primary sources on the Transatlantic Slave Trade, pp. 1-7*</p>
3 22-Sep	<p>Transatlantic Slave Trade II: Expansion</p> <p>Excel</p> <p>Thornton, John. "Africans and Afro-Americans in the Atlantic World: Life and Labor", in <i>Africa and Africans in the making of the Atlantic world, 1400-1800</i>. Cambridge University Press 1998, Ch 6..</p> <p>Mintz, Steven, Ed. <i>African American voices: a documentary reader, 1619-1877</i>. Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, pp. 48-50.</p> <p><i>Slave Voyages Database*</i></p> <p><i>Slave Societies Digital Archive*</i></p>
4 29-Sep	<p>The Middle Passage; Atlantic Creoles</p> <p>ArcGIS (Digital Mapping)</p> <p>Smallwood, Stephanie. <i>Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora</i>. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009. Chs 1-4.</p> <p>Berlin, Ira. "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African- American Society in Mainland North America." <i>William and Mary Quarterly</i>, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Apr, 1996), pp. 251-288.</p>
5 6-Oct	<p>The Lusophone Atlantic and the Brazil-Angola Connection</p> <p>Developing research papers and online presentations</p> <p>Schwartz, Stuart. <i>Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550 - 1835</i> (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Chs. 2 and 4</p>

Ferreira, Roquinaldo. *Cross-cultural exchange in the Atlantic world: Angola and Brazil during the era of the slave trade*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Ch. 1

Slave baptisms*

6 13-Oct **The British Caribbean**

Topic Modeling/Voyant

Ligon, Richard. *A true & exact history of the island of Barbados*. London: Peter Parker and Thomas Guy. 1673 [1657]*

Slave codes from Barbados and Jamaica*

7 20-Oct **North America; Iconic Narratives and Travelers**

Network diagram softwares

The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African. Oxford: Heinemann, 1996 (1745)*

8 27-Oct **Religion I: In Africa**

ESRI Storymaps I

Thompson, Robert Farris. *Flash of the Spirit: African & Afro-American Art & Philosophy*. New York: Random House US, 2010, Chs. 2-4

Jansen, John and Wyatt MacGaffrey, Ed. *An anthology of Kongo religion primary texts from Lower Zaïre*. Lawrence, Kan., 1974. (Selections)*

9 3-Nov **Religion II: AfroCatholicism; Culture, Community and Religion in Diaspora**

ESRI Storymaps II

Kiddy, Elizabeth. *Blacks of the Rosary: Memory and History in Minas Gerais, Brazil*. Penn State University Press, [2005], Ch. 1

Mulvey, Patricia, "Black Brothers and Sisters: Membership in the Black Lay Brotherhoods of Colonial Brazil", *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Vol 17, No. 2 (1980): 253-279.

DeWulf, Jeroen. "Black Brotherhoods in North America: Afro-Iberian and West-Central African Influences". *African Studies Quarterly*, Vol 15/3, 19-38

Founding documents for a black confraternity (Irmandade), 1699.*

10 10-Nov **Gender**

Image-Gathering and Optimization, Thesis Development

Morgan, Jennifer. *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*. University of Penn Press, 2004, Ch. 1 and 2

*Prince, Mary. The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself...London: Westley, 1831.**

- 11 17-Nov **Resistance and Revolution: S. Domingue, and Jamaica; Maritime Communication**
Digital Timelines
Geggus, David. "The Haitian Revolution", Franklin Knight and Colin Palmer, *The Modern Caribbean* (University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 21-50.
Gomez, Michael. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. University of North Carolina Press, 1998. Ch. 1: "Vesey's Challenge", pp.
- 12 24-Nov **Religion III: Islam**
Said, Omar Ibn. "'Oh ye Americans': The Autobiography of Omar ibn Said an enslaved Muslim in the United States, 1831." National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox. *The Making of African American Identity: Vol. I, 1500-1865*, pp. 1-4
Osman, Ghada and Camille Forbes. "Representing the West in the Arabic Language: The Slave Narrative of Omar Ibn Said." *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Sep 2004, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 331-343.
- 13 1-Dec **Antislavery**
Primary Source, tbd.
Brown, Christopher. "The Abolition of the Slave Trade", in Burnard and Heuman.
Garrigus, John. "Free Coloureds", in Burnard and Heuman.
- 14 8-Dec **Project Workshopping**
Penultimate meeting: peer review of final projects.
- 15 15-Dec **Wrapup and Review; Final Projects Due**