

HISTORY 206R: AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY HISTORY

"Genealogical trees do not flourish among slaves."

-FREDERICK DOUGLASS, 1855

Christopher Jones
christopher.jones@byu.edu
Office: 2109 JFSB
Office Hours: M, 10:15-11:45 am; F, 10:30-11:30 am

Fall 2019
Section 003 (385 CB)
Th 9:00-9:50 am

COURSE DESCRIPTION + OBJECTIVES:

This course is designed to provide students with a general knowledge of sound research methods and resources available for African American family history. It is assumed that students come to the class with the doctrinal and research background of History 205. Students who lack this training are encouraged to use the resources available at the Family History Workshops (details are available via Learning Suite). Along with History 205, this class is intended to give students skills to help in their research of African American family history.

COURSE FORMAT AND OBJECTIVES:

The central aim of History 206R is to help students learn practical skills in family history/genealogical research and citation, methodology, record preservation and writing. This particular section of the course aims to help students develop research and writing skills for African American family history research.

The class will consist of some combination of lectures, discussions, problem-solving exercises, exams, and hands-on research.

REQUIRED READING:

The following book is available at the BYU Bookstore and from various online retailers. It is also available in electronic format through the Harold B. Lee Library.

- Heather Andrea Williams, *Help Me to Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012)

Additional readings will be available via the Harold B. Lee Library (HBLL) or Learning Suite (LS).

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:

There are seven graded components to this course:

1. ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION – 10%

Students are expected to attend class and actively participate. This necessitates reading the assigned material before class and coming prepared to participate in class discussions and other in-class activities. I will take roll regularly throughout the semester.

Students may miss one class period without being penalized, though you are responsible for any material missed in case of absence and cannot make up any assignments missed as a result of your absence. **Your final (total) grade will be penalized one percentage point for each class period missed after that.** In addition, **I reserve the right to adjust borderline grades up or down based on attendance and participation in class discussion.**

2. IN-CLASS WRITING/PROBLEM-SOLVING EXERCISES – 5%

There will be three (3) short, low-risk exercises meant to engage you with important research methodologies. They might cover project planning; accounting for missing or contradictory information; responding to an assigned reading; formulating research strategies; or planning for future research. *They cannot be made up.*

3. DIGITAL HISTORY PROJECTS – 10%

Each of you will be required to contribute 30 transcriptions to *Freedom on the Move* (<https://freedomonthemove.org/>) and/or *Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery* (<http://informationwanted.org/>), collaborative research databases documenting African American individuals and families during and after slavery. Entries will be due on a rolling basis over the course of the semester. See due dates below under "Class Readings + Schedule."

4. RESEARCH REPORT – 30%

You will each research and write a research report about an African American individual. For most of you, that person will be a black Latter-day Saint, and your research will form the basis of a new entry on the Century of Black Mormons website. The culminating project of this class will be the completion of a formal Research Report/Biographical Summary of that person's life and family. Sample research reports and biographical entries from CBM are available on Learning Suite. Your report should be approximately 1000-1500 words.

Concentrate on analyzing specific information and demonstrating how pieces of evidence support a specific conclusion. Your report should reflect information from

original records or indexes to original records.

All sources should be cited in footnotes. Please attach a Family Group Record (FGR) as a pdf, as well as a research log. Templates and examples of each are available on LS.

5. METADATA SHEET – FIRST DRAFT- 7.5%

Fill out a “metadata” sheet for the individual you are working on for your research report, including as much information as possible by the due date. The template can be accessed via Learning Suite.

6. METADATA SHEET – FINAL DRAFT- 12.5%

Complete a “metadata” sheet for the individual you are working on for your research report, including as much information as possible. The template can be accessed via Learning Suite.

7. FINAL EXAM – 25%

Take home, due via Learning Suite by 11:59 pm on Wednesday, December 18.

POLICIES AND REMINDERS:

This class is intended to be a space to critically and thoughtfully discuss African American Family History. Please feel free to ask questions and offer opinions during class (in fact, your grade depends on it!), but always treat your classmates, your professor, and the individuals we discuss (both living and dead) with respect. Disagreement is allowed, but personal attacks and insults are not. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. If you experience a problem, please report the situation to the professor immediately.

