

**SENEGAMBIA TO SOUTH CAROLINA, GHANA TO GEORGIA:  
AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY, 1450-1850**

**DRAFT SYLLABUS – HISTORY 334, Autumn 2014**

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Lecture 334, 101: Tuesday, 9:30-11:00, Buchanan D218  
Discussion 334, L01: Thursday, 9:00-10:00, Buchanan D301  
Discussion 334, L02: Thursday, 10:00-11:00, Buchanan D301

**Please note that, owing to “Imagine UBC,” there will be no lecture on Tuesday, Sept. 2. All students who are enrolled in H334 must attend Discussion L02 on Thursday, Sept. 4. This begins at 10:00 in Buchanan D301. There, the course will be introduced – mainly we will read through this syllabus – and then we also will create two equally divided discussion sections that will meet in subsequent weeks.**

Office Hours: TBD, in 1122 Buchanan Tower

**OVERVIEW**

This course investigates the history of Americans of African ancestry from the time of enslavement in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century to the mid-1800s and the coming of the U.S. Civil War, which ended chattel slavery in the American Republic. The origins and nature of slavery in what became the United States, and the efforts of enslaved persons to resist the slave regimes in the North and the South, stand as the central problems that we will explore. The readings, drawn from primary and secondary works in history and the social sciences, as well as from the American literary canon, focus on groups as well as on representative men and women – some famous, but many who lived at a distance from the centre stage of history. By examining the lives of selected individuals and groups, this course invites you to interrogate the meaning of freedom and of slavery, and to examine the relationship of slavery, race, and the global economy that began to emerge after 1450. As the readings suggest, the questions of gender and of religion figure prominently in the histories we will be considering.

In general, H334 asks that you think about the past as a set of problems and questions, and not merely as a simple narrative of events. And H334 asks that you extend yourselves beyond an engagement with various aspects of the history of African Americans to reflect on how such history “works” in the present. Accordingly, we will be investigating how parts of the past seem to have been silenced, and how we might come to “unsilence” them. In the endeavor, we will investigate Islam and slavery in the United States – a topic which often is overlooked – and also reflect on why this is so.

We will need to work on unsilencing ourselves, and our discussion meetings on Thursday

are intended to help in the effort. We will discuss the details about the Thursday assignments at our first meeting in September.

The readings on slavery are focused by way of concentrating principally on five texts, four of them autobiographies. These materials, together with studies of Sojourner Truth and Nat Turner, two enslaved persons of African origin, raise myriad interpretive and evidentiary problems, illustrate the great variety of experiences encompassed by slavery, and will allow us to explore in detail religion, gender, and resistance and accommodation under the slave regimes in colonial America and the United States.

This year, two very special guest lecturers will help us grapple with the problem of the origins of slavery – origins in Europe and in Africa – as a world system. The first guest will be Prof. David Eltis, who is an adjunct member of the UBC Department of History, and who stands as the single most authoritative contemporary voice on this problem. The second guest is Amir Syed, a UBC grad who is just finishing his doctoral work at the University of Michigan. Mr. Syed has a particular expertise in the interconnections of Islam and slavery.

Together, we will be viewing a number of documentary films, and it is essential that all members of the class attend these sessions. During these sessions, and in fact during all of our meetings, we are obligated to refrain from laptop activities that distract our neighbors – not to mention ourselves. Such activities – Facebook, various e-mail and instant messaging applications, texting, YouTube, or general browsing on the web – cannot be tolerated at any time, in any of our classes. This rule is not a matter of personal preference, and certainly is not intended to stand as an example of professorial power. Rather, it is designed to help protect everyone from consequences that typically follow incomplete or misapprehended assignments.

### **READINGS & FILMS**

There is no textbook for H334, but Darlene Clark Hine et al, African Americans: A Concise History, or other surveys, may prove helpful. They are readily available.

In addition to the course pack, which is on sale at the UBC Bookstore, the required texts are:

Herman Melville, “Benito Cereno,” ed. Wyn Kelly. Prior to reading this short story, please do not consult any outside sources. And please do not talk about the text with anyone before our discussion about it.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed., The Classic Slave Narratives (Equiano, Prince, Douglass, & Jacobs)

Stephen B. Oates, The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner’s Fierce Rebellion

Clarence E. Walker, Mongrel Nation: The America Begotten by Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings

Sue Eakin, ed., Solomon Northup’s Twelve Years a Slave: And Plantation Life in the Antebellum South

We will study selections from the recent Hollywood adaptation of this book and also view the documentary, "Prince Among Slaves," based upon Terry Alford's book, Prince Among Slaves: The True Story of an African Prince Sold Into Slavery in the American South. We also will view documentaries on the origins of slavery in the Chesapeake Region, on Frederick Douglass, and on Thomas Jefferson and the problem of race.

