Welcome to FYS 033, Slavery and American Popular Culture, and welcome to Drake! Please be familiar with all material included on this syllabus. I'm looking forward to working with you and getting to know you this semester. I hope you find this semester interesting and satisfying. At any point during this semester if you have any questions or concerns about anything related to class, please come and talk to me. I am committed to facilitating your success and achievement as you do the hard work of learning. I welcome any thoughts from you on how I can better help you to do that learning.

Course Description
In 1865 the United States ended slavery in this country, freeing four million African Americans. Slavery has been the subject of countless works of fiction, non-fiction, and film. Depictions of slavery in American popular culture began well before slavery ended. Many anti-slavery political activists wrote widely read newspapers, novels, and nonfiction books. Arguably, these works helped to end slavery. In this class we will examine material from the past, including anti-slavery fiction and nonfiction, and from the present, including current fiction, scholarly writing, and movies.

Readings
We will read the following books. These books are available in the university bookstore and Amazon.com. Please buy them all. Some other readings are available electronically. These readings are on the course web site. This site should come up if you go to https://drake.blackboard.com/ and log in. Please have a copy of the course readings with you for each day of class.

- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Bedford
- Solomon Northrop, *Twelve Years a Slave*, Graymalkin

We will also view the films *Django Unchained* and *Twelve Years A Slave*
Course goals
In this course you will learn more about slavery in U.S. history. More than that, the course is an opportunity to improve your ability to examine works of popular culture. We will focus on identifying and analyzing the ways works of popular culture depict society in the past and the present. We will practice this activity through discussion, informal writing, and formal writing. These activities mean that the course will give you opportunities to improve your skills and habits at
- listening, thinking, and responding during discussion
- writing to think
- revising your writing
- summarizing, analyzing, and presenting information
- making arguments

To take advantage of these opportunities you will need to do all of the following things and can expect these things from each other:
- come to every class and do so prepared to listen to others, take notes, and respond thoughtfully
- do the reading with your full attention
- complete the course assignments on time
- come to office hours or set up another time to meet me

If you do all these things to the best of your ability, you will get the most out of this course intellectually and academically.

Above all, I ask you to make two commitments for this class. First, I ask you to commit to pursuing individual intellectual excellence in this class. Second, I ask you to treat our class as a community of people engaged in this pursuit together in a mutually-beneficial way. That is to say, in this class please challenge yourself to improve your skills, sharpen your abilities, and think new thoughts, and please attempt to help your classmates do the same.

Assignments

Writing Papers
You will write three papers in this class. All of your papers should be no shorter than 1100 words and no longer than 1300 words. At the top of each paper please include your name, which paper you are doing, a paper title, and your paper's word count.

You should make an appointment to attend the Writing Workshop for each of your papers. This is a course requirement. You should attend the Writing Workshop before the initial due date for each paper. You can make an appointment at the Writing Workshop here: http://www.drake.edu/english/studentresources/writingworkshop/ Tell them I referred you, so they will report to me that you attended.

You will revise each paper after you write it. We will discuss revision in class.
Paper 1. Write a paper about Morrison's *A Mercy* and Berlin's *Generations of Captivity*. How are these books similar and how are they different in their depiction of slavery and enslaved people? In answering this question, show how *A Mercy* supports some aspect of the account in *Generations of Captivity*. Show how *A Mercy* shows something about slavery and enslaved people that you do not see in *Generations of Captivity*. Show how *A Mercy* challenges or contradicts the account in *Generations of Captivity* in some way.

Paper 2. Morrison's *A Mercy* is set in the late 17th century. Anderson’s *Chains* is set in the late 18th century, in the era of the American Revolution. Make an argument answering this question: Based on what you’ve read, did the American Revolution primarily cause changes in slavery and the lives of enslaved people, or did the Revolution primarily keep slavery and enslaved people’s lives the same? As you answer this question, you should show what aspects of slavery and the lives on enslaved people were similar and what aspects were different in the late 17th century and in the era of the American Revolution. Use examples from *A Mercy*, *Chains*, and *Generations of Captivity*.

Paper 3. Write a paper about *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, *Twelve Years A Slave*, and *Generations of Captivity*. How are these books similar and how are they different in their depictions of slavery and enslaved people? How do they support, expand on, and conflict with each other?

