

# HIS 2050: Writing History: 19th Century African American Activism



13746 | Fall 2018 | CU 129 | Tuesdays & Thursdays | 2.00 - 3.20 pm

## General Information

Welcome to HIS 2050: Writing History. My name is [Charlie Gleeck](#), and I will be your professor this term. By way of a brief background: I'm a Ph.D. student in [Comparative Studies](#) here at FAU. My work crosses the fields of cultural studies, history, and literary studies, with an explicit focus on the areas of African American Book History and Print Culture and Whiteness in

American Print Culture. My office is located in SO 380, and I host office hours from 1.30 to 3.30 pm each Wednesday. I'm also open to a meeting by appointment; please feel free to speak to me directly if you need to meet outside of my scheduled office hours. You can contact me via email [agleek@fau.edu](mailto:agleek@fau.edu), although face to face conversations are always preferable than those via email. If you must craft an email to me, please be sure that you are writing in such a way that I will actually read your message and reply

to you instead of simply deleting it. If you need advice on how to do this, you can start [here](#). Please note that I only check and respond to emails in the mornings on Monday-Thursdays. The Canvas site for this course is <https://canvas.fau.edu/courses/49521>. Please be sure that you're familiar with this site and that your notification settings for Canvas are up to date as much of the material and communication for our course will be disseminated through Canvas.

## Course Theme

Our work in this course will center around two questions. First, *what were the material and social conditions for Black<sup>1</sup> men, women, and children living in the territory that would become the United States<sup>2</sup>, from roughly 1750 until on or about 1860?* While slavery is likely the first concept that comes to mind, additional concepts such as racism, white supremacy, and what Cedric Robinson defines as “racial capitalism” offer nuanced ways to ways to address this complicated, first question. From here, our second question, *In what ways, and with what effects, did Black men, women, and children work to overcome, resist, or otherwise avail themselves*

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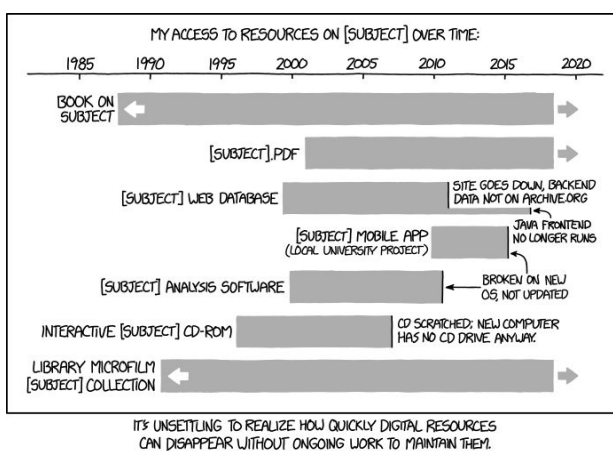
<sup>1</sup> I use the terms “African American” and “Black” interchangeably throughout this course, as is the academic tradition of scholars working in the Humanities. Each has their own analytical purchase and shortcomings, many of which are functions of the violence inflicted upon people and communities as a part of transatlantic slavery and the racial capitalist economies in the Americas. We can certainly discuss these rhetorical choices and historical contexts further in our class sessions.

<sup>2</sup> As with the term “Black,” the name “United States” is both historically and rhetorically unstable, particularly over the arc of the long 19th century (1750-1914). “Turtle Island,” “Nueva Espana,” “Nouvelle France,” and a host of other concepts are equally appropriate to describe the geographic territory we are working with in this course. Again, this is a topic that is wholly appropriate for discussion in our class sessions.

from their material and social conditions during the first part of the long 19th century? points to the various successes, failures, and missed opportunities Black people had in working against racial capitalism and other forms of oppression. Such work came in the form of a wide variety of activism inside and outside conventional politics; from writing, speaking, and organizing to emigration and revolts. What should become clear over the arc of our course is that Black people and organizations, sometimes along with their allies in indigenous, European, and white communities, were anything but passive or unsuccessful in their work towards liberation in facing racialized power structures in the United States.

