

# Abolitionism in the Sea Islands

Maymester 2016, Mondays–Fridays 11:00–1:45

Hargray 276

ENGL B429.0M0. *Topics in American Literature* (3 credit hours): intensive study of selected topics; may be repeated for credit under another suffix. Prerequisites: English 101, 102, and one 200-level course or higher, or instructor permission.

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Office: Library 246 | Office Hours: 1:45–2:30, and by appointment



Fanny Kemble (1833). Thomas Sulley. lithograph. [American Antiquarian Society](#). | Charlotte Forten Grimké. photograph. [Presbyterian Historical Society](#). | Ellen Craft. frontispiece. [Avery Research Center, College of Charleston](#). | William and Ellen Craft. [Atlanta Black Star](#). | Angelina and Sarah Grimké (1838?). wood engravings. [Library of Congress](#). | Harriet Tubman. photograph. [PBS Black Culture Connection](#). | Robert Smalls: *Wheeling Freedom* (2012). L. Merché Frazier. Organza, cotton batting, monofilament thread; appliqué; collage layering, machine quilting, embroidery. [And Still We Rise](#). | Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1862?). photograph. [Enfilading Lines](#). | Laura Towne with Dick, Maria, and Amoretta (1866). photograph. [First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia](#).

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

What can a celebrated actress from London, a determined schoolteacher from Philadelphia, and a now-infamous fugitive slave couple from Macon teach us about Abolitionism in the Sea Islands? How did a woman free herself and her husband by passing and cross-dressing all the way from Middle Georgia to Savannah, Charleston, and Philadelphia? What did life hold for them in Boston and—after the Fugitive Slave Law passed in 1850—in Liverpool? Why did they return to the lowcountry years later, hoping to build a farm and a school? How did England's Shakespearean starlet—mid-century's famed Juliet and Portia—become a different kind of transatlantic sensation? How did her divorce complicate/facilitate the publication of once-private journals: scathing critiques of plantation slavery? *How did people fight for justice in the place we call home, just before and after emancipation?*

Spend the first few weeks of summer learning about social reform networks in our own neck of the woods. We live in an extremely important place for nineteenth-century studies: a hotbed of secession and difficult reconstruction, yes, but also the sometime home to diverse abolitionist authors, educators, and activists. In this course, we'll study a series of nineteenth-century texts with local composition, circulation, and reception histories. We'll explore what people wrote about landmarks and watershed events that still punctuate our sense of place in Beaufort, Jasper, and



*Carte de Port Royal et des environs (1860).* George Woolworth Colton. [Library of Congress](#).

Chatham Counties by reading powerful, painful, and inspiring books. We'll also take advantage of our compressed summer schedule to do some *in situ* reading and researching that will help us study mid-century St. Helena's and St. Simon's Islands, Mitchelville and Woodville, Charleston and Savannah, Butler Plantation and Seaside Plantation. In fact, part of our work will require off-the-page/on-the-road time: touring the Penn Center, visiting the Camp Saxton marker and the William and Ellen Craft medallion at SCAD (just installed in February 2016).

I'm organizing our three weeks around three texts: *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom* by William and Ellen Craft (published 1860), *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation* by Fanny Kemble (written, 1838–1839; published 1863); and Charlotte Forten Grimké's *Journals* and essays about the Port Royal Experiment and the Penn School (written, 1861–1864; published 1953). To contextualize this focused reading sequence, we'll also study short passages by writers whose deep-rooted, sprawling abolitionist networks challenge us to engage seriously with current debates in American Studies about precarious historical and geopolitical boundaries. We'll place our writers in serious conversation with Laura Towne, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Henry David Thoreau, and Angelina and Sarah Grimké—and map important triangulations that link the lowcountry to Boston, Concord, and Philadelphia. By stressing the presence of the lowcountry in narratives by authors who emigrated or were displaced as fugitives, we'll learn to read abolitionist transformations regionally and nationally at the same time. As we'll discover, our most local, coastal texts also require us to read transatlantically. In this spirit, our culminating writing project will link our university to our broader community. Students will create multimodal annotations/editions of excerpted passages as alternatives to traditional, researched close reading essays. Our goal is to make projects that enrich (maybe recast, maybe unnerve) people's perspectives of our most immediate worlds.



## COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who complete this course and earn a grade of C or higher should:

- develop a working reading knowledge of Sea Islands Abolitionism, including literary histories and communities connected to the Port Royal Experiment and the Penn Center;
- develop a working understanding of critical “triangulations” and practice reading locally and globally at the same time;
- consider the ways interdisciplinary reading practices illuminate our course selections;
- appreciate the ways textual histories (revision, reception, transatlantic circulation and publication) enrich studies of form and social reform;
- think about how and why it’s meaningful for us to read nonfiction genres (letters, journals, and diaries) as literary;
- relate American literary texts to their cultural and historical contexts and situate individual authors and works within major currents in Americanist studies;
- hone close reading skills central not only to an education in humanities but also in liberal studies, and appreciate these critical practices as extensions of good note-taking and good writing;
- think about why we read what we read, how writers talk back to one another across generations, how readers and critics likewise talk back to one another across generations, and, to some extent, why revisionist histories help us to read race, class, and gender with sensitivity;
- research, present, and write about the texts, their historical contexts, and their critical afterlives;
- write a researched close reading project, using critical revision and remediation processes.

## COURSE MATERIALS

Craft, William, and Ellen Craft. *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom*. Ed. Barbara McCaskill. U of Georgia P, 1999. ISBN: 978-0820321044.

Grimké, Charlotte Forten. *The Journals of Charlotte Forten Grimké*. Ed. Brenda Stevenson. Oxford UP, 1988. ISBN: 978-0195060867.

