

# PHIL-8216: The Haitian Revolution

Georgetown University Fall 2023

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**Lecture:** R 12:30-3:00

**Office Hours:** T 11AM-1PM; R 11:00-12:00, Instructor's Office

*"We must, with one last act of national authority, forever assure the empire of liberty in the country of our birth; we must take any hope of re-enslaving us away from the inhuman government that for so long kept us in the most humiliating torpor. In the end we must live independent or die.*

– Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Haitian Declaration of Independence, January 1<sup>st</sup> 1804

## 1. Course Summary: What this course is about

What does it mean to be free? The demand for freedom and against the “slavery” of unjust rule was metaphorical in the mouths of many of the revolutionaries of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, particularly in the United States and France. Meanwhile, the fight for freedom from literal slavery was chief among the literal motivating forces and material demands of the Haitian Revolution. This Revolution is one of the most significant events in world history: it created the first state to abolish slavery, played a pivotal supporting role in the wars of Latin American independence, and altered the political trajectory of the entire world. Political philosophy has much to learn from this history – but maybe, if we're lucky, a little something to add to the discussion as well. Let's find out.

## 2. Course Requirements

*Paper track:*

*2 short papers (1-1.5k words)*

*Suggestion: 1 on a figure, 1 on a theme*

**Or**

*1 long paper (3k-5k words)*

*Presentation track:*

1) *Present an argument on a core course theme with in-class Q&A from instructor and peers (in weeks 9-15)*

2) *Produce one of the following*

a. *Literature review*

b. *Book review*

c. *Course design on related topic*

*Or mix-and-match (e.g. 1 short paper + 1 of the presentation track requirements)*

## **2.1 Class/Section Participation**

Most of you are grad students. You know what to do! Show up, communicate if you have issues.

## **2.2 In Class Presentations**

Each student on the presentation track will be expected to present one argument related to course themes. You are encouraged though not required to find intersections between course themes and your research interests. Your presentation should include a brief reconstruction of the book or article's major themes and/or arguments where appropriate: this step is especially important for books, as I will only make a portion of each book required reading for each week. Your presentation should also engage critically with these major themes and incorporate outside texts, thoughts, facts, and content from the course and from the discussions we have along the way.

## **2.3 Grading**

### **Paper deadlines:**

If you need an extension on any assignment, please ask *before* the due date. In general, I will be willing to give a 48-hour grace period (no questions asked). If you are still having trouble completing the assignment after that, you must set up an appointment to go over your ideas and set a schedule for finishing the paper. Unless an extension is granted in advance, assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a grade (A- to a B+, B+ to a B, etc.) for each day they are late.

### **Appealing a grade:**

You can appeal any grade that you feel does not accurately represent the work you have done. All appeals for re-evaluation must be made in writing, no more than two weeks after your paper is returned, and no sooner than 48 hours after you receive your grade. Requests must provide a compelling argument for raising the grade, but an agreement to re-evaluate a paper is no guarantee of a better grade, and it can result in lower grades if there are more serious problems that were missed on the first reading.

### **The honor code:**

The Georgetown University Honor pledge requires you to be honest in your academic endeavors and to hold yourself to the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life. I expect you to be familiar with the letter and the spirit of this pledge; and, I will enforce the Honor Code by reporting any and all suspected cases of academic dishonesty.

## **2.3 Class Conduct**

In this class I hope we can come to respect two things: the truth, and each other. There's a connection between these: we all know things, and so we all have things to learn from each other. But we can only acquire and build on each other's knowledge collaboratively – saying what we think others want to hear is not genuine contribution to discussion, and neither is the lack of *voiced* dissent equivalent to genuine consensus. Respect for each other, for knowledge,

and for learning requires that we articulate our own views, opinions, misgivings, and questions with courage and respect, and that we contribute

The we will be discussing in this class may generate contentious claims, spirited discussions, vehement disagreements, and trenchant criticisms. This is at least part of what doing philosophy is all about – most importantly, it's part of what it is to live with other people as full people rather than as objects of management. I promise you all to do my best to raise philosophical issues and to start philosophical discussions in ways that are as sensitive as possible to the variety of viewpoints and opinions that we are sure to find among the members of this class. My part, as instructor, is not the same as yours – but you all have a necessary part nevertheless and I ask you all to do yours as well.

#### **2.4 Email Policy**

There are many positives of our increasingly connected age: ease of communication allows us to have conversations across borders in real-time, reach each other at any hour of day, and do so with minimal effort. But these very advantages themselves intensify some drawbacks: it is increasingly difficult to “disconnect” and increasingly easy to be less than thoughtful in when and how we contact each other. If your inbox and browser tabs look anything like mine (and I bet they do), you're personally experiencing one of the weightiest downstream negative consequences: the incredible volume of demands on our attention in the form of emails, social media messages, targeted advertisements, and more.

These incessant demands on our attention are inimical in many ways to the kind of focus that an intellectual life and development universities ought to foster. Our expectations of ourselves and each other have to catch up to these new realities. So I propose these expectations for you and I both:

- I will do my best to send **two or fewer emails** to you all per week – please check Canvas regularly for class updates and course readings.
- I will routinely end the lecture portion of class **ten minutes early**, so students with quick questions and/or who cannot make office hours have an opportunity to ask them or raise questions in class and **in person**.
- I ask that **you default to office hours or in-person class time as your primary way to ask questions** about the text – my default policy will be that multiple students will be allowed in the room at once, though if you have a question or concern that requires discretion, we can accommodate that as well.
  - o **Please come to office hours** – they are a great chance to listen to what your fellow students think
- If you have a question or concern that requires email, I ask that you email me **during business hours** (9AM-5PM, M-F) unless there are extenuating circumstances, and with at least **48 hours** of notice before a decision/action you're requesting must be completed (e.g. add/drop signature)
  - o This applies to requests for extensions as well

### **3. Tentative Schedule**

All readings will be made accessible. On the weeks where a book is assigned rather than an article or articles, you will only be required to read an excerpt, though it is highly suggested and encouraged that you read the books in their entirety whenever your schedule allows. The one exception is for presenters: unless otherwise communicated, those presenting on a book will be required to read it in its entirety.

