THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION
AS.001.145, Fall 2022
Professor Michael Kwass (he, him, his)
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Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Objectives:
This seminar explores one of the most important events in modern history: the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). The Haitian Revolution was the most radical of all the Atlantic Revolutions, including the American and French Revolutions. Launched by enslaved people of African descent, the Revolution thwarted racial and colonial domination by European-descended peoples by abolishing slavery and establishing an independent Black nation in the heart of a hostile Atlantic world. How did this happen? What gave rise to the Revolution? How did Haitians end slavery, break away from France and other imperial powers, and create their own sovereign nation? What kinds of conflicts — both foreign and domestic — did Haitians face along the way, and what kinds of residual social and racial tensions continued to shape Haiti in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? By the end of the semester, I hope students will have gained a critical understanding of the origins, course, and legacy of the Haitian Revolution.

Course Requirements:
This is an inquiry-driven, student-led seminar. Students’ own curiosity, questions, and desire to learn will shape the class at every turn. The seminar is designed to foster meaningful civil exchange among students across disciplinary interests and from diverse backgrounds. To that end, all students are expected to contribute actively to class.

To obtain a grade of “S” (satisfactory), students must:

1) Post questions on the reading on Canvass by 10pm on Monday and Wednesday evenings in anticipation of class the next day. In addition to posting one question on the reading, students must post a short statement (2-4 clear sentences) explaining why their question is exciting or important. How does the question illuminate the significance of the reading assignment, and what kinds of discussions might it prompt? Don’t be afraid to take intellectual risks!

2) Lead class discussion. Students will read one another’s questions on line before class and bring their own questions to class. At the beginning of every class, I will divide students into small groups of three. Each group will discuss the questions they have formulated, sharpen them to make them as clear and incisive as possible, and choose one principal question and one back-up question to share with the class. I’ll write the questions on the board. Then, two students will assist me in leading class discussion based loosely on those questions and any other questions they have prepared in advance. Everyone is expected to contribute to class discussion and to make it easy for the discussion leaders to do their job — think of discussion as a team effort! The aim of this exercise is to interrogate the readings, particularly the primary sources (documents from the period), and build students’ skills for engaging in collective analysis, interpretation, and intellectual sociability.
3) Write two short papers on primary sources. The first paper, due October 18, should make an argument about the meaning of a primary source (or small set of sources) we discussed in class. The second paper, due December 15, should analyze a primary source (or small set of sources) of your own choosing. Papers should be approximately four double-spaced pages in length (with 12-point font and standard margins).

4) On October 18, the date on which first papers are due, students will deliver a five-minute presentation on their first paper in which they lay out their papers’ arguments.

**Required Texts (available for purchase at the JHU bookstore and on e-reserve at the JHU Library):**


Additional readings are available on e-reserve at the JHU library

**Student Resources:**
Johns Hopkins offers students a wide array of academic and health resources. I strongly encourage you to make use of them. My past students have found the Writing Center (see below) to be particularly useful. Regarding health resources, please keep in mind that the university offers mental health services, such as the Counseling Center (see below), in addition to physical health services. It is perfectly normal for college students to experience mental health challenges during the academic year, which is why the university offers mental health services to the student body.

So, please make use of:

*People around you:*
- Each other
- Your professors & TAs
- Your FYM (first-year mentor)
- Your RA (resident assistant)

*Academic resources:*
- [Writing Center](#)
- [ESL Consulting](#)
- [Research & Library Assistance](#)
Health resources:

- Student Well-being
- Counseling Center (or call 410-516-8278, open 24/7)
- One-stop shopping for resources for 1st-years
- Student Health & Wellness Center
- Religious & Spiritual Life
- Recreation Center
- A Place to Talk (peer counseling)
- Office of Institutional Equity

Finally, please don’t forget to register to vote if you’re eligible. Democracies are fragile and depend on the active participation of citizens like you.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (Aug 30 and Sept 1): Introduction to Class
Tue: Review syllabus. Think about which weeks you might want to lead discussion.


Week 2 (Sept 6 and 8): Spanish and French Colonization

Th: Popkin, *Concise History*, pp. 15-19; Geggus, pp. 6-7 (A Slave Trader’s View); and the code noir translated by Garrigus at the following website: [https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/1205/2016/02/code-noir.pdf](https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/1205/2016/02/code-noir.pdf)

Week 3 (Sept 13 and 15): A Slave Society: Power and Resistance

**Week 4 (Sept 20 and 22): Racism in the Enlightenment**

Th: Individual Meetings: see sign-up sheet

**Week 5 (Sept 27 and 29): The French Revolution, the Free People of Color, and the Uprising of the Enslaved**
Tue: Popkin, *Concise History*, pp. 29-36. Dubois and Garrigus, pp. 60-63 (Grégoire), 63-65 (Vincent Ogé), and 66-69 (Julien Raimond).


**Week 6 (Oct 4 and 6): Emancipation**

Th: Popkin, *Concise History*, 58-69; Geggus, pp. 98-114 (Slave Emancipation).

**Week 7 (Oct 11 and 13): The Rise of Toussaint Louverture**
Tue: Popkin, *Concise History*, pp. 69-91; Dubois and Garrigus, pp. 141-149 (Toussaint Louverture)

Th: Visit to the Library: Meet at the Macksey Room in the rare book department of the library. Dubois and Garrigus, pp. 150-157 (The Haitian Revolution and the United States)

**Week 8 (Oct 18 and 20): Papers and Presentations**
Tue: Papers due. Presentations.

Th: Fall Break

**Week 9 (Oct 25 and 27): The Rise of Toussaint Louverture and the Struggle for Independence**

Th: Popkin, *Concise History*, 116-136; Geggus, pp. 168-170 (The War of Independence), 171-172 (Bonaparte on Slave Emancipation); 176-178 (collaboration and Revolt), 178-179 (Atrocities)

**Week 10 (Nov 1 and 3): Post-Revolutionary Haiti**
Tue: Popkin, *Concise History*, 136-142; Geggus, pp. 179-180 (Declaration of Independence) and pp. 180-182 (Dessaline’s Proclamation); Dubois and Garrigus, pp. 181-186 (The Haitian Constitution).

Week 11 (Nov 8 and 10): The Impact of the Haitian Revolution

Th: Popkin, *Concise History*, 143-168; Geggus, pp. 200-205; and the following document: http://faculty.webster.edu/corbetre/haiti/history/earlyhaiti/recognition.htm

Week 12 (Nov 15 and 17): Nineteenth-Century Haitian Society and Culture

Th: No class. Start reading for week 14.

Week 13 (Nov 22 and 24): Holiday

Week 14 (Nov 29 and Dec 1): Haiti in the News: The Indemnity and Reparations
https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/20/world/americas/haiti-history-colonized-france.html

Th:
1) “A Staggering Debt”:

2) “Invade Haiti, Wall Street Urged”:

3) “Demanding Reparations”
https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/20/world/americas/haiti-aristide-reparations-france.html

Week 15 (Dec 6 and 8): Representations of the Haitian Revolution in Film

Th: Discussion of Sepinwall and *Top Five*. 
Final paper due December 15.