HISTORY 201:
The Historians Craft:
Freedom Summer and the Sixties' Civil Rights Movement

Course Meetings:
Mondays: 1:20-3:15
2251 Humanities Building

Instructor:
Dr. Simon Balto (he/him)
Office: 4134 Mosse Humanities Building
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Office Hours:
Wednesday, 1:00-3:00, and by appointment

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Members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, ca. 1963. Courtesy of the SNCC Legacy Project, https://snccclegacyproject.org/in-memoriam-julian-bond/

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The Civil Rights Movement in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s fundamentally changed not only this country, but the entire world. In organizing and mobilizing for the eradication of legalized segregation and race-based political subordination, Black activists and their allies reconfigured the meaning and boundaries of full legal citizenship in the U.S., and inspired a wave of

other social movements both domestically and abroad. While most activists recognized even in the moment that the victories won were partial, not total, the struggles they waged and the accomplishments they made nonetheless constituted a transformative moment in American history.

At the center of all of this were young people -- teenagers and, in particular, people of college age. While popular memory centers people of an older generation at the heart of the movement's story, it was young people who were often the front-line agents of social change during this time period. College students in Greensboro, North Carolina organized anti-segregation sit-ins at a local Woolworths store in 1960, and those sit-ins would subsequently spread to other cities and towns across the segregated South, reigniting the movement as it sought new campaigns that might help recapture lost momentum. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), mostly comprised of college students and people of similar age (even if they didn't go to college), was arguably the most important organizing group of the early 1960s, working to challenge segregation while also doing community organizing, voter registration, and voter education programs in the belly of the lethally dangerous Deep South. Still other people of a young age took part in the famous Freedom Rides, and sustained those rides when unspeakable racist violence threatened to derail them. And a network of college students descended upon Mississippi in 1964 in an effort to help show the world the racist brutality of white Mississippi in resisting racial progress, and the dogged interest of Black Mississippians in pursuing their civil and political rights.

This course explores student activism within and on behalf of the Civil Rights Movement during the first half of the 1960s, with a central interest in the activation of SNCC and the planning for and launch of Freedom Summer. As an introduction to "the historian's craft," we will work on skills assorted with said craft: conducting primary research, reading and evaluating scholarly writings about the subject matter, making and honing arguments, and doing historical writing. We have the unique privilege of holding classes across the mall from the Wisconsin Historical Society, which has some of the largest archival holdings in the world on this particular subject. Students should expect to not just be engaged in work within the confines of the classroom, but also in the archives across the way.

This 3-credit course satisfies the Comm-B requirement.

Course Credit Information

As a three-credit class, we meet as a group for about three hours per week. The class carries the expectation that you will spend two hours outside of class on course-learning activities (reading, writing, studying, etc) for every hour of classroom time. In other words, you should allot roughly six hours of work for this course per week *outside of the classroom,* in addition to the time you spend inside the classroom. That figure is an average; there will be some weeks where you likely need to devote more time than that to this class, and others where you can devote a bit less.

Learning Goals and Outcomes

The very broad goals of this class are to 1) introduce students to the history of the Civil Rights Movement as it existed and unfolded on the ground in the early 1960s, and in particular of how people of students' age engaged in and experienced it; 2) immerse students in learning about and practicing the craft of historical work; and 3) in keeping with the terms of UW-Madison's Comm-B requirement, develop students' abilities to think critically and communicate effectively the findings of said critical thought.

Over the course of the semester, you will:

1. Learn about social movements and social movement organizations: how they work, what challenges they face both internally and externally, how they come apart, etc.
2. Read and analyze a range of texts, both primary and secondary, relative to the movement of the 1960s.
3. Cultivate research skills, including but not limited to identifying sources, finding sources, and putting sources into conversation with one another.
4. Learn how to ask historical questions and develop historical arguments.
5. Plan and develop a research agenda that is both significant and manageable.
6. Communicate your findings effectively both in writing and orally.

Course Obligations

A variety of things goes into your final grade for this course. As this is a class that is largely oriented toward skill-building and training in the methods historians use, much of the assessment will involve that type of work, including presenting on your research and writing a final paper that is a piece of original research.