Blackboard Posts (also known as Pre-discussion Exploratory Writing, 150 points)

Before class you should write a post on our class’s Blackboard site. Your posts should be no more than 250 words and should take you no more than twenty minutes. If you go over 250 words or twenty minutes spent writing, just stop, even if mid-sentence. (I mean that!) You should post on our course Blackboard site before the start of class. If you post them earlier, that’s better, but I understand this may not always be possible. Each of your posts should do one of the following:
- summarize how day’s reading depicts slavery
- show how the day’s reading supports or contradicts a point in another day’s reading

You will be doing this exploratory writing for several reasons. One reason is that writing more makes you a better writer. Another is that this writing will help improve your reading and use of the texts. People understand a reading better and have better thoughts about it when they write about it. That means you will have an easier time writing your papers and have higher quality thoughts because you did this exploratory writing. This also means we will have more useful and interesting discussions because you will have written - and so, thought more deeply – about the reading by the time class starts. Finally, by sharing these texts you will also be helping your classmates think through the reading.
There are twenty-one days with readings in this class. If you do this assignment fifteen times you get full credit. You can do up to five additional posts for extra credit. These extra posts must be done on additional days about other course readings (so, no credit for posting twice on the same readings). Each of these additional posts will count for ten points of extra credit toward your final grade for the course. This will be the only opportunity for extra credit in this class and I do not allow students to redo other assignments for additional credit.

Discussion co-facilitation

Once this semester you will each co-facilitate starting discussion, along with one or more classmates. This will count toward your participation grade. You and your partner(s) should read all of the exploratory writing that your classmates posted that week on the course Blackboard site.

Each of you should pick two different points from what your classmates have posted and which you want to highlight for the class. Pick one selection with a focus on intellectual excitement - something interesting, thought provoking, illuminating, anything along those lines. This selection should be something that makes wheels turn in your mind in some way – a passage that makes you think differently, or that you can see applying to some aspect of the world in an interesting way. Pick another selection with a focus on something the class can puzzle through as a group – something you disagree with, or don’t understand, or that made you newly confused about something you thought you understood.

Each of you should also pick two passages from the week’s reading. These two selections from the reading should be selected along the same lines – one exciting, one puzzling.

Bring all these selections to class and be prepared to ask questions in order to get your classmates talking -- to get discussion started. You don’t have to provide answers or bring insights (though I’m sure you will have some and I look forward to hearing them!). The point is to get others engaged in a conversation and help a group discussion happen.

On the day when you co-facilitate please turn in to me a copy of the two selections from your classmates’ posts and the two passages you identified.

Participation (150 points)

Participating means contributing to our class as an intellectual community, and using our class community to push yourself intellectually. You should make an effort to speak once per class. Speaking in class will help you think new thoughts and develop your speaking skills. If you speak in class it will also help your classmates to think new thoughts and develop their skills. This can only happen if you’re in class. You can miss two classes with no penalty. After that, absences will hurt your grade. If you need to make some arrangement because an event in your life requires you to miss class, see me as soon as possible, preferably beforehand.

Grades

Paper 1 and revision – 100 points
Paper 2 and revision – 100 points
Paper 3 and revision – 100 points
Blackboard posts – 150 points
Participation – 150 points
Total: 600 points

You must complete all the papers and paper revisions for this class regardless of the points. All late assignments will be penalized eight points per day.

**Plagiarism and Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism is when someone presents another person’s ideas as his or her own. It is plagiarism if you use someone else’s words without quoting, or if you put someone else’s ideas in your own words without identifying that person. I trust your intellectual honesty and do not expect that we will have any problems with plagiarism. That said, I have had students plagiarize in the past, and so I mention it here.

Plagiarism is an act of intellectual dishonesty and an act that harms the person who plagiarizes. We improve our skills and develop our abilities by hard work. Someone who plagiarizes does not do that hard work and so makes no improvement or personal development. In my experience, when someone plagiarizes it is typically a temporary lapse in judgment made in a moment when the person feels they can not succeed honestly and feels embarrassed to say so -- such as a student who has fallen behind in the reading and is not prepared to complete an assignment by the deadline. If you happen to find yourself in a difficult situation that will affect your performance in our class, speak to me and we will figure something out. The sooner you let me know, the better, but it is always better to be honest with me so I can act as someone on your side. The university also takes plagiarism seriously and there can be serious consequences. You can find the university guidelines on plagiarism online at [http://www.drake.edu/studentlife/handbook-resources/handbook/academic/#dishonesty](http://www.drake.edu/studentlife/handbook-resources/handbook/academic/#dishonesty).

