

## The 1619 Project: History and Public Debate

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### Course Description and Goals

In August 2019, the *New York Times Magazine* released a special issue of its publication entitled the “1619 Project”. Edited by Dr. Nikole Hannah-Jones, the project features essays by a team of writers seeking to rethink the United States’s historical relationship to slavery. The project immediately captured public attention, simultaneously winning a Pulitzer Prize and attracting an onslaught of criticism from some professional historians and conservative media and politicians. This class will study the 1619 Project: its content, the historical scholarship on which it is built, and the public debate surrounding it.

The course goals are for students to

- 1) Identify both the general argument Dr. Hannah-Jones makes in the 1619 Project, and the content of each of the individual essays.
- 2) Master the broader scholarship on which the project’s authors drew to make their arguments
- 3) Analyze the public debate about the project, with a particular appreciation for the difference between debates over the content of the Project’s essays, and the broader debate over how to address present systemic racism in the United States
- 4) Communicate their interpretation of the 1619 Project to others in a meaningful and approachable format with the goal of improving the climate of debate in society at large

### Required Texts

We will be reading a diverse array of book chapters, academic articles, and media content (online and print newspaper articles, op-eds, and blog posts). Readings will be shared with students on blackboard and on the library’s e-reserve. Students are therefore **not required to purchase any texts**. All readings

will be available electronically on the library's ereserve website:

<https://ares.library.jhu.edu/shib/ares.dll>

Students can also refer to the following link when reading the 1619 project:

[https://pulitzercenter.org/sites/default/files/full\\_issue\\_of\\_the\\_1619\\_project.pdf](https://pulitzercenter.org/sites/default/files/full_issue_of_the_1619_project.pdf)

The syllabus includes a wide array of readings from several types of sources. **Do not hesitate to reach out if you are having trouble accessing the readings!** Technical difficulties happen and I am more than happy to help.

### **Grading**

This course is **reading intensive and discussion based**. Lectures are intended to give students background information to contextualize the readings as needed. **Attendance is therefore vital**. Students needing to miss class should alert me in advance.

In addition, there will be three projects that will contribute to final grades:

- Participation (33%)
- Group Project (33%)
- Final project (33%)

### **Assignments**

#### 1) Group Project

Each week we will read a collection of academic publications and news articles that relate to the 1619 Project essay under discussion. In the final weeks of the course, the readings will be chosen, and the discussion led, by student groups. Two classes will be devoted to working labs to allow students to select and plan the readings. Groups will give a brief presentation at the beginning of class to discuss how they selected the readings and will be in charge of structuring and running the discussion. The goal is to develop your skills interrogating the sources of argument-driven content. I will distribute a list of suggested topics for these group discussions, but students are welcome to select topics themselves.

#### 2) Final Project

Students will develop either their ideas from class discussions or their presentation from the group-project readings into either a research paper or a format intended for a public audience. This can take the form of a youtube video, podcast, a series of Tik-Tok videos, a series of Twitter threads, op-ed, or blog post. There will be one final working lab one week before the project is due for students to discuss and

### **Disabilities and Counseling**

If you are a student with a registered accommodation for a disability, please let me know.

If you believe you might require accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services ([studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu](mailto:studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu), 410-516-4720) or in-person at 385 Garland Hall.

Students experience mental health problems should be aware of the services provided by the Counseling Center: 410-516-8278, <https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/counselingcenter/>  
General mental wellness resources are available at: <http://wellness.jhu.edu>.

## Week 1 (Jan 24 and Jan 26): Introduction

- Tues., Jan 24: Introductions
  
- Thurs, Jan 26: Narratives of History
  - Readings and Discussion
    - Nikole Hannah-Jones 1619 Project Essay, 15-26.
    - Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Beacon Press, (2015, 1995), xi-xiv, xxi-xxiii, 1-70 (foreword, preface, chapter 1, chapter 2)
    - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story”,
      - [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en)
    - Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 1-8, 251-260, 269-271

## Week 2 (Jan 31 and Feb 2): Race and the Founding

- Tues, Jan 31: Race in American Identity
  - Lecture: Race, Slavery, and the Founding of the American Colonies
- Thurs Feb 2: Race and Revolution
  - Readings and Discussion
    - Robert G. Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution*, 19-24
    - Woody Holton , *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 133-161.
    - Duncan J. Macleod, “Toward Caste,” in eds. Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution*, (University Press of Virginia: Charlottesville, 1983), 230-236.
    - Manisha Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause: A History of Abolition*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 1-5, 34-53
    - Leslie M. Harris, “I Helped Fact-Check the 1619 Project. The Times Ignored Me.”
      - <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/03/06/1619-project-new-york-times-mistake-122248>
    - Jake Silverstein, “We Respond to the Historians Who Critiqued the 1619 Project”
      - <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/magazine/we-respond-to-the-historians-who-critiqued-the-1619-project.html>