A NOTE ON TECHNOLOGY AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

You are welcome to use laptops, tablets, and other electronic devices in class for taking notes, viewing reading materials, and/or completing in-class assignments. Each of us learns differently and takes notes differently. Regardless of how you take notes, please do your best to not distract the class or your fellow students. To that end, please silence your electronic devices and use them only to take notes or access course materials. As a former student and a current instructor, please rest assured that I can tell when you are browsing the internet, facebooking, tweeting, snapchatting, instagramming, TikTok-ing, or using any other social media app or game, or reading material not relevant to this class. I reserve the right to ask you to put your electronic devices away at any point.

A NOTE ON CHILDREN IN CLASS

As part of my commitment to helping all students succeed, I have implemented the following policies regarding children in class:

- 1) All breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as necessary.

- 2) Non-nursing babies and older children are welcome whenever alternate arrangements cannot be made. As a parent of three young children, I understand that babysitters fall through, partners have conflicting schedules, and other issues arise that leave parents with few other options.
- 3) In all cases where children come to class, I invite parents/caregivers to sit close to the door so as to more easily excuse yourself to attend to your child's needs. Non-parents in the class, please reserve seats near the door for your parenting classmates.
- 4) All students are expected to join with me in creating a welcoming environment that is respectful of your classmates who bring children to class.
- 5) Finally, I understand that among the most difficult aspects of parenting young children is sleep deprivation and exhaustion. The struggles of balancing school, work, childcare, and other day-to-day activities is tiring, and I will do my best to accommodate any such issues while maintaining the same high expectations for all students enrolled in the class. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Honor Code: In keeping with the principles of the BYU Honor Code, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. Academic honesty means, most fundamentally, that any work you present as your own must in fact be your own work and not that of another. Violations of this principle may result in a failing grade in the course and additional disciplinary action by the university. Students are also expected to adhere to the Dress and Grooming Standards. Please call the Honor Code Office at (810) 422-2847 if you have questions about those standards.

Preventing + Responding to Sexual Misconduct: In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Brigham Young University prohibits unlawful sex discrimination against any participant in its education programs or activities. The university also prohibits sexual harassment—including sexual violence—committed by or against students, university employees, and visitors to campus. As outlined in university policy, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are considered forms of "Sexual Misconduct" prohibited by the university.

University policy requires all university employees in a teaching, managerial, or supervisory role to report all incidents of Sexual Misconduct that come to their attention in any way, including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Incidents of Sexual Misconduct should be reported to the Title IX Coordinator at t9coordinator@byu.edu or (801) 422-8692. Reports may also be submitted through EthicsPoint at <https://titleix.byu.edu/report> or 1-888-238-1062 (24-hours a day).

BYU offers confidential resources for those affected by Sexual Misconduct, including the university's Victim Advocate, as well as a number of non-confidential resources and services that may be

helpful. Additional information about Title IX, the university's Sexual Misconduct Policy, reporting requirements, and resources can be found at <http://titleix.byu.edu> or by contacting the university's Title IX Coordinator.

Students With Disabilities: Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (2170 WSC). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified, documented disabilities. The UAC can also assess students for learning, attention, and emotional concerns. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures by contacting the Equal Employment Office at (801) 422-5895, D-285 ASB.

Mental Health: Mental health concerns and stressful life events can affect students' academic performance and quality of life. BYU Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS, 1500 WSC, (801) 422-3035) provides individuals, couples, and group counseling, as well as stress management services. These services are confidential and are provided by the university at no cost for full-time students. For general information please visit <https://caps.byu.edu>; for more immediate concerns please visit <http://help.byu.edu>.

CLASS SCHEDULE + READINGS

WEEK 1

September 5 **Course Overview**

WEEK 2

September 12 **The Practice, Politics, + Promise of African-American Genealogy**
Watch: Ancestry.com ad (available [here](#))
Read: Janell Ross, "Ancestry.com ad pulled, criticized for sugarcoating slavery," NBCNews.com (available [here](#)); Adam H. Domby, "Beyond Romantic Advertisements: Ancestry.com, Genealogy, and White Supremacy," Black Perspectives (available [here](#)); Williams, *Help Me to Find My People*, pp. 190-200.