The course pack, which is available at the UBC Bookstore, contains the following selections, some of which will be optional:

1. Benjamin DeMott, "Put on a Happy Face: Masking the differences between blacks and whites," Harper's Magazine, September 1995.
2. Peter H. Wood, "Slave Labor Camps in Early America: Overcoming Denial and Discovering The Gulag" (1999).
3. Winthrop Jordan, The White Man's Burden (1974), chapter 1, "First Impressions: Initial English Confrontation With Africans."
4. Gary B. Nash, "Europe, Africa, and the New World," selection from Red, White and Black: The Peoples of Early North America (1992).
5. Edmund S. Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox" (1972).
6. Joshua D. Rothman, "James Callender and Social Knowledge of Interracial Sex in Antebellum Virginia;" Clarence Walker, "Denial Is Not a River in Egypt;" Annette Gordon-Reed, "'The Memories of a Few Negroes': Rescuing America's Future at Monticello."
7. Thomas Jefferson Notes on the State of Virginia (1787), selections.
8. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Women Who Opposed Slavery," selection from Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South (1988).
9. Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (1852).
10. Nell Irvin Painter, "Representing Truth: Sojourner Truth's Knowing and Becoming Known," 1994.
11. Nell Irvin Painter, "Soul Murder & Slavery: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting," 2002.

### **WHAT ARE THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF H334?**

Students who complete this course successfully will possess an understanding of the broad outlines of African-American History through the 1850s. In so doing, they will achieve a deeper appreciation of how history, as a discipline, can enhance our thinking and analytic skills, heighten our empathic faculties, and help confront the fundamental, historically determined, meanings of key concepts in our contemporary lives. The concepts of civilization, citizenship, and freedom – concepts that often seem burdened by ambiguity and paradox – are among those that will be interrogated by members of H334. More specifically, by the end of the term, students should be able to:

Explain the origins of slavery in the "New World," with particular reference to the question of economic and/or cultural causality.

Discuss the origins of the discourse of white supremacy and the place held by this discourse in the history of African Americans, 1450-1850.  
Characterize the institution of slavery in North America and explain how it functioned as a social, economic, and cultural system.  
Assess the views held by Thomas Jefferson on race and slavery, why and how such views seem mostly to have been obliterated by the larger culture, and the significance of these erasures for the study of African-American History.  
Put forward an argument on the problem of slave accommodation and resistance, its links to religion, and how and why this problem is, or is not, gendered.  
Evaluate the importance of autobiography, as well as oral tradition, music, and folklore, in studying African-American History.  
Offer an appraisal of the Abolitionist Movement and assess its importance in antebellum America.  
Analyze, in general terms, how master historical narratives come to be created and, with particular reference to African-American History through the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, how counter narratives are created and sometimes challenge received historical wisdom.

While H334 is not technically a “writing intensive” course, learning how to write more effectively is a principal goal of the course; students can expect to see improvement in the skills of composition and organization, argumentation, and rhetorical strategy.

**HOW CAN I SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE? WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED OF ME?**  
**WHAT ARE THE GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE COURSE?**

Your success will depend mostly upon careful reading and note-taking, a willingness to take intellectual risks, and a desire to explore what the novelist and critic Ralph Ellison once labeled the “tradition of forgetfulness... of denying the past, of converting the tragic realities of ourselves but most often of others, even if those others are of our own group, into comedy.”

Participation in the lectures on Tuesdays and in discussions on Thursdays is an essential part of your success. What does participation mean? It means active engagement with your colleagues; it means asking questions and listening carefully to others; it means trying to answer questions and having the courage to share your ideas; it means coming to class prepared – that is, coming to class with having completed the reading.

Each of us shares the responsibility for how well H334 will work. Accordingly, we need to build an environment where everyone feels welcome, and where all of our ideas are respected and where they can be explored and criticized. This means above all that it is our shared responsibility to ensure that everyone in the class is comfortable in it, and that no one feel ill-at-ease for reasons of age or gender, economic standing, political preference, race, ethnic or religious background, national origin, or sexual orientation. It therefore follows that jokes at anyone’s expense other than that of the instructor are not permitted. And, again, do not distract your in-class neighbors by engaging in non-essential activities on your laptops.