- Sean Wilentz, “A Matter of Facts”
  - <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/01/1619-project-new-york-times-wilentz/605152/>
- Adam Serwer, “The Fight Over the 1619 Project is Not About the Facts”
  - <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/12/historians-clash-1619-project/604093/>

## Week 3 (Feb 7 and Feb 9): Civil War and Reconstruction

- Tues Feb 7: Civil War and Reconstruction
  - Lecture: The Political Economy of Jim Crow
- Thurs Feb 9: Jim Crow and the Long Civil Rights Movement
  - Reading and Discussion
    - Martha Jones, *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All*, 1-11, 19-28, 43-49, 86-90, 128-132, 150-152
    - Hilary Green, *Educational Reconstruction: African American Schools in the Urban South, 1865-1890*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 1-35
    - Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *The Journal of American History* no. 4, (Mar., 2005), pp. 1233-1263, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3660172> .
    - Lani Guinier, “From Racial Liberalism to Racial Literacy: *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Interest-Divergence Dilemma” *Journal of American History* no. 91, (June, 2004), pp. 92-118, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3659616>

## Week 4 (Feb 14 and Feb 16): Capitalism and Slavery Part 1, What is Capitalism?

- Tues Feb 14: Guest Lecture: Dr. Martha Jones
- Thurs Feb 16: Readings and Discussion
  - Jurgen Kocka, *Capitalism: A Short History*, 1-25, 54-145

## Week 5 (Feb 21 and Feb 23): Capitalism and Slavery Part 2, Slavery’s Capitalism?

- Tues Feb 21: Lecture: The “New History of Capitalism” and the case for “Slavery’s Capitalism”
- Thurs Feb 23: Reading and Discussion
  - Ed Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, *Slavery’s Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*, 1-3, 31-87, 105-122
  - Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2007), 34-64

## Week 6 (Feb 28 and Mar 2): Capitalism and Slavery Part 3, the Conservative Reaction

- Tues Feb 28: Reading and Discussion
  - Mathew Desmond 1619 Essay, *Capitalism and Slavery*
  - Allen C. Guelzo, “The 1619 Project Tells a False Story about Capitalism, Too”
    - <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-1619-project-tells-a-false-story-about-capitalism-too-11588956387>
  - Deirdre McCloskey, “Slavery Did Not Make America Rich”
    - <https://reason.com/2018/07/19/slavery-did-not-make-america-r/>
  - Phillip W. Magness, *The 1619 Project: A Critique*, 7-22, 55-68
  - Marc Parry, “Shackles and Dollars: Historians and Economists clash over slavery”
    - <https://www.chronicle.com/article/shackles-and-dollars/>
  - Eric Foner, “A Brutal Process”
    - [https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/05/books/review/the-half-has-never-been-told-by-edward-e-baptist.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/05/books/review/the-half-has-never-been-told-by-edward-e-baptist.html?_r=0)
- Thurs Mar 2: Working Lab #1, Group Projects

## Week 7 (Mar 7 and Mar 9): Capitalism and Slavery Part 4, The Socialist Reaction

- Tues Mar 7: What is Neoliberalism?
  - Lecture: What is Neoliberalism?
  - Readings and Discussion
    - Alys Eve Weinbaum, *The Afterlife of Reproductive Slavery: Biocapitalism and Black Feminism’s Philosophy of History*, 1-28
- Thurs Mar 9: Socialist critiques of the 1619 project
  - Readings and Discussion
    - Ed David North and Thomas Mackaman, *The New York Times’ 1619 Project and the Racist Falsification of History*, xi-xxvi; 53-73; 125-137

## Week 8 (Mar 14 and Mar 16: Capitalism and Slavery, Part 4, the Wealth Gap

- Tues Mar 14: The Wealth Gap in the U.S.
  - Readings
    - Trymaine Lee, 1619 Project Essay, 83
    - Tiya Miles 1619 Project Essay, 40
    - Louis Hyman, *Debtor Nation: The History of America in Red Ink*, 46-47, 61-67, 173-215
    - William Darity Jr. et al, “What We Get Wrong About Closing the Racial Wealth Gap,” (Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity, April 2018), p. 1-20.