Class Participation (20% of grade):

This is a seminar-style class. That means that a lot of what we're going to do is talk in service of collaborative learning. We will be doing workshops, small group work, in-person presentations, etc., but all of it requires a willingness to communicate with one another openly, honestly, and respectfully. This means not just showing up to every class, on-time, prepared, and having done all the reading, but also being an active voice in the classroom. We will do a mid-semester check-in as to how you feel you're doing in this aspect of the class (and how *I* feel you're doing), but please know that from the start this is a central element of our time together, and thus is a central element of assessment.

Leading Discussion (10% of grade):

Beginning the week of February 20 and lasting for most of the semester, a portion of each class discussion will be led by two (and in one instance, three) students. (Sign-up for specific dates will take place via a Google document that I'll circulate.)

Students will lead discussion for at least 30 minutes, with the twin aims of 1) better educating the rest of the class about the history of the movement and 2) formulating questions for the class that will foster a meaningful discussion.

In planning for your dedicated week, you will need to 1) thoroughly read and think carefully about the common assigned "for content" reading for that week. This will almost always be some section of Charles Payne's *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, with one or two exceptions. 2) Identify two primary sources that you find interesting and that may be generative for how we think about organizing, risk, power, social movements, resistance, etc. You finding the sources is part of this assignment, as a skills-building exercise. Your sources may come from visiting the Wisconsin Historical Society again, or you can pull them from the amazing online Civil Rights Movement Archive. In the case of the latter, pay particular attention to the document collections housed under "Freedom Summer Projects," "Freedom Schools," "Sit-Ins of 1960-61," or "SNCC Founding Conference." Feel free to

use this an opportunity to have a larger discussion with a bunch of other smarties about a document you're considering working with for your final project.

How you divide the labor between the two of you is up to you as a pair of presenters. You can tag-team the discussion of the assigned readings and each select one primary source to present and discuss, or one of you can take on the assigned reading and the other selects both primary sources. But be dependable to one another, and communicate well with one another.

The two of you need to send me an email outlining your lesson plan – including your chosen primary sources and your discussion questions about both them and the assigned reading – by 5:00 PM on the Friday before your Monday discussion.

Canvas Posts (15% of grade)

There are ten posts to Canvas over the course of the semester that ask you to reflect briefly upon the reading. Almost always, these need to be completed prior to class because they a) are a vehicle for getting you thinking about the reading you've done and b) are a way for me to see what y'all are thinking about as I prepare for class. Each of these is worth 1.5% of the final grade, for a total of 15%.

Final Presentation (10% of grade)

In our final two course meetings (evenly divided between the two sessions), students will individually present on the research that they've done over the course of the semester. For more specific details, please see the course calendar on April 24.

Final Paper (30% of grade)

Each student will write a final paper based upon research conducted over the course of the semester. A fuller checklist of key features to a successful paper is included as a separate handout, but the paper should at base have these features:

1. Be between eight and ten double-spaced pages in length.
2. Make use of at least **five** primary sources, at least three of them from the Wisconsin Historical Society archives.
3. Make use of at least **two** secondary sources, at least one of which cannot be a reading assigned to the class.
4. Have a clear argument, backed by evidence, and be written clearly and with a logical structure.
5. Include proper citations.

Topics for the paper should be developed in conversation with me and should be pursuant to your interests within the context of the early-Sixties Civil Rights Movement and young people's work within it.

Final papers are due by 11:59 PM on Friday, May 5 so that you can work through finals week unencumbered by obligations to this course. Extensions are available if need be, but must be requested in writing via email.

Rough Draft of Final Paper (5%) *AND Peer Review of Final Paper* (also 5%)

A rough draft of your paper is due to me and to one of your peers **by 5:00 PM on Thursday, April 13**. By the time class meets on Monday, 4/17, you will provide extensive feedback to one another

(with me copied on the email) as to the strengths of their rough draft, as well as areas where they could improve it. Feedback should be constructive, not hurtful or so vague as to be useless. We will talk more about this over the course of the semester, but suffice to say that peer review is an essential part of historical (and many other fields of) scholarship, and thus it will be considered seriously for our purposes this semester.

Brainstorm for Final Paper (5%)

(Adapting this from my colleague Professor Jorell Meléndez-Badillo) **By March 20** (I encourage you submit sooner, however), you will submit to me a brief summary of two potential topics that you see yourself potentially wanting to write about for your final paper. Your discussion of **each** topic should be at least one substantial paragraph in length and should demonstrate that you have explored some sources that you might use in pursuing it. I will offer feedback to you as to which seems more viable, and in class on March 20 we will have discussions about project viability, honing questions and approaches, and ways to make the tasks at hand manageable.