## Course Content and Resources

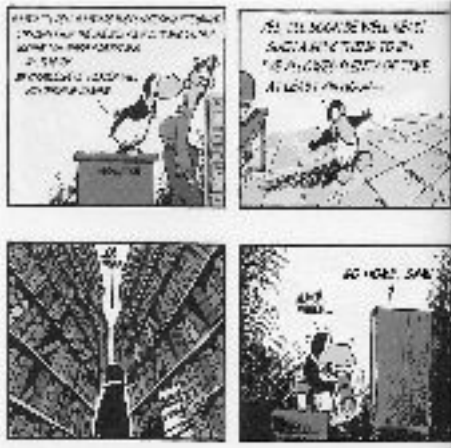
Books, and especially textbooks, are never neutral ground for the study of culture, history, and literature. The choices that writers and publishers, libraries, book sellers, and curriculum committees, and even professors and graduate instructors make in producing, selecting, and exploring texts for academic study in any discipline reflect particular material and social conditions and interests, and thus are not necessarily made with a sense of pure objectivity or detached analysis. With these realities in mind, I've selected a required book for the course, some strongly recommended books, and several primary and secondary source materials curated on Canvas which will allow us to interrogate and write about our course themes in a comprehensive fashion. I outline these materials below, but first, a brief digression about other books and coursework that are likely relevant to your interests.



There are several excellent books<sup>3</sup> that I would have loved to include in this course but have excluded them to construct a manageable comprehensive course in writing about the history of Black activism and social movements in the 19th century. These texts are worth engaging with on your own both as broad backgrounds on many of the topics that we will cover this semester, as well as a means of expanding upon many of the themes we will address in this course. As a student and scholar who comes from a radical and critical standpoint to the study of culture, history, and literature, texts such as Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, and

<sup>3</sup> There is no way, of course, to include an exhaustive bibliography relevant to the study of African American and Black culture, history, and literature in the Americas prior to the 20th century in a single syllabus. My aim with these suggestions is to point you towards a handful of accessible texts, rather than to highlight all of the speeches, letters, newspaper articles, essays, novels, philosophical treatises, and other materials that comprise the continually expanding archive of 19th century Black activism in the Americas.

more recently, Paul Ortiz' *An African American and LatinX People's History of the United States* are excellent, sweeping, and readable introductions to Black History in a U.S. and hemispheric American context. Benjamin Quarles' *Black Abolitionists* is required reading for those of you interested in nineteenth-century Black History, and perhaps we'll read excerpts from this text throughout our course. Pero Galo Dagbovie's *What is African American History?*



and John Ernest's *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794-1861* both offer historiographies which challenge and complicate the linear and often simplistic narration of African American history in the U.S. Additionally classics such as Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* and C. L. R. James' *The Black Jacobins*, are thorough historical and cultural analyses of Black people's experiences in the Western hemisphere. Books about slavery are rather ubiquitous, and works such as Edward Baptist's *The Half Has Never Been Told*, Steven Hahn's *A Nation Under Our Feet* and Stephanie Smallwood's *Saltwater Slavery* provide both

thoughtful contexts and pair nicely with texts that you are likely more familiar with; Frederick Douglass' *A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* and Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, for example. Finally, those of you who are thinking about or already plan to further your studies in Black Literary Studies or History should consider registering in the Spring 2019 term for any of the following: Dr. Boutelle's "American Literature to 1865" course, Dr. Dagbovie-Mullins' "Major American Writers-20th Century" course, and Dr. Suddler's "African American History Since 1877" course.

Given the thematic, temporal, and workload expectations of this lower division, undergraduate course, we'll read two books this term: John Ernest, *A Nation Within a Nation: Organizing African-American Communities Before the Civil War*, (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011) and Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Movements in America* (New York: Routledge, 1997). Please purchase these books on your own, ideally from your local [independent bookstore](#). Additionally, we'll do quite a bit of work with the [Colored Conventions Project](#), referencing both primary texts housed in this project as well as secondary readings and scholarship related to the Colored Conventions. Finally, we'll supplement our core readings with a range of additional readings, primary sources, and other content, available on our Canvas page, throughout the semester.