The issue of workplace safety is of paramount importance, and it requires that all of us adhere to codes of behavior – in and out of the classroom and indeed wherever we encounter each other – that respect the emotional and physical integrity of all of our colleagues, and well-known, established behavioral and social boundaries which, as newspapers and television remind us on a daily basis, all-too-often continue to be breached. My expectation, and the expectation of the Department of History, is that all of us will abide by the guidelines for appropriate behavior outlined by UBC, as well as by these more directly stated standards of H334. UBC has issued a new policy on the matter of respectful environments for students, faculty, and staff. It is available here: <http://www.hr.ubc.ca/respectful-environment/>. And you may find UBC's most recent update on the issue of sexual assault and workplace safety here: <http://www.ubc.ca/staysafe/>.

No one likes to deal with marks, but they are a fact of our university lives. In H334, you will be rewarded for consistently doing your work, and there will be chances to resubmit work with which you may be dissatisfied.

Work that receives an "A" is inspired: it demonstrates a thorough grasp of the material and an original understanding of it. Work that receives a "B" means that it constitutes a strong performance and demonstrates a good understanding of the material. Note that a "C" in this class means that you have done pretty well and that you have attained an adequate comprehension of the material we cover. In order to get this mark, you must do all of the work and complete all of the reading. Work that receives a "D" is inadequate, usually because it contains serious gaps and misunderstandings. An "F" will be awarded if your work is completely inadequate, that is, if it reveals that you have no real understanding of the material we have covered.

Remember that marks are an evaluation of your work, and not a comment on your intelligence. They are not an evaluation of you as a person. And they are not a comment on how hard you have worked. It is possible in this class to work very hard, and still receive a "B." Curiously, perhaps, the more you concentrate on marks and on the results, the less well you may do. In learning, it is the process that matters and, I believe, it is the process which in the end determines the results. So, work hard, take notes when you read – I can help with strategies about this – and ask questions. If you can do this, the results should take care of themselves.

If you experience difficulties with the readings, please come see me. We can discuss the troublesome material or, if you like, some general strategies for doing the work in H334. Drop by early in the term. I always am happy to meet with students. Really.

If you face a learning challenge, such as a diagnosed "learning disability," please know that I stand ready to work with you so that you can achieve to the fullest extent of your aspirations. Drop by to discuss the course requirements and whatever accommodations may be helpful to you. If you have fears about speaking in public, please let me know so that we can work out an appropriate, helpful, and non-threatening strategy for equitable evaluation and, I would hope, for some modicum of success in this realm. If you do approach public speech with trepidation – and also if you do not – try to assume that you are among friends in H334. My experience suggests that the more of us who proceed from this assumption, the more likely it is to become a demonstrable fact of our shared classroom experience.

What we do in class will help you make sense out of our readings, which are the core of H334. Therefore, attendance at all lectures and discussions is mandatory. If you have a valid reason for missing a class, please send me an e-mail. If you become seriously ill or have a crisis

that interferes with your work, please let me know so that we can discuss strategies for dealing with the situation and possible exceptions to the regular deadlines. If you do not inform me of the extraordinary circumstances that you may be facing, all work must be completed on time. You will find me sympathetic and flexible if you are confronting a difficult situation; however, if you do not inform me, in advance, you will be expected to complete your work on time.

In the realm of academic integrity, you are expected to refrain from cheating, lying, or engaging in acts of plagiarism. All written work in H334 should be prepared and completed by each individual student. If you borrow someone's words or ideas, they should be cited in the proper manner. For guidance on writing and on professional integrity, in addition to the web sites listed on my "writing page"

(<http://faculty.arts.ubc.ca/pkrause/writing%20links%20and%20tips.html>), see the UBC Calendar. Additionally, the following sites may be helpful: <https://www.history.ubc.ca/content/common-questions-about-citations> and [http://help.library.ubc.ca/planning-your-research/academic-integrity-pla....](http://help.library.ubc.ca/planning-your-research/academic-integrity-pla...) You may also want to check out UBC's policies on academic misconduct: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,960>.

As the university has explained, "Regular attendance is expected of students in all their classes (including lectures, laboratories, tutorials, seminars, etc.). Students who neglect their academic work and assignments may be excluded from the final examinations." The official policy of the university holds that it: "accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Disability Resource Centre. The University accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations.... Please let your instructor know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation on these grounds.

"Students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, cannot assume they will be accommodated...."

