

HIST-1813: SPECIAL TOPICS IN HISTORY: FREEDOM STRUGGLES

Cuyahoga Community College

Viewing: HIST-1813 : Special Topics in History: Freedom Struggles

Academic Term:

Spring 2026

Subject Code

HIST - History

Course Number:

1813

Title:

Special Topics in History: Freedom Struggles

Catalog Description:

Freedom Struggles explores African American resistance movements from the Underground Railroad to Freedom Summer, examining how sound, story, and place shape the fight for liberation. Through historical texts, music, and primary sources, students investigate themes of remembrance, activism, and cultural expression. Midway through the semester, students embark on a transformative travel experience to key civil rights sites in Mississippi, Tennessee, and Ohio. This interdisciplinary course invites deep reflection on the legacy of struggle and the meaning of freedom today. Open to all majors; ideal for students interested in history, music, education, or civic engagement.

Credit Hour(s):

3

Lecture Hour(s):

3

Requisites

Prerequisite and Corequisite

Departmental approval.

Outcomes

Course Outcome(s):

Demonstrate Historical Understanding

Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:

Critical/Creative Thinking: Analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information in order to consider problems/ideas and transform them in innovative or imaginative ways.

Objective(s):

1. Analyze major African American resistance movements using historical texts and primary sources.
2. Synthesize insights from history, music, literature, and cultural studies to produce original work that balances academic rigor with personal engagement.
3. Evaluate how place, memory, and public history shape narratives of liberation.

Course Outcome(s):

Interpret Cultural and Musical Traditions

Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:

Cultural Sensitivity: Demonstrate sensitivity to the beliefs, views, values, and practices of cultures within and beyond the United States.

Objective(s):

1. Examine African American musical forms (including spirituals, blues, and protest songs) as expressions of cultural resistance and historical witness.
2. Explore the emotional and ethical dimensions of activism, martyrdom, and remembrance through guided reflection and creative response.
3. Interpret cultural expressions—such as music, poetry, and oral history—as forms of protest and remembrance.

Course Outcome(s):

Collaborate for Civic Awareness

Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:

Civic Responsibility: Analyze the results of actions and inactions with the likely effects on the larger local and/or global communities.

Objective(s):

1. Work collectively to connect historical freedom struggles with contemporary issues, fostering civic identity and responsibility.
2. Analyze historical and contemporary acts of resistance—alongside moments of inaction—to evaluate their impact on local and global communities, with attention to civic engagement, cultural legacy, and social transformation.

Methods of Evaluation:

1. Written assessments
2. Quizzes/Exams
3. Discussion Boards
4. Journals
5. Research projects
6. Book/article reviews
7. Assessment of musical knowledge (Creative Response Format)
7. Creative reflection piece post - travel experience
8. Annotated bibliographies or discographies

Course Content Outline:

Week 1 – Foundations of Resistance

1. The Beginnings of Black Abolitionism in the 1820s
2. Early Networks of Solidarity and Escape
3. African American Religious and Intellectual Traditions

Week 2 – Underground Railroad as Infrastructure

1. Fugitive Routes and Free Black Communities
2. Northern Activism and Eric Foner's *Gateway to Freedom*
3. *Myth vs. Reality in Underground Railroad Narratives*

Week 3 – Harriet Tubman and Sonic Resistance

1. Harriet Tubman's Legacy and Leadership
2. Spirituals as Codes and Cultural Memory
3. Tiya Miles' *Night Flyer* and Tubman's Faith Vision

Week 4 – Black Abolitionist Voices and Print Culture

1. David Walker, Maria Stewart, and Frederick Douglass
2. Newspapers, Pamphlets, and Resistance Literature
3. Black Women's Intellectual Labor in the Antebellum Era

Week 5 – Civil War and Emancipation

1. Contraband Camps and Black Military Service
2. Sound, Story, and the Meaning of Freedom
3. Emancipation Proclamation and Its Limits

Week 6 – Reconstruction and Backlash

1. Black Political Participation and Constitutional Change
2. White Supremacist Violence and Lost Cause Mythology
3. The Rise of Black Institutions and Education

Week 7 – Jim Crow and Everyday Resistance

1. Segregation, Disenfranchisement, and Survival Strategies
2. Blues and Gospel as Cultural Protest
3. Gendered Resistance and Black Women’s Labor

Week 8 – The Great Migration and Northern Activism

1. Movement, Labor, and Urban Resistance
2. Cultural Expression in Music, Art, and Literature
3. Isabel Wilkerson’s *The Warmth of Other Suns*

Week 9 – World War II and the Seeds of Change

1. Black Military Service and the Double V Campaign
2. Early Legal Challenges and the NAACP’s Strategy
3. Cold War Politics and Civil Rights Framing