Grading Scale

A: 93-100 AB: 88-92 B: 83-87 BC: 78-82
C: 70-77 D: 60-69

Required Texts

All readings except for one will be available for free, whether they're web-based or provided via Canvas. The one exception is Charles Payne's *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*. Please purchase a physical copy of this book, specifically the 2007 edition with a new preface. I want everyone to have a physical copy so that we can have an easier time in-class doing things like tracking and cross-referencing footnotes – something that e-books just make maddeningly clunky. It's available new for $34.95 from Amazon (or even better, order through a local bookstore). You can find it used elsewhere online, too (AbeBooks.com, for example); just be sure you're getting the 2007 edition because we are going to be analyzing for a methods exercise the preface that's only contained in that edition. A direct Amazon link, whether you buy it there or not but so that you can see the cover of the edition I'm talking about, is here.

You will note that in the first half of the semester, most weeks include an assigned reading that is housed on the web. These are excellent how-to tools for developing projects of original historical research, and were created by graduate students here at UW some years ago under the direction of esteemed (and now retired) environmental historian Bill Cronon. Given Professor Cronon's research interests and thus those of the graduate students who studied under him, when those readings offer examples of historical questions, evidence, etc., the examples are usually related to environmental history. Please know that the methods and best practices they are describing, however, are relevant to practically any field of history, including what we're doing this semester. We will talk regularly about the strategies they recommend, and you will be expected to practice them as you develop your research agenda over the course of the semester.

Two Notes on Email

1) I do my best to respond to emails in a timely fashion, and usually do so. Understand, however, that responses to emails that you send in the evening or over the weekend may not be returned until the next business day. (For example, if you email me on Friday evening, please don't expect a response until Monday morning. If you'd consider the matter to be an emergency, please type URGENT in the subject line of the email.)

2) You should craft your own emails in a way that models professional courtesy. It's a good practice to be in. These are not text messages, and should include a salutation (i.e. "Dear Professor Balto") and a closing (i.e. "Sincerely, [your name]"). Very soon, you will be using email to communicate with potential employers, colleagues, etc. Start honing the skill now.

Academic Conduct

Students are expected to adhere to the University of Wisconsin's policies concerning academic integrity. Cheating can lead to all manner of unpleasantries, up to and including expulsion from the university. Any student found to be cheating or plagiarizing will be held accountable according to UW's standards. If you have *any question whatsoever* as to something you're doing may constitute plagiarism, *please ask*. I will not hold it against you if you're worried that you might be plagiarizing and want to check before turning something in. Once you turn it in, however, I'm contractually obligated to follow university procedures. Let's opt for safe over sorry.

For more information, the resources at the following page from the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards may be helpful: https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-misconduct/

Disability Services

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of disability or ongoing illness, please contact me as soon as possible. UW's McBurney Center office coordinates services for students with disabilities; I will work collaboratively with the Center and students in need of accommodation to provide necessary accommodations. The McBurney Center's website, including their contact information, is here: https://mcburney.wisc.edu/

The History Lab

The History Department at UW offers resources to students through the History Lab that are intended to help you write like a historian. It's staffed by experienced graduate students who can help you form thesis statements and arguments, adopt correct citational practices, and so on. This would be a very, very good resource to tap into when you're working on your paper later in the term.

Writing Center

You are also encouraged to utilize the services available to you via UW's Writing Center, which offers wonderful resources and coaching for writers, regardless of self-perceived skill level. The Center (housed in Helen C. White, but with online options also available and satellite locations across campus) offers one-on-one consultation to students to help improve their abilities as writers. Consider consulting with them when planning and writing your papers. Services are free, and constitute a truly invaluable resource for everyone on campus. Visit the Center here for more information: https://writing.wisc.edu/

UW-Madison's Institutional Statement on Diversity

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW–Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin–Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background — people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

Statement on Recording Lectures and other Classroom Content

Material I present to you via lecture, etc., is protected intellectual property, per the policy of the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents. What does this mean? For one, it means that you are not authorized to record my lectures or other classroom content, whether by video or audio. The exception is if you are a student with a qualifying disability that requires accommodation as determined by the McBurney Center. It also means that you are not allowed to sell notes that you take in class; those are for your personal use only (or for collaborative study purposes with your peers who are also enrolled in this class). It means that you are not allowed to record classroom lectures or discussions and distribute them, whether by posting them online or selling them to any organization. Failure to comply with these guidelines constitutes copyright infringement and is susceptible to discipline under university policy.