## **Part I:**

- **Week 1 (Aug 25) Declaration of Independence**

Jean-Jacques Dessalines, The Haitian Declaration of Independence;  
Lyonel Antoine Trouillot, Preface to *Stirring the Pot of Haitian History*

- **Week 2 (Aug 31) What's Freedom?**

Jean Casimir, *The Haitians: A Decolonial History*, introduction  
Tyler Stovall, *White Freedom*  
Kris Sealey, *Creolizing the Nation*

- **Week 3 (Sept 7) What's History?**

Marlene Daut, "Beyond Trouillot: Unsettling Genealogies of Historical Thought"  
Marlene Daut, "Un-Silencing the Past: Boisrond-Tonnerre, Vastey, and the Re-Writing of the Haitian Revolution"  
Michel-Rolph Trouillot, intro-chapter 3, *Stirring the Pot of Haitian History*

### **Week (Sept 14) Africa and Ayiti**

Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, intro and chapter 1  
Alex Dupuy, "French Merchant Capital and Slavery in Saint-Domingue"

*Optional: Mike Duncan, "Revolutions" season 4, episode 1, "Saint Domingue"*

- **Week 5 (Sept 21) Uprising**

Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, chapter 1  
Jean Casimir, *The Haitians: A Decolonial History*, chapters 4 and 7  
Johnhenry Gonzalez, *Maroon Nation*, intro, chapter 2

*Optional: Mike Duncan, "Revolutions" season 4, episode 3; "Three Revolts"; episode 8, "The Tricolor Commission"*

- **Week 6 (Sept 28) Toussaint, Rigaud, and the War of Knives**

Sudhir Hazareesingh, *Black Spartacus*, intro, part three  
David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity* chapter 4  
CLR James, *The Black Jacobins* appendix: “From Toussaint Louverture to Fidel Castro”

*Optional: CLR James, The rest of The Black Jacobins*  
*Optional: Mike Duncan, “Revolutions” season 4, episode 7, “The Citizens of June 20”*

- **Week 7 (Oct 5) Christophe, Pétion, Sans Souci**  
Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, chapters 1-2  
Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, chapter 11, epilogue  
Laurent Dubois, *Aftershocks of History*, introduction, chapter 1
- **Week 8 (Oct 12) Aftermath**  
Anna Julia Cooper, *Slavery and the French Revolutionists (1788-1805)*, intro,  
Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, intro, chapters 2 and 4

**SUGGESTED FIRST PAPER / DRAFT / PROJECT DUE DATE: Oct 15<sup>th</sup> 11:59 PM**

- **Week 9 (Oct 19) Aftermath**  
Vijaya Ramachandran, Julie Walz, “Haiti: Where Has All the Money Gone?”  
Catherine Porter, Constant Méheut, Matt Apuzzo and Selam Gebrekidan, “The Root of Haiti’s Misery”  
Marlene Daut, “What the French Really Owe Haiti”
- **Week 10 (Oct 26) Aftermath**  
Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *State Against Nation*, introduction  
David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, introduction  
Matthew J. Smith, "From Dessalines to Duvalier" Revisited: A Quarter-Century Retrospective
- **Week 11 (Nov 2) Back to freedom**  
Alex Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth*  
Neil Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage*  
Lewis Gordon, “Problematic people and epistemic decolonization: Toward the postcolonial in Africana political thought”

- **Week 12 (Nov 9)**

Michael Monahan, *Creolizing Practices of Freedom*  
Johnhenry Gonzalez, *Maroon Nation*, chapters 3 and 5

**Week 13 (Nov 16)**

Peter James Hudson, *Bankers and Empire*  
Leslie Alexander, *Fear of a Black Republic*

- **Week 14 (Nov 21, 23)**

*NO CLASS, FALL RECESS*

**FALL RECESS**

- **Week 15 (Nov 28, 30)**

Peter James Hudson and Jemima Pierre, “Haiti: On Interventions and Occupations”  
Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “Haiti’s Nightmare and the Lessons of History”

- **Week 16 (Dec 5, 7)**

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *State Against Nation*, conclusion

ADDITIONAL READING TBA

2: *NO CLASS*

**FINAL PAPER DUE**

**4. Resources**

**Accessibility and diversity:**

One finds a great deal of diversity in teaching and learning styles in a modern university. These styles may not always mesh in ways that are conducive to the success and wellbeing of everyone in a course. But there are often ways of improving things. I am happy to discuss the structure of this course, and to work with the learning styles people have to the best of my abilities. So please feel free to talk to me in office hours. I sincerely think that every student is entitled to a meaningful and stimulating classroom experience! Disabled students and students on record with the university as requiring particular accommodations, please let me know that this is the case, in confidence, during the first few weeks of the semester—and please take advantage of services provided by the university. Finally, please let me know if you learn during the semester that something would make the classroom accessible.

### **Sexual misconduct:**

As a faculty member and an educator, it is my responsibility to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence and sexual assault. And university policy requires all faculty members to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University's response to sexual misconduct. But Georgetown also has a number of fully confidential professional resources who can provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct. These resources include: [Jen Schweer](#) (202.687.0323) Associate Director of Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention; [Erica Shirley](#) (202.687.6985) Trauma Specialist (CAPS). More information about campus resources and reporting sexual misconduct can be found at <http://sexualassault.georgetown.edu>.