WEEK 3

September 19 **Databases and analysis**
Read: African American Family History Research Guide, Ancestry.com (available [here](#)); "African American Genealogy," FamilySearch.org (available [here](#)); "Researching African American Genealogy," FamilySearch.org (available [here](#)); "Quick Guide to African American Records," FamilySearch.org (available [here](#)).

WEEK 4

September 26 **Freedom on the Move/Last Seen**

Read: "African American Newspapers," FamilySearch.org (available [here](#)); Freedom on the Move (<http://freedomonthemove.org>); Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery (<http://informationwanted.org>). Browse both sites, and register as a contributor at each.

WEEK 5

October 3

Genealogical Trees Do Not Flourish Among Slaves

Read: Williams, *Help Me to Find My People*, 1-116.

WEEK 6

October 10

Century of Black Mormons

Read: *Century of Black Mormons* (available [here](#)). Browse the site and read at least five of the biographical entries, noting the types of sources used to document their lives, conversions, and family relationships.

**First five (1-5) entries due to Freedom on the Move and/or
Last Seen by 11:59 pm on Friday, October 11. Please remember to submit to
LS evidence of their completion**

WEEK 7

October 17

Help Me to Find My People, Part II

Read: Williams, *Help Me to Find My People*, 117-200.

WEEK 8

October 24

Census Records

Read: BYU's U.S. Census Tutorial (available [here](#)); Melissa Nobles, "Racial Categorization and Censuses," in *Census and Identity*, 43-70 (available via HBLL [here](#)); "What Census Calls Us: A Historical Timeline," Pew Research Center (available [here](#)).

**Next ten (6-15) entries due to Freedom on the Move and/or
Last Seen by 11:59 pm on Friday, October 25. Please remember to
submit to LS evidence of their completion**

WEEK 9

October 31

Church Records

Read: Albert J. Raboteau, *A Fire in the Bones: Reflections on African-American Religious History*, 79-137 (available via LS); "United

States Church Records," FamilySearch.org (available [here](#)).

Metadata Sheet – Rough Draft due to LS by 11:59 pm on Friday, November 1

WEEK 10

November 7

Freedmen's Bureau

Read: W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Freedmen's Bureau," *The Atlantic*, March 1901 (available [here](#)); "African American Freedmen's Bureau Records," FamilySearch.org (available [here](#)). Under "Accessing the Records," click on several links to explore the records, paying attention to what information different collections include.

***Next ten (16-25) entries due to Freedom on the Move and/or
Last Seen by 11:59 pm on Friday, November 8. Please remember to submit to
LS evidence of their completion***

WEEK 11

November 14

Vital Records

Read: Seth Freed Wessler, "Black Deaths Matter," *The Nation*, October 15, 2015 (available [here](#)); William A. Blair, "Black Lives at Arlington National Cemetery: From Slavery to Segregation," *Southern Spaces*, April 2, 2019 (available [here](#)); Lynn Rainville, *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Central Virginia*, chapter 2 ("Locating and Recording the Dead"), 12-22 (available via HBLL [here](#)).

WEEK 12

November 19

BYU Forum with Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (11-11:50 am)

November 21

Newspapers and Military Records

Read: "African American Newspapers," FamilySearch.org (available [here](#)); "African American Military Records," FamilySearch.org (available [here](#)).

WEEK 13

November 28

NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Holiday

***Final five (26-30) entries due to Freedom on the Move and/or
Last Seen by 11:59 pm on Monday, November 25. Please remember to submit to
LS evidence of their completion***

WEEK 14**December 5****American Slavery**

Read: Tera W. Hunter, *Bound in Wedlock*, 1-85 (available via LS); "African American Slavery and Bondage," FamilySearch.org (available [here](#)).

WEEK 15**December 12****The Slave Trade, DNA, and Africa**

Read: Alondra Nelson, *The Social Life of DNA*, 141-66 (available via LS); Slave Voyages Database (available [here](#)). Browse the site and explore the databases.

Final Research Report Due to LS by 11:59 pm on Tuesday, December 10. Please submit with the Research Report your completed metadata sheet, a FGR, and a research log

FINAL EXAM: Take Home – due to LS by 11:59 on Wednesday, December 18