## Class Participation

There are at least two perspectives in discussing class participation in the undergraduate classroom. One of these centers on grading where class participation is a means of qualitatively or quantitatively assessing an individual's behavior in a class setting. This is a rather instructor-centric evaluation of students, based on the instructor's professional perception of how a student's motivation to learn is expressed in their overt engagement with the material. This approach is perfectly fine, as I know plenty of folks who've been successfully teaching longer than I have who adopt this position. However, this

grading approach to measuring class participation has several pedagogical drawbacks and shortcomings including, but not limited to, the use of grades to coerce behavior or the assumption that all students act in the same ways in social situations (we professors certainly do not). My perspective on class participation stems from the premise that our job, students and faculty alike, is to construct a culturally relevant and cohesive environment of disparate individual thinkers and learners, one that centers on conversations about challenging subjects. Teaching and learning are material and social affairs; they require presence and are functions of physical attributes of the people and things in a classroom, as well as the interactions of the community, all of which form a culture of learning. This means that

assessing an individual's class participation, either qualitatively or quantitatively, isn't an accurate way of assessing learning in a classroom (note that I don't mean objective; all grading is a subjective practice). To this end, I will not grade you on your participation in our class, but I will hold you accountable for meeting the following expectations:

- Be in class every day so that you can contribute to the class' discussion and analysis of the material. This may come in the form of large group, small group, and individually-based work and writing assignments, including peer reviews of your colleague's writing. Your colleagues and I expect your presence to include the absence of your device or other distracting behaviors. If you must miss our class, please let me know via email beforehand. I reserve the right to moderate your grade in this class should you not meet these expectations.



- I, and in most cases we, will design engaging discussions, activities, or other ways of conversing about the material we are covering, including the development of your nonfiction reading, writing and research skills.
- The History Department, the College of Arts and Letters, and the University have guidelines for student attendance and decorum. These are located in this syllabus as well as in the Student Code of Conduct. Please be sure that you read these guidelines and adhere to them in both their letter and in their spirit. I reserve the right to moderate your grade in this class should you not meet these expectations.

## Assessment, Assignments, and Grading

Your grade is determined by my evaluation of your performance on the following assignments: three (3) Essays, one (1) Research Exhibition, and a series of Exploratory Writing samples. Brief descriptions for each of these assignments follow in the next section of this document. You will submit all assignments to Canvas for assessment. Additionally, you should bring hard copies of all of your writing to class as they will be subject to additional individual and group work.

Feedback on your thinking and writing, however, is *far more important* than any grade you receive on an assignment. An appeal for brevity, one I have likely ignored so far in this syllabus, prevents me from articulating the range of scholarly evidence that shows that timely and targeted



feedback is essential to improving student learning. Suffice it to say; I'm happy to talk more about this topic in class and during office hours. Until then, you'll have to trust me that the late Joe Bower's mantra, "assessment isn't a spreadsheet, its a conversation" is a

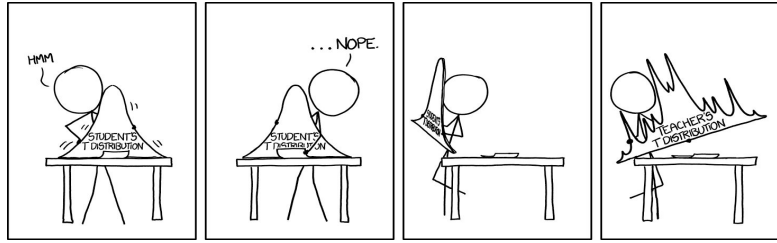
wholly apt description of what will guide teaching and learning in our course. You will receive peer feedback from your colleagues on draft versions of your Essays, Research Exhibition, and Exploratory Writing Samples. Additionally, I will provide you with feedback in the form of Grammarly reports and selected feedback on your writing. You can always receive additional, individual feedback on your thinking and writing by meeting with me during office hours

When calculating your final grade, letters will be counted as follows:

100-94: A | 93-90: A- | 89-87: B+ | 86-84: B | 83-80: B- | 79-77: C+ | 76-74: C  
73-70: C-\* | 69-67: D+ | 66-64: D | 63-60: D- | 59-00: F

*\*Failure for Gordon Rule purposes = 73 and below*





Assignments are due according to the posted information in Canvas. Failure to submit an assignment at all will result in a grade of “F”, while assignments submitted after the due date and time can earn a grade no higher than a “C-.” While I understand that emergencies can and do happen (for some reason, this occurs rather frequently on or around assignment due dates) those contingencies do not necessarily warrant giving you the opportunity to turn in work beyond the assigned date and time. This is not to say that I am neither empathetic nor student-centric in my approach to teaching, quite the opposite in fact. I'll happily point you towards former students at Ivy League schools, in research-intensive graduate programs, and those with bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees working in public and private sectors who can speak with you on this subject. Rather, my perspective comes from my keen desire to help you develop the requisite planning skills and communication practices which will make you successful both in this class as well as in the rest of your university experience.

## Brief Assignment Descriptions

### *Essays (60% of your final grade)*

You will write three [argument driven essays](#), each with major revisions, based on selections from our readings and source materials. Each essay should build on the skills you have mastered to position you into this class in the first place: they should contain an argument, reflect a close analytical reading of texts, and offer some discussion of the implications of the argument in a wider context (address the “so what?” question). Specific due dates and parameters for the assignment, including revision requirements, are found in documentation posted on Canvas.



### *Exploratory Writing (25% of your final grade)*

You will write various [exploratory writing](#) samples throughout this course. This work will come in a variety of forms; from summaries of your readings to pre-writing exercises and drafting, to reflections on your learning, and more. Specific due dates and parameters for the assignment are found in documentation posted on Canvas.

### *Research Exhibition (15% of your final grade)*

You will create a digital Research Exhibition as your major project for this course. Exhibitions will include, at a minimum, developing a unique line of inquiry, research of source materials that result in an Annotated Bibliography and Synthesis of these sources, and a Presentation during the final week of the term. We will collaboratively develop the assessment guidelines, components, mechanics, and other aspects of the Research Exhibition in the latter half of the term.

## Academic Support

Undergraduate university students face a variety of challenges, one of which involves securing and sustaining academic support. In years past, students were often left to "sink or swim"; a



metaphor that invoked a rather solitary approach to explaining individual student success. Recently, universities such as our's have adopted a community-based approach to students achievement and retention; namely in the form of establishing professional organizations dedicated to providing student with personalized learning support. FAU's [Center for Learning and Student Success](#), "provides a variety of programs to help students engage, achieve and excel at FAU and prepare for a future of lifelong learning." Practically, the Center offers individualized peer and group tutoring, as well as Freshman-specific programming to support students in their academic achievement in their studies. Additionally, the [University Center for Excellence in Writing](#) (UCEW), "help students at any point in the writing process (i.e., brainstorming, drafting, revising) and with papers for courses, senior or master theses, dissertations, job

applications, applications for graduate school, articles for publication, grant proposals and other documents." As a former UCEW consultant, I can attest to the value of working with the good folks at the UCEW at any stage of your writing for this course. I'm happy to speak with you individually about the specific ways in which the UCEW can support your work in this class. Finally, our [Wimberly Libraries](#) are home to an excellent staff of Research Librarians whose job is to help you navigate the research process, identify lines of inquiry, dive deep into archival resources, and much, much more. Larry Mello is our Research Librarian-- you'll meet him in one of our class sessions during the term. Additionally, you can schedule a [research consultation session](#) through our Library at any time during the term.

Additionally, I've outlined a few additional campus departments whose job is to provide service and support to you inside and outside of our classroom setting.



Student Health Services: SHS provides primary medical care, immunization, and dental services, as well as specialized health services for women, men, and pharmacological care. SHS has offices on the Boca Raton, Davie, and Jupiter campuses. If you'd like to make an appointment or learn more about these resources, you can call (561) 297-3512 or visit their website here:

<http://www.fau.edu/shs/>.