Week 10 – The Modern Civil Rights Era Begins

1. Brown v. Board and the Montgomery Bus Boycott
2. The Role of Women and Youth in Early Organizing
3. The Radical Edge of Nonviolence

Week 11 – Freedom Summer and Grassroots Activism

1. SNCC, MFDP, and the Architecture of Risk
2. Dittmer, Kolnick, McLemore’s *Freedom Summer* – Documents and Context
3. Oral Histories and Local Organizing Traditions

Week 12 – Music as Protest and Cultural Memory

1. Daphne Brooks’ *Liner Notes* and Black Feminist Sound
2. Protest Songs from Billie Holiday to Sam Cooke
3. Student-Curated Playlists and Sonic Reflections

Week 13 – Public History and Contested Memory

1. Museums, Monuments, and Memorials
2. Whose Stories Get Told and How?
3. Debates Over Curriculum and Historical Representation

Week 14 – Creative Resistance and Student Voice

1. Poetry, Performance, and Personal Expression
2. Audre Lorde’s “Poetry Is Not a Luxury” and Student Projects
3. Freedom Dreams and Radical Imagination

Week 15 – Contemporary Connections

1. Civic Engagement and Modern Movements
2. Ta-Nehisi Coates and the Legacy of Reparations
3. Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow* and Policy Critique

Week 16 – Reflection and Closure

1. Defining Freedom in the Present
2. Final Presentations and Course Synthesis
3. Building a Living Archive for Future Generations

Religious Accommodation

Before reviewing the course schedule, students should carefully review the following religious accommodation policy and other required instructional policies:

Religious Accommodation:

Students seeking an accommodation for absences permitted under Ohio’s Testing Your Faith Act must provide the instructor with written notice of the specific dates for which the student requires an accommodation and must do so not later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of instruction. Please submit requests for accommodations at this link: <https://portal2.tri-c.edu/ReligiousAccommodation/> Religious Accommodation Form. Students with questions about their religious accommodations under Ohio’s Testing Your Faith Act may contact the College’s Office of General Counsel and Legal Services by phone at 216.987.4856 or via email at legal@tri-c.edu.

Other Required Instructional Policies:

<https://www.tri-c.edu/student-resources/curriculum/documents/syllabus-part-b.pdf>

Weekly Schedule

	Topics
Week 1	Introduction and foundations of resistance
Week 2	Underground Railroad as Infrastructure
Week 3	Harriet Tubman as Sonic Resistance
Week 4	Black Abolitionist Voices and Print Culture
Week 5	Civil War and Emancipation
Week 6	Reconstruction and Backlash
Week 7	Jim Crow and Everyday Resistance
Week 8	The Great Migration and Northern Activism
Week 9	World War II and the Seeds of Change
Week 10	The Modern Civil Rights Era Begins
Week 11	Freedom Summer and Grassroots Activism
Week 12	Music as Protest and Cultural Memory
Week 13	Public History and Contested Memory
Week 14	Creative Resistance and Student Voice
Week 15	Contemporary Connections
Week 16	Reflection and Closure

The Course Schedule is subject to change due to pedagogical needs, instructor discretion, parts of term, and unexpected events.

Required/Recommended Readings

Dittmer, John. *Freedom Summer: A Brief History with Documents*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2017.

Dittmer, John. *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*. University of Illinois Press, 1994.

Foner, Eric. *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2015.

Miles, Tiya. *Night Flyer: Harriet Tubman and the Faith Dreams of a Free People*. Penguin Press, 2024.

Brooks, Daphne A. *Liner Notes for the Revolution: The Intellectual Life of Black Feminist Sound*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2021.

Resources for the Instructor

Dittmer, John. . *Freedom Summer: A Brief History with Documents*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2017.

Dittmer, John. *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*. University of Illinois Press, 1994.

Foner, Eric. *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2015.

Miles, Tiya. *Night Flyer: Harriet Tubman and the Faith Dreams of a Free People*. Penguin Press, 2024.

Brooks, Daphne A. *Liner Notes for the Revolution: The Intellectual Life of Black Feminist Sound*.. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2021.

Payne, Charles M. . *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*. University of California Press, , 1995.

Kelley, Robin D. G. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Beacon Press, 2002.

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. Revised ed. New Press, 2012.

Jones, Martha S. . *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America*. . Cambridge University Press, , 2018.

Blackmon, Douglas A. . *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. . Anchor Books, , 2008.

Additional Resources for the Instructor

Smithsonian NMAAHC (<https://nmaahc.si.edu/>)

PBS: *The Underground Railroad – The Paths & Places of Refuge*

Smithsonian Folkways: Protest Songs Collection (<https://folkways.si.edu/protest-songs-introduction/music/tools-for-teaching/smithsonian/>)

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