SLAVERY AND RACE: 
AFRICAN BACKGROUNDS TO THE EARLY REPUBLIC

**Course Description:** This graduate reading seminar emphasizes the following topics: servile labor systems within Africa, the Atlantic slave trade (1450-1820), development of the principal (and varied) slave systems in English mainland America and the early Republic (to ca. 1820), the impact of the American Revolution, slave culture, resistance, emergence of antislavery activity, the growth and status of free black populations in the United States, and the impact of slavery on national politics.

**Readings:** All books are on three-hour reserve at the Wisconsin Historical Society, College Library, or the Kohler Art History Library (check MadCat for the location). In addition, the following titles are available for purchase at the UW Bookstore on State Street:


Sets of the *American Historical Review* and the *Journal of American History* are located on the south wall of the main reading room at the Wisconsin Historical Society. Xerox copies of some of the assigned readings are on the bookshelf in the southeast corner of the same room. The following titles listed in this syllabus may be accessed through the JSTOR database in MadCat (click on Journals, Magazines and Newspapers/Databases by Title: T/ JSTOR):

- *American Historical Review*
- *Journal of American History*
- *Journal of Southern History*
- *Reviews in American History*
- *William and Mary Quarterly*

For print and electronic copies of other assigned journals, access the MadCat Library Catalog, then click on Basic Search/Journal Titles/[enter title being requested]. If the
journal is available electronically, the entry will lead you to ProQuest Research Library, the History Cooperative databases, or another site.

**Written Assignments:** A variety of brief written assignments are designed to enhance students’ skills in articulating and evaluating scholarship and evidence.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Jan. 18**

**Introduction to the Course**

**Jan. 25**

**African Contexts**


**Writing Assignment:** In no more than 100 words, state the argument of Evans’s essay.

**Feb. 1**

**The Atlantic Slave Trade**


_______, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (1990), preface and 3-57.


**Feb. 8**

**The Experience**


**Feb. 15**

**Constructing Slavery and Race in English Mainland America**

T. H. Breen and Stephen Innes, *‘Myne Owne Ground’: Race and Freedom*


Writing Assignment: In no more than 1,200 words, define slavery.

Feb. 22

**Slave Societies**


Mar. 1

**African-American Material Culture**

NOTE: Meet in Room L140 of the Elvehjem Museum. This week we will be joining Professor Ann Smart Martin's course entitled "The Arts of Cultural Blending: The Material Culture of Race and Ethnicity in America, 1620-1910."


Walsh, From Calabar to Carter’s Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community, chaps. chaps. 3-6.

Recommended:

Lawrence W. Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom (1977), preface and
chaps. 1-2.
Charles Joyner, *Down By the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (1984), chap. 7 [re: the creation of the Gullah language].

Mar. 8

**No Class Today**

Writing Assignment due no later than 4 p.m. (faculty mailbox 5007): A well organized, well written paper that assesses the strengths and limitations of the sources scholars rely upon in interpreting slavery and race, as you have examined these topics during the first two months of the course. Be sure to support generalizations with citations to specific evidence used in the assigned readings. (maximum 5,000 words)

Mar. 15

**The Problems of Slavery in a Revolutionary Age**


Mar. 22

**SPRING BREAK**

Mar. 29

**Accommodation and Resistance**

Jean B. Lee, "Charlotte's Mount Vernon." (typescript)

Writing Assignment: Review Frey's book (maximum 1,000 words)
Apr. 5  Masters

Apr. 12  Circumscribed Freedoms

Writing Assignment: Drawing upon this week’s readings, as well as any others that appear relevant, consider this question: Could slavery have been abolished at the nation’s founding? (1500 words)

Apr. 19  Slavery and National Politics in the Early Republic
Donald Robinson, *Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765-1820* (1979),

Apr. 26  Migration in the Early National Period
May 4

A “Wolf by the Ears”


Writing Assignment: Respond to Wilkins's book (maximum 1,500 words)
equally intelligible reasons, scholars have also viewed the history of the English revival in isolation. In its broadest sense, revivalism in the mid-eighteenth century not only appeared in several places and involved a range of theologies and religious polities, including Anglican, Lutheran, and Pietist, as well as Calvinist, but these groupings also shared connections and influences. Evidence suggests that Calvinist...