For the most up-to-date explanation of the university's policies regarding academic concessions, please see this page on the web:

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,48,0,0>.

Finally, understand that the readings must be completed before our class meets on Tuesdays. By university standards, there is a moderate amount of reading in this course. If you decide to enroll, be certain that you are prepared to do the reading and to submit your work on time.

### **WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR MARKS & REQUIREMENTS?**

Consistent attendance, conscientious reading, and attentive and civil participation are essential parts of your work in this course. In this realm, as in all others, strict adherence to the principles of academic integrity is expected. Plagiarism, in any form, will not be tolerated. Above all, please remember that all authors own their ideas, words, and research; you therefore must give appropriate credit, typically in the form of quotations and footnotes, when using the work of another scholar. Plagiarism, whether or not it is "intentional," is a serious violation of UBC's standards; violations of the standards will be prosecuted. If your work is late, if you feel under pressure, do anything but cheat, please. Do not jeopardize your career and your good name for the sake of a mark in H334. It is just not worth it.

Take great care when using resources on the Web. Many can prove helpful, but a significant number can be misleading – including, of course, Wikipedia. Be certain that unattributed sentences gleaned from the Web do not find their way into your submissions for H334. Failure to be vigilant about this matter inevitably will raise questions about academic integrity.

All written work must be:

1. Prepared only on a typewriter or a computer. Handwritten work is not acceptable. And faxes or e-mails of your work cannot be accepted by the Department of History.
2. Double-spaced and formatted in a simple, easy-to-read font, such as Times New Roman. The size of the font must be 12-point.
3. Set so it has margins of one inch on both sides, and at the top and bottom.
4. Numbered by pages and stapled in the upper left corner. (Do not use paper clips or creative folding.)
5. Backed-up, always, at regular intervals. (I recommend every three minutes.) Use a USB mini-drive, an external hard drive, a network storage service, and/or a hard copy. Computer or printer crashes or problems are not acceptable reasons for late submissions.

The Faculty of Arts requires that written work conform to accepted standards of English expression; if writing does not meet such standards, it cannot be evaluated. Marks will be based on the quality of your written work and of your participation in the lectures and group discussions.

Regular attendance should put virtually everyone in a position to achieve marks with which he or she is happy. The key is doing the reading, on time, and coming to class, prepared. Late work cannot be accepted, except under the circumstances discussed above. Note the approximate weight of the following requirements:

<b>ASSIGNMENT</b>	<b>DATE DUE</b>	<b>APPROXIMATE WEIGHT OF THE FINAL MARK FOR TERM ONE</b>
1.) Personal statement on your expectations and on the reasons for your enrollment. 1-page maximum	At the beginning of our second discussion sections.	Mandatory, but no mark awarded; two marks deducted from final mark if not submitted on time.
2.) Brief reading notes on the weekly assignments, prepared on 4"x6" notecards. (One card per text.) These may be collected at the beginning of class.	Each Thursday. We will discuss the details at our initial meetings. A summary may be found following the calendar below.	20% Four sets of these will be marked; each of the marked sets therefore carries an approximate weight of 5%.

3.) Two critical essays; 4-page maximum.	<b><u>OCT. 14 – 1<sup>ST</sup> ESSAY</u></b> 2 <sup>ND</sup> ESSAY -- TBD	20%
4.) Participation in the discussions on Thursday.	Throughout the term.	20%
5.) Final paper – no exam.	TBD. The questions will be distributed in advance. There will be ample time to discuss them in class and/or with the instructor.	40%

### CALENDAR

<b>LECTURES TUESDAY</b>	<b>READINGS, COMPLETED BY TUESDAY</b>	<b>DISCUSSION THURSDAY</b>
2 Sept. Imagine UBC – no class	<b><u>All students should attend the 10:00 a.m. discussion on Thursday, Sept. 4 →→</u></b>	4 Sept. Overview of Course: Syllabus & Guidelines
9 Sept. Introduction: Ways of Seeing, and Not Seeing, the African-American Past	Melville, “Benito Cereno”	11 Sept. “Benito Cereno” 1-page paper due
16 Sept. Origins of Slavery – and slave resistance – in the “New World”	Jordan, Nash Essay by Prof. David Eltis, to be available on-line	18 Sept. How do you explain the origins of slavery?
23 Sept. Slavery as a Global System Prof. David Eltis	Morgan	25 Sept. Religious Holiday – No Class
30 Sept. Video: “Africans in America: The Terrible Transformation”	Equiano	2 Oct. What was “the Terrible Transformation?”