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change, depending upon our collective needs and the flow of the semester.

1/30: Introductions: Why do we do this work? What do we already know? What do we wish to know and hope to learn?

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2/6: Introducing the Movement: *Freedom on My Mind*

Reading (to be completed before class on 2/6)

Julian Bond, "SNCC: What We Did," *Monthly Review* 52:5 (October 2000): 14-28 (on Canvas)

Po-Yi Hung and Abigail Popp, "Learning to Do Historical Research: A Primer: How to Frame a Researchable Question," http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/questions.htm

Watching (to be completed before class on 2/6)

Choose **ONE** video interview from Washington University's *Eyes on the Prize* collection from among the following:

Victoria Gray Adams, Marrion Barry, Unita Blackwell, Stokely Carmichael, Courtland Cox, Dave Dennis, Ivanhoe Donaldson, James Forman, Lawrence Guyot, Casey Hayden, Tom Hayden, John Lewis, Robert Moses

*Please note: each of these interviews ranges from roughly 30 to roughly 50 minutes. Budget your time accordingly.

Writing (due by the end of the day on Wednesday, 2/8 – DO NOT WRITE UNTIL AFTER CLASS ON 2/6)

500 words (or more) in which you discuss the three sources (Bond's article, the interview of your choosing, and the *Freedom on My Mind* documentary) together, trying to draft a very preliminary analysis of student activism and student activists' relationships with local people during the Civil Rights Movement of the early 1960s.

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2/13: Field Trip to the Archives!

Meet in the lobby of the Wisconsin Historical Society promptly at 1:20 (ideally a couple minutes early if you're able). If you arrive late, you will need to find your way to the fourth-floor archives room.

Reading (complete before our class meeting)

Michael Edmonds, "BOLD (Not to Say Crazy): Collecting Civil Rights Manuscripts during the 1960s," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 97:4 (Summer 2014): 2-15

Stillman Wagstaff and Jesse Gant, "Learning to Do Historical Research: A Primer: What are the Documents?," http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/documents.htm

Writing (due by the end of the day on Wednesday, 2/15 – DO NOT WRITE UNTIL AFTER CLASS ON 2/13)

-500 words (or more) in which you discuss archival creation, practice, and importance based upon our engagement with archivist Cynthia Bachhuber at WHS, Michael Edmonds' article, and your own experiences in the archives. (On the latter, try to keep things broad, sensory even, as opposed to deep analysis of particular documents. We'll get to that soon enough.)

-Two examples of what you think might be interesting research questions relative to the topic of our course, based upon our admittedly limited engagement with the history so far. These may stem directly from questions that come to you as you're looking through the archives at the WHS.

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2/20: Assessing scholarship

Reading (for methods)

Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, Bibliographic Essay, pp. 413-442
Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, Preface to the 2007 Edition, pp. xiii-xxiii

Michelle Nieman, Brien Barrett, and Kevin Gibbons, "Learning to Do Historical Research: A Primer: On the Search," http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/searching.htm

Reading (for content)

Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, pp. 1-66

Writing (due BY 8:00 AM ON 2/20)

-200-250 words analyzing how Payne constructs the bibliographic essay and preface to the updated edition of his book. What do you suppose are his ultimate aims and conclusions in them?
-200-250 words identifying what you take to be Payne's central points in the Introduction and first two chapters of *I've Got the Light*. Pay special attention to thinking about what conditions were like for Black Mississippians in the years before the Civil Rights Movement, and how Black Mississippians responded.

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2/27: Using Primary Sources

Bring to class

Copies of two primary sources* from the WHS collections, AND annotations with your thoughts about what the sources reveal about the history of the early-60s Civil Rights Movement. Can you determine who authored the source? Can you assess its accuracy and biases?

Be sure also that you have in your possession unannotated copies of both sources that are shareable (whether printed, or digital files that you can email or Airdrop to classmates). In class, we'll do a workshop in groups of roughly three people in which you read each other's sources and discuss them collaboratively. Are your peers reading the sources the same way that you did? Do their thoughts echo your annotations? If not, why not?

