

THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION
AS.001.145, Fall 2023
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 Canvas 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 17, 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 (you are required to purchase hard copies of the following books, which are available at the JHU bookstore):

Jeremy D. Popkin, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution*, 2nd edition (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2022)

Laurent Dubois and John D. Garrigus, eds., *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents* (The Bedford Series in History and Culture) (2nd edition, 2017)

David Geggus, ed., *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2014)

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](#)
- [Office of Academic Support](#)
- [Center for Student Success](#)

- [Student Disability Services](#)
- [Citation sources \(JHU library\)](#)
- [Purdue Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#)
- [Homewood Undergraduate Ethics Policy](#)

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 29 and Aug 31): Introduction to Class

Tue: Review syllabus. Think about which weeks you might want to lead discussion.

Th: Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995), chap. 3: An unthinkable history, pp. 71-107. **Schedule pairs of discussion leaders: every pair must lead discussion twice. Also, circulate sign-up sheet for individual 15-minute meetings on September 21, 4:30-6:00pm.**

Week 2 (Sept 5 and 7): Spanish and French Colonization

Tue: *Concise History*, pp. 1-15; and *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America, 1492-1493*, American Exploration & Travel Series, Vol. 70, eds. Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelley (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, paperback, 1991), "Thursday 10 - Saturday 13 October 1492," pp. 57-73, and "Thursday 6 December," pp. 203-208.

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>

Week 3 (Sept 12 and 14): A Slave Society: Power and Resistance

Tue: Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from below* (Knoxville, TN, 1997), Chapter 1 (pp. 15-45); Geggus, pp. 7-9 (Plantation Slaves) and 10-12 (The Lejeune Atrocity Case).

Th: Popkin, *Concise History*, pp. 19-26; Geggus, pp. 12-13 (Racial Discrimination: Official), 14 (Racial Discrimination: Unofficial), and 15-35 (Slave Resistance).

Week 4 (Sept 19 and 21): Racism in the Enlightenment

Tue: Popkin, *Concise History*, pp. 26-29; Andrew Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science and Slavery in the Age of Enlightenment*, chap. 4.

Th: Individual Meetings: see sign-up sheet

Week 5 (Sept 26 and 28): 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).

Th: Popkin, *Concise History*, pp. 37-58; Geggus, 77-78 (The Lenormand Meeting), 78-79 (The Bois Caiman Ceremony); Dubois and Garrigus, pp. 83-87 (Philadelphia General Advertiser).

Week 6 (Oct 3 and 5): Emancipation

Tue: John K. Thornton, "African Soldiers in the Haitian Revolution", *Journal of Caribbean History* 25 (1991), pp. 58-80; Dubois and Garrigus, pp. 91-95 (Gros).

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

Week 7 (Oct 10 and 12): 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 17 and 19): Papers and Presentations

Tue: **Papers due. Presentations.**

Th: Fall Break

Week 9 (Oct 24 and 26): The Rise of Toussaint Louverture and the Struggle for Independence

Tue: Popkin, *Concise History*, 92-115; Geggus, pp. 153-154 (Toussaint's labor decree), pp. 154-158 (A British Visitor), pp. 160-164 (Toussaint Louverture's Constitution of 1801)

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 (Oct 31 and Nov 2): Post-Revolutionary Haiti

Tue: Popkin, *Concise History*, 136-150; Geggus, pp. 179-180 (Declaration of Independence) and pp. 180-182 (Dessaline's Proclamation); Dubois and Garrigus, pp. 181-186 (The Haitian Constitution).

Th: No reading. In-class documentary film: "Jean-Jacques Dessalines: le vainqueur de Napoléon Bonaparte" by Arnold Antonin. Meet in library at the audio-visual screening room on A-level.

Week 11 (Nov 7 and 9): The Impact of the Haitian Revolution

Tue: Ashli White, “The Politics of “French Negroes” in the United States,” in Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, ed., *Haitian History: New Perspectives* (Routledge, 2013), chap. 5 (pp. 123-138); Geggus, pp. 183-199 (Overseas Reactions).

Th: No Class. Start reading for next week.

Week 12 (Nov 14 and 16): Nineteenth-Century Haitian Society and Culture

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

Th: Johnhenry Gonzales, *Maroon Nation*, chap. 5; Mimi Sheller, “Sword-Bearing Citizens: Militarism and Manhood in Nineteenth-Century Haiti,” in Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, ed., *Haitian History: New Perspectives* (Routledge, 2013), chap. 7 (157-179).

Week 13 (Nov 21 and 23): HolidayWeek 14 (Nov 28 and 30): Haiti in the News: The Indemnity and Reparations

Tue: Kris Manjapra, *Black Ghost of Empire* (New York, 2022), chapter 2 (pp. 45-68); and “The Root of Haiti’s Misery,” *New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/20/world/americas/haiti-history-colonized-france.html>

Th: Elazar Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices* (New York, 2000), chapter 12 (pp. 283-307) and conclusion (pp. 308-349); and “A Staggering Debt”: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/05/20/world/americas/enslaved-haiti-debt-timeline.html?action=click&pgtype=Article&state=default&module=stylIn-haiti-package&variant=show®ion=MAIN_CONTENT_1&block=storyline_top_links_recirc

Week 15 (Dec 5 and 7): Representations of the Haitian Revolution in Film

Tue: [TBD: WATCH FILM OR PLAY VIDEO GAME]

Th: Pizza Party: Discussion of Film or Video

Final paper due December 15.