**Changes to Syllabus**

The point of the class is your success and learning. The syllabus is built around that. I wrote this syllabus before I met any of you. You are all individuals, and you form a unique combination in this class. I may make changes to the syllabus during the semester if it seems to me that most people will get more out of this class as a result.

**Campus Resources**

Speaking Center -- [https://library.drake.edu/get-help/services-for-students/speaking/](https://library.drake.edu/get-help/services-for-students/speaking/)

The Speaking Center exists to help all Drake students who want to be better public speakers. My remarks on writing go as well for public speaking.

Disability Services -- [http://www.drake.edu/acadassist/disabilityservices/](http://www.drake.edu/acadassist/disabilityservices/)

Disability Services helps students with disabilities exercise their rights to inclusion and accommodation.
University Counseling Center -- http://www.drake.edu/counselingcenter/
The University Counseling Center provides counseling and mental health resources to Drake students.

Academic Achievement -- http://www.drake.edu/acadassist/
Academic Achievement exists to help you succeed. They can help you improve your academic skills and raise your grades.

Office for Sexual Violence Response and Healthy Relationship Promotion -- http://www.drake.edu/sexual-assault/
This coordinator of this office acts as a resource for students who have been subjected to violence including sexual assault/harassment, dating/domestic violence, gender-based discrimination, and stalking.
Schedule of Class Sessions
When readings are listed, please have those readings done by the time our class meets on that date.

Monday, August 31, 2015
Reading: Course syllabus

Wednesday, September 2, 2015
Reading: Writing packet, on course Blackboard site

Monday, September 7, 2015- Labor day, no meeting

Wednesday, September 9, 2015
Reading: Berlin, Generations of Captivity, 1-96

Monday, September 14, 2015
Reading: Morrison, A Mercy, 1-78

Wednesday, September 16, 2015
Reading: Morrison, A Mercy, 79-118

Monday, September 21, 2015
Reading: Morrison, A Mercy, 119-167

Wednesday, September 23, 2015
Reading: Morrison, A Mercy, 168-196

Monday, September 28, 2015
No reading.
**Paper 1 due. Bring a paper copy to class.**

Wednesday, September 30, 2015
Reading: Anderson, Chains, 1-52

**Revision of Paper 1 due Sunday, October 4th. You can email me your revised paper if you like. Send me the original and the revised draft. Bring your completed revision memo to our next class.**

Monday, October 5, 2015
Reading: Anderson, Chains, 53-153

Wednesday, October 7, 2015
Reading: Anderson, Chains, 154-205
Monday, October 12, 2015
Reading: Anderson, *Chains*, 206-313

Wednesday, October 14, 2015
Reading: Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 97-157

Monday, October 19, 2015 - Fall break, no meeting

Wednesday, October 21, 2015
No reading.

**Paper 2 due. Bring a paper copy to class.**

Monday, October 26, 2015
Reading: Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 158-209

Wednesday, October 28, 2015
Reading: Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1-55

**Revision of Paper 2 due Sunday, November 1st. You can email me your revised paper if you like. Send me the original and the revised draft. Bring your completed revision memo to our next class.**

Monday, November 2, 2015
Reading: Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 55-163

Wednesday, November 4, 2015
Reading: Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 163-228

Monday, November 9, 2015
Reading: Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 228-335

Wednesday, November 11, 2015
Reading: Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 335-398

Monday, November 16, 2015
Reading: Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 399-453

Wednesday, November 18, 2015
Reading: Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 245-270

Monday, November 23, 2015
Reading: Northrup, *Twelve Years A Slave*, 1-79

Wednesday, November 25, 2015 - Thanksgiving break, no meeting

Monday, November 30, 2015
Reading: Northrup, *Twelve Years A Slave*, 79-203

Wednesday, December 2, 2015
Reading: Northrup, *Twelve Years A Slave*, 204-238

Monday, December 7, 2015
No reading.
**Paper 3 due. Bring a paper copy to class.**

Wednesday, December 9, 2015 – Last class

**Paper 3 revision due by Monday December 14th.**