7 Oct. Islam, Christianity, & Slavery Amir Syed	Equiano	9 Oct. Who was Olaudah Equiano, and what can he teach us about the past?
14 Oct. Race & Slavery in Colonial America & the New Republic Video: “Jefferson’s Blood” <b>FIRST 4-PAGE ESSAY DUE</b>	Walker, Jefferson, Rothman	16 Oct. Video: “Jefferson’s Blood”
21 Oct. Race, Slavery, and Memory: The Case of Thomas Jefferson	Douglass, Wood	23 Oct. Silencing and Unsilencing the Past
28 Oct. Slavery, Song, Religion, & Resistance	Prince OR Jacobs	30 Oct. Slavery, Gender, & Resistance, 1
4 Nov. Prince Among Slaves, documentary presentation on Abd al Rahman Ibrahim	Fox-Genovese, optional Painter, on Sojourner Truth	6 Nov. Slavery, Gender, & Resistance, 2
11 Nov. Remembrance Day – No Classes	Northup, Twelve Years a Slave	14 Nov. Northup
18 Nov. Twelve Years a Slave, selections from the movie	Oates, Fires of Jubilee	20 Nov. Solomon Northup, Nat Turner, Sojourner Truth
25 Nov. Slavery – what we know, and don’t know: toward the political crisis of the 1850s	Painter, “Soul Murder” Re-read & reconsider “Benito Cereno”	27 Nov. Putting it all together: your collective sense of slavery
2 Dec. Exams begin		
17 Dec. Exams end		

### **READING NOTES**

These are due each Thursday. If there is more than one reading, do a notecard for each text that you have read. The reading notes are intended to assist you in mastering and evaluating what you have read, and they also should help our discussions. Additionally, your notes will help

you understand the larger patterns that inform the course of African-American History into the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century – and therefore the cards will help you prepare for the final written exercise in December. Unlike other written assignments, the cards may be hand-written.

Each notecard should be:

1. Written on one side of a 4”x6” lined bibliography card.
2. Headed by the name of the author and an abbreviated title on the left side, and by your name on the right side.
3. Divided into two sections:
  - A.) A statement of the thesis or argument of the book, article, or primary source.
  - B.) A critical assessment of the reading, including an evaluation of the argument, of the quality and use of evidence, and of any questions that the reading suggests. You might also consider the following: What does the text tell you that is surprising or unexpected about history, politics, and/or culture? What was the author’s intent in writing it? What did she or he want you to learn from what you have read?

For the first term, four sets of reading notes will be marked.<sup>1</sup>

**WHAT SORTS OF ESSAY QUESTIONS ARE LIKELY?**  
**WHAT IS THE SPECIFIC CRITERIA FOR MARKING?**

The following questions are intended to help you focus when doing the reading for H334. In modified form, they may appear among the choices for your first or second essays this term, or you may encounter similar questions on the final written exercise in December.

Some hints: when writing your answers, assume that your readers are as intelligent as you but have no prior knowledge of the subject matter. Do not write for the instructor or for anyone who has specialized knowledge of the problems you choose to discuss. Do not be afraid to take a firm position, but be certain to defend it with hard evidence that has been gleaned from the texts we have read, the documentaries we have watched, and our discussions and lectures.

1.) You have encountered a number of arguments and explanations regarding the rise of slavery in the Americas and, in particular, in what is called British North America. How do you account for the rise of slavery in what became the United States? In answering this question, take care to consider the arguments put forward by Winthrop Jordan, Edmund Morgan, David Eltis, Herman Melville, Gary Nash, the authors of “The Terrible Transformation,” and Thomas Jefferson. Above all, make certain that you put forward an argument of your own.

2.) Characterize (or describe) the institution of American slavery and explain (or analyze) how it functioned. Pay particular attention to the question of slave accommodation and resistance, taking care to address the issue of how resistance, and its possible links to religion,

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<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to Prof. Anne Gorsuch for helpful suggestions on the reading notes.

may have been gendered. Above all, base your answer on: Frederick Douglass's autobiography and the other autobiographical accounts you have read; the documentary on Abd al Rahman Ibrahima; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's essay, "Women Who Opposed Slavery," and Nell Painter's essays on Sojourner Truth. Be as concrete and as specific as possible, and organize the best available evidence to support your interpretation.