Counseling and Psychological Services: CAPS offers a variety of services to students that you're already paying for: individual, group, psychiatric services, alcohol and drugs assessments/counseling, LD/ADHD assessment, and reading/study skills. There are offices on the Boca, Davie, and Jupiter campuses. If you'd like to make an appointment or learn more about these resources, you can call (561) 297-3540 or visit their website here:

<http://www.fau.edu/counseling/>,

FAU Beyond Food Program: For assisting FAU students in need to raise their food security level to persist toward academic success. Information about how to refer a student/peer or to self-refer and about other resources available in the Palm Beach/Broward community

<http://www.fau.edu/dean/beyondfood/index.php>.

University Advising Services: For resources including Online Advising, making in-person appointments, information on the ACCESS program, Flight Plan and IFP checklists, various forms, and other related registration information and online platforms.

<http://www.fau.edu/uas/>.

Office of the Ombuds: For helping to assure that all students are served well in all situations. The Ombuds works to solve problems, to allay frustration, and to advise those requesting

help, either before or after existing University processes. The Ombuds functions independently and serves as a neutral problem-solver, has access to all University offices, records, and personnel. The Ombuds provides information on processes, refers to appropriate offices, helps to develop options and facilitates mediation. The Ombuds can recommend policy or procedure changes. <http://www.fau.edu/ombuds/index.php>.

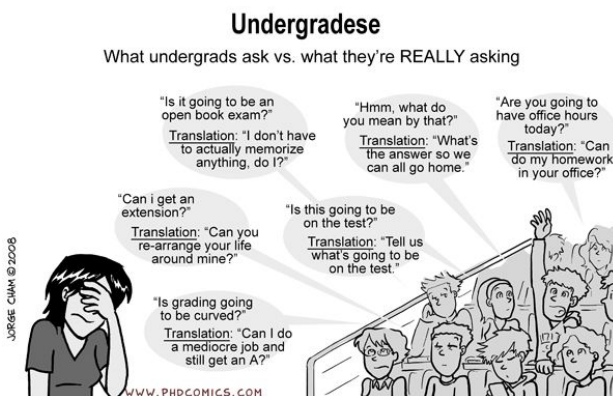
## Procedural

Class starts and ends at the time published in the Departmental Course Schedule. We have a limited amount of time each day to work through a rather ambitious set of coursework.

Consequently, I plan to start on time each day and finish at the allotted time so that you can move on to your other classes, coursework, jobs, or anything else that you have scheduled that

day outside of our class time. This respect for your time, as well as for your other instructors' time, does rest upon you treating this class, your colleagues, and me with the same level of professionalism.

As with all matters related to class, it is better for you to speak with me during office hours (just pop by—you don't need an appointment) or before and after class than to not say anything and hope that everything will work out in your favor (it likely won't). You're also welcome to email me, but such communication is not a substitute for the conversation and dialogue that we can have in face to face meetings. My main point with all of this, belabored I'm sure, is that the best way for you to navigate the complexities of this course is to work to develop a comfortable and professional relationship with your colleagues and me as we work together this term.



## Departmental, College, and University Policies

### Academic Integrity

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards; because it interferes with the University mission to provide a high-quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the University community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places a high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. For more information on the harsh penalties that come with academic dishonesty, see:

[http://www.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.001\\_Code\\_of\\_Academic\\_Integrity.pdf](http://www.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.001_Code_of_Academic_Integrity.pdf).

### Accommodations

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS)—in Boca Raton, SU 133 (561-297-3880); in Davie, LA 203 (954-236-1222); or in Jupiter, SR 110 (561-799-8585) —and follow all SAS procedures.

### Attendance

More than two weeks' worth of unexcused absences may result in an "F" unless you successfully apply for a grade of "W". Our College's collective experience as teachers of writing suggests that students who miss more than two weeks' worth of class are unable to produce passing work and ultimately fail the class. That fact reflects both the rigorous pace of this course and the fact that what students learn in this class, they learn in the classroom through group work, discussion, and writing activities, work that cannot be made up.