- <http://narrowthegap.org/images/documents/Wealth-Gap---FINAL-COMplete-REPORT.pdf>
  - Vann R. Newkirk II, "The Great Land Robbery: The shameful story of how 1 million black families have been ripped from their farms," *The Atlantic*, September 2019.
    - <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/09/this-land-was-our-land/594742/>
  - Emily Badger, "The Dramatic Racial Bias of Subprime Lending During the Housing Boom," *Bloomberg*, August 16, 2013
    - <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-08-16/the-dramatic-racial-bias-of-subprime-lending-during-the-housing-boom>
  - Michael Powell, "Banks Accused of Pushing Mortgage Deals on Blacks," *The New York Times*, June 6, 2009
    - [https://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/07/us/07baltimore.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/07/us/07baltimore.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)
- Thurs Mar 16: Working Lab #2, Group Projects

## Week 9 (Mar 21 and Mar 23): Spring Break

## Week 10 (Mar 28 and Mar 30): Public Policy

- Tues Mar 28: Anti-Democratic Politics
  - Jamelle Bouie 1619 Project Essay, 52-55
  - Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, "The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism," *Perspective on Politics No. 9*, (March, 2011), pp. 25-43.
  - Christopher S. Parker, "2010 Multi-State Survey on Race & Politics," <https://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/racepolitics.html>
  - "Charles Blow's 'The Devil You Know' Is A Black Power Manifesto For Our Time", <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/26/960665185/charles-blow-s-the-devil-you-know-is-a-black-power-manifesto-for-our-time>
- Thurs Mar 30: Traffic Jams
  - Kevin M. Kruse 1619 Project Essay, 48-50
  - Douwe Schipper, "The Baltimore maglev: another too good to be true promise in city transportation"
    - <https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/op-ed/bs-ed-op-0708-maglev-con-20210707-zjcou3cqzzgi7menwl3kiafblq-story.html>
  - Emily Lieb, "'White Man's Lane': Hollowing Out the Highway Ghetto in Baltimore," in eds Jessica Elfenbein, Thomas Hollowak, and Elizabeth Nix, *Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth in an American City*, (Temple University Press: Philadelphia, 2011), pp 51-69

## Week 11 (Apr 4 and Apr 6): Student-Led Discussion

- Tues Apr 4:
- Thurs Apr 6:

## Week 12: (Apr 11 and Apr 13): Student-Led Discussion

- Tues Apr 11
- Thurs Apr 13:

## Week 13 (Apr 18 and Apr 20): Student-Led Discussion

- Tues Apr 18:
- Thurs Apr 20:

## Week 14 (Apr 25 and Apr 27): Closing Thoughts

- Tuesday: The University Institution and the 1619 Project
  - Readings and Discussions
    - “After Tenure Controversy, Nikole Hannah-Jones Will Join Howard Faculty Instead Of UNC”
    - <https://www.npr.org/2021/07/06/1013315775/after-tenure-controversy-nikole-hannah-jones-will-join-howard-faculty-instead-of>
    - Nikole Hannah-Jones, Statement on decision to join Howard University
      - <https://www.naacpldf.org/press-release/nikole-hannah-jones-issues-statement-on-decision-to-decline-tenure-offer-at-university-of-north-carolina-chapel-hill-and-to-accept-knight-chair-appointment-at-howard-university/>
    - Imani Light, “An Open Letter to Nikole Hannah-Jones from a Howard Faculty Member”
      - <https://howardprof.medium.com/an-open-letter-to-nikole-hannah-jones-from-a-howard-faculty-member-ad1fb3f9c05b>
    - Asheen Kapur Siddique, “Campus Cancel Culture Freakouts Obscure the Power of University Boards”
      - <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/campus-cancel-culture-university-boards>

- Samuel J. Abrams and Amna Khalid, “Are colleges and universities too liberal? What the research says about the political composition of campuses and campus climate”
    - <https://www.aei.org/articles/are-colleges-and-universities-too-liberal-what-the-research-says-about-the-political-composition-of-campuses-and-campus-climate/>
  - Michael Mitchell, Michael Leachman, and Matt Saenz, “State Higher Education Funding Cuts Have Pushed Costs to Students, Worsened Inequality”
    - <https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/state-higher-education-funding-cuts-have-pushed-costs-to-students>
  - Natalie L. Khan, “‘An Endangered Species’: The Scarcity of Harvard’s Conservative Faculty”
    - <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2021/4/9/disappearance-conservative-faculty/>
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- Thursday: Working Lab #3: Final Projects