3.) We have considered one of the great iconic members in the pantheon of America's "civil religion," Thomas Jefferson, and how his views on race seem mostly to have been obliterated or erased by the larger culture. What is the significance of these erasures for the study of African-American History and of history in general? What parallels might be drawn between these erasures and what the historian Peter H. Wood characterizes as an on-going insistence that slave labor camps be labeled "plantations?"

4.) A professor of English recently offered the following observations about the nature of learning in institutions of higher education: "It's said that some time ago a Columbia University instructor used to issue a harsh two-part question. One: What book did you most dislike in this course? Two: What intellectual or characterological flaws in you does that dislike point to? The hand that framed that question was surely heavy. But at least it compels one to see intellectual work as a confrontation between two people, student and author, where the stakes matter. Those Columbia students were being asked to relate the quality of an encounter, not rate the action as though it had unfolded on the big screen." Reframe the questions suggested above in a less "heavy" manner, perhaps by asking, "What book or article have I most disliked in this course, and to which intellectual oversights of mine does my dislike point?" Your answer should be cast in the form of an argument that would be accessible to someone who has not done the reading for H334. A superior answer will draw connections between personal oversights and/or blindness and some of the larger ellipses or lapses in public memory and consciousness that we have considered.

5.) The historian Nathan Huggins offered the following observation about the origins of African slavery in the New World: "The 20th-century Western mind is frozen by the horror of men selling and buying others as slaves and even more stunned at the irony of black men serving as agents for the enslavement of blacks by whites. Shocking though it is, this human barter was truly the most stark representation of what modernism and Western capitalist expansion meant to traditional peoples. In the New World, people became items of commerce, their talents, their labors, and their produce thrown into the market place, where their best hope was to bring a decent price. The racial wrong was lost on African merchants, who saw themselves as selling people other than their own. The distinctions of tribe were more real to them than race, a concept that was yet to be refined by 19th- and 20th-century Western rationalists." Evaluate and assess Huggins's comments, taking care to put forward an argument of your own about the origins of slavery in North America. Your argument should be grounded in concrete evidence and should address the interpretations offered by "The Terrible Transformation," David Eltis, Gary Nash, Winthrop Jordan, and Edmund Morgan. Your answer should offer an analytic narrative.

## Evaluation of Essays

Essays will be evaluated on the basis of three broad categories:

1. Argument and structure – 50%: Essays should present an argument, and they should be structured in a way that allows the reader to follow the developing lines of the argument. Therefore, essays should have an introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction should be concise and should put forth a thesis statement. An important part of the assignment is to define a question or problem and try to answer it. The answer effectively constitutes the argument, and it forms the body. The body should be well-organized and built upon logically connected paragraphs, each of which has a topic sentence and a “punch line.” The conclusion should recapitulate the thesis statement or main point, and make it clear to the reader why what you have written is important.
2. Content and Evidence – 25%: The best essays utilize evidence in creative ways and integrate the evidence into the logical presentation of the argument. And the best essays demonstrate original and critical thinking. Your main points should be supported by direct reference to a text, and evidence always is required to corroborate the main points of your argument. Simple assertions of your opinions will not do. Sometimes you will need to paraphrase a text. Why? Because you are writing for an audience which is as clever as you but which has no knowledge of the texts you are engaging. (Writing in such a way ensures that you will not overlook logical and evidentiary connections.)
3. Style, presentation, and use of language – 25%: Is your writing precise and engaging? Is it grammatical? Inappropriate usage, awkward syntax, and wordiness can hurt. Remember what Abraham Lincoln wrote about the connections between clear writing and clear thinking: weakness in writing typically indicates feebleness in thought. (Here, Lincoln was not criticizing another person; rather he was commenting on his own rhetorical struggles.)

What appears real and objective from TV or the newspaper is the result ... of choices, of constructions, of a great deal of hiding of other realities. Walter Benjamin says every document of civilization is also a document of barbarism. What we see as real immediately is only a fraction of the truth. It is the role of the intellect not just to amass expert information, but much more basically, to question and, yes, to challenge the framework of knowledge – to ask about the hidden costs or barbarism, to ask for whom is this knowledge useful and why is it set up this way, for whom does this objective news, as it's sometimes called, serve as a reality, for what end, ethical or unethical, is a war declared, a missile deployed, a distant people punished, and so on. The greatest danger to the educated mind is that it should be made silent or stilled in its restlessness, its volatility, its need to ask provocative questions that challenge authority.... Most of what is presented as reality is the result of constructions and representations that I believe have to be looked at as having a history which is very often either forgotten, or hidden or distorted.  
— Edward Said, Commencement Remarks, Haverford College, 2000