### Disruptions

Pagers or cellular phones should be turned off or not brought into the classroom. Radios, iPods, portable gaming systems, and other electronic media devices should not be used in the classroom. Disruptive behavior, as defined in the Student Handbook, is not tolerated, and, if persisted in after admonition by the professor, will be grounds for removal from the class. Disruptive behavior can include but is not limited to chronic lateness, leaving and re-entering the room while class is in session, and eating in class.

### Gordon Rule

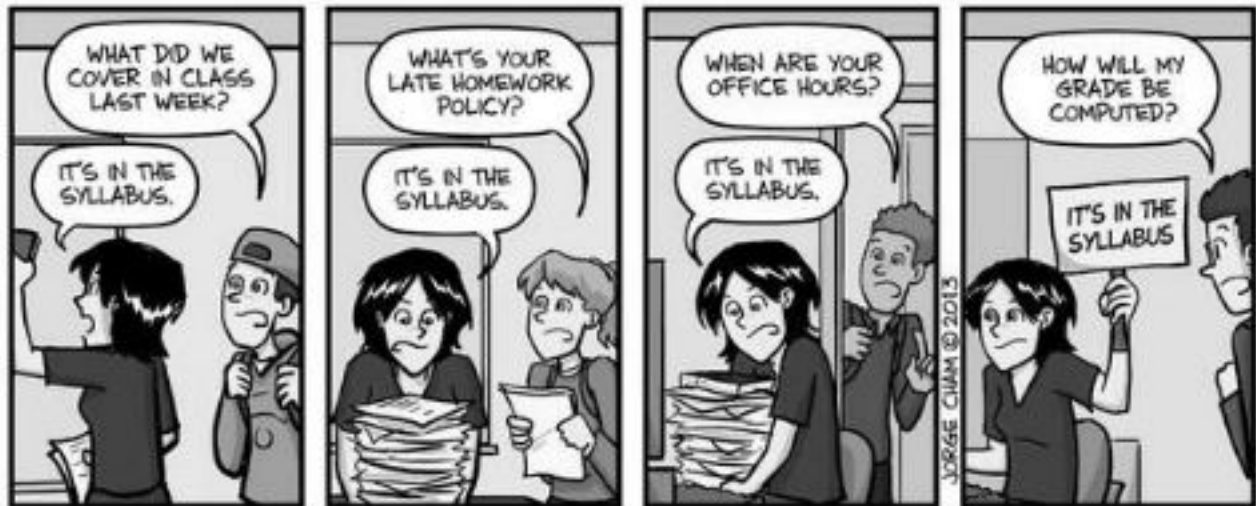
As per the Florida Department of Education: Florida Atlantic University requires students earning a baccalaureate degree to complete twelve (12) hours of writing-intensive coursework. Each three-hour course must include a minimum of 5,000 written words and at least one extensive revision. These writing assignments must figure into at least fifty percent (50%) of the final course grade. You must achieve a grade of "C" (not C-minus) or better in this course to receive credit. Furthermore, this class meets the University-wide Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) criteria, which expect you to improve your writing over the course of the term. The University's WAC program promotes the teaching of writing across all levels and all disciplines. Writing-to-learn activities have proven effective in developing critical thinking skills, learning discipline-specific content, and understanding and building competence in the modes of inquiry and writing for various disciplines and professions.

### Plagiarism

The Undergraduate Catalog describes academic irregularities, which, on the first occurrence, can result in a grade of "F" for the course and a notation on a student's record, and, on the second occurrence, can result in expulsion from the University. Among these is plagiarism.

Plagiarism is a form of theft. It means presenting the work of someone else as though it were your own, that is, without properly acknowledging the source. Sources include published material and the unpublished work of other students. If you do not acknowledge the source, you show an intent to deceive. Plagiarism is a grave matter. If your instructor suspects that you have

plagiarized all or part of any of your work, she or he has the right to submit that work to SafeAssign or Turnitin, our plagiarism detection services.<sup>4</sup>



# IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

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