*Please note that you do not necessarily have to use these primary sources in the paper that you eventually write. It's an added bonus if this jump-starts your work on that project, but the primary purpose here is for you to familiarize yourself with working with documents.

Reading (for method)

Cathy DeShano and Emma Schroeder, "Learning to Do Historical Research: A Primer: On the Pleasure of Note-Taking," http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/notetaking.htm

Reading (for content)

Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, pp. 67-131

Writing (due BY 8:00 AM ON 2/27)

-At least 250 words identifying what you take to be Payne's central points in Chapters 3 and 4 of *I've Got the Light*. Pay special attention to thinking about how organizing works.

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3/6: Historian Fight!: Understanding Historical Debate and Interpretive Disagreement

Reading (for both methods AND content – READ IN THIS ORDER)

Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91:4 (March 2005): 1233-1263

Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Struggles," *Journal of African American History* 92:2 (Spring 2007): 265-288

Writing (due BY 8:00 AM ON 3/6)

-At least 500 words assessing 1) the key arguments of each article, 2) what the key tension between them seems to be, 3) which one you find more convincing/compelling and why, and 4) why such tensions and disagreements even matter. We will discuss and debate this in class.

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3/13: SPRING BREAK

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3/20: Honing Our Questions

Bring to Class

Your brainstorm ideas for your final paper

Reading (for methods)

Jacquelyn Gill and Stephen Laubach, "Learning to Do Historical Research: A Primer: Arguments and Narrative," http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/arguing.htm

Reading (for content)

Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, pp. 132-206

Writing (due BY 8:00 AM ON 3/20)

-At least 250 words on "the redefinition of leadership" as argued by Payne in chapters 5 and 6 of *I've Got the Light*.

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3/27: Nailing Down Sources

Bring to Class

An *annotated* list of at least five primary sources that you have identified as promising sources to use for your final paper.

Reading (for methods)

Liese Dart and Brian Hamilton, "Learning to Do Historical Research: A Primer: Positioning Your Argument in a Wider Literature," http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/positioning.htm

Reading (for content)

Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, pp. 207-283

Writing (due BY 8:00 AM ON 3/27)

-At least 250 words in which you pinpoint what you take to be a key point in Payne, chapters 6-8 of *I've Got the Light*, and elaborate on why you think it's important to consider as we work toward a more comprehensive understanding of the movement. This is an exercise in trying to think deeply about a specific point/argument.

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4/3: In lieu of a regular class meeting, work on your final paper. We will discuss the below readings the following week.

Reading (for methods)

Genya Erling and Tris O'Kane, "Learning to Do Historical Research: A Primer: Drafting, Revising, and Editing," http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/writing.htm

Reading (for content)

Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, pp. 284-362

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4/10: Drafting and Editing

Bring to Class

An *annotated* list of at least two secondary sources that you have identified as sources to use for your final paper.

Reading (for content)

Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, pp. 363-412

Writing (due BY 8:00 AM ON 4/10)

-At least 300 words (using both last week's reading and this week's) in which you discuss what Payne identifies as the causes behind the end of the Mississippi movement. Would you characterize the end of the movement as a tragedy? A failure? A success? Something else? And importantly, what does this tell us about how organizing and social movements work?

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4/17: Peer Review

Bring to Class

Your paper rough draft and your review of your peer's rough draft.

Reading (for content)

Hasan Kwame Jeffries, "SNCC, Black Power, and Independent Political Party Organizing in Alabama, 1964-1966," *The Journal of African American History* 91:2 (Spring 2006): 171-193

Writing (due BY 8:00 AM ON 4/17)

-At least 250 words about the transition from SNCC to Black Power in Jeffries' article. Does Jeffries seem to agree or disagree with Payne's assessment of Black Power and its relationship to civil rights?

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4/24: In-class presentations

Half the class will give in-class presentations on this day. Presentations should be between five and seven minutes in length, and should offer clear articulations of what your argument is, what your evidence in support of that argument is, and what your conclusions are. I encourage you to construct some sort of visual component to help facilitate your audience's understanding of the topic, but doing so is not mandatory. The rest of the class should come away from your presentation with a clear understanding of what you've accomplished in the course of your research. Please anticipate a few minutes of questions following your presentation. (We will budget roughly 10 minutes per presenter in total between the presentation and the Q&A to follow.)

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5/1: In-class presentations

The other half of the class gives their presentations in-class on this day. All the same guidelines and expectations laid out above apply.