We’ll also read from digital archives, excerpt, and materials posted to [Blackboard](#). I’ll show film adaptations from university or other library collections. Beyond the two required books, please anticipate modest printing and photocopying expenses related to your assignments.

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Because this is an upper-division seminar, grades will be determined by commonplace books, reflection papers (two on our primary course texts and one rabbit-hole reflection on secondary/context materials), the final map-making/annotating project (a deconstructed, researched close reading that turns your work from this course into public scholarship), and participation. I’ll give you detailed prompts for these course assignments well ahead of their respective deadlines. In order to pass this class, you must complete all major assignments. For detailed participation guidelines, please see below. Here are the assignments, with deadlines and percentages:

ASSIGNMENTS	DEADLINES	PERCENTAGES
Participation ( <i>including quizzes</i> )	ongoing	100 points/10%
Commonplace Book	ongoing	250 points/25%
Week 1 Reflection	Friday, 13 May	150 points/15%
Week 2 Reflection	Friday, 20 May	150 points/15%
Rabbit Hole Reflection	Monday, 23 May	150 points/15%
Final Map-Making/Annotating Project	Friday, 27 May	200 points/20%

## SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

You'll always submit major assignments electronically on Blackboard. You'll also turn in hard copies. Your assignments are due at the beginning of the class indicated by our course schedule (see below) unless otherwise noted. Please remember that Blackboard will record dates and times for your submissions. Even if you're absent when an assignment is due, it remains your responsibility to submit it. Late work will be penalized at a rate of 1/2-letter for every 24 hours, including weekends. After a week, you'll receive no credit. If you truly need an extension, then you must ask for it in an email before the due date; you must also tell me when you want the revised due date to be.

## ATTENDANCE

In order to be successful in a reading-intensive course, you need to come to class, and to come to class on time. Be aware that I follow USCB's policy (found in USCB's Academic Bulletin) that "absence from more than 10 percent of the scheduled class sessions, whether excused or unexcused, is excessive and the instructor may choose to exact a grade penalty for such absences." I do exact a grade penalty: at your second absence, no matter the reason, I deduct 1/2-letter grade (for instance, from A to B+) from your final course grade; each absence beyond two will result in another 1/2-letter deduction from your final course grade. If you reach four absences, you will earn an F for the course. I mean this, too. These penalties can't be reflected in the Blackboard grade book. I'll apply them at the end of the semester when I record your final grade with the Registrar. Please arrive on time: lateness is disruptive in discussion-intensive courses, and habitual lateness will impact your participation grade. These policies are in place to support you, not to punish you. I want you to learn, to enjoy the learning process, and to do well. If you miss class often, then you will struggle. Please let me know if circumstances arise that make it unusually difficult for you to attend.

## PARTICIPATION

I'll determine your participation grade by considering two things: reading quizzes and consistently meaningful engagement and involvement in class discussions. You won't earn full credit for participation merely by attending class and/or reading but not talking. A-, B-, and even C-level participation means that you have a daily, or at least a weekly, presence in our conversations.

### *On reading & reading quizzes*

Your most important work will be reading—and reading intensively—before each class. Because this is a three-credit hour course that meets twice a week, you'll need to spend several hours between class periods preparing for discussions and writing your essays. Both of these require good note-taking practices, which you'll hone in your commonplace books. I suggest that you read with a pen or a pencil in hand. Mark interesting words, interesting phrases, crucial passages, first impressions, ideas that do and don't speak to you, things that don't make sense, epiphanies, connections to other texts or to other authors, and/or questions to percolate after reading and re-reading. Delight in marginalia. Look up words you don't know. Scroll through maps, museums, and digital archives. Browse USCB's library collections. Google references you don't recognize. I'll post links to resources on our Blackboard page, but you'll surely find many materials on your own. You'll find our supplementary course materials linked to Blackboard. I've marked these materials on the course schedule below. Please print—and annotate and highlight—these reading materials before class.

We'll have reading quizzes every single day to support you, not to punish you, and to teach you to read with the intensity that this course demands. Your reading quizzes should demonstrate not only

that you've read but also that you've thought about what you've read. To prepare for reading quizzes, practice analyzing, not memorizing, details that help you to study a text as a whole. We'll use reading quizzes to guide discussions—and to prompt even more precise questions and answers. The more prepared you are for reading quizzes, the more prepared you will be for class discussions.

### *On talking*

This class will be a combination of lecture and discussion, which means you need to come to class having read with careful and meaningful attention—and you need to be prepared and excited to talk. We will devote significant time practicing this kind of reading together, since it's a skill that will help you to be successful in this course and in most disciplines and professions. Just as your essays are contributions to intellectual conversations, your membership in and relationship with our class also necessarily require you to be vocal, even and especially when you're not quite sure about something. If you tend to be shy, set yourself a goal: at first, make it a point to speak up at least once a week. It'll be easier for you to do this more and more as we all get to know you. I encourage—and expect—everybody to talk: to raise questions and answers, to introduce diverse perspectives, but also to offer inklings of ideas that surface in the back of your mind or in the margin of your textbook. I ask that we all think about the demands of our course in terms of college-level work, college-level work ethics, and a shared delight in the humanities.

## GRADES

I'll assign letter and number grades for major assignments, and I'll record them as points in our course grade book on Blackboard (which translates numbers from points to percentages). I'll determine final course grades based on these ranges:

LETTER GRADE	NUMBER GRADE/PERCENTAGES
A	900 to 1000 points/90 to 100%
B+	850 to fewer than 900 points/85 to less than 90%
B	800 to fewer than 850 points/80 to less than 85%
C+	750 to fewer than 800 points/75 to less than 80%
C	700 to fewer than 750 points/70 to less than 75%
D+	650 to fewer than 700 points/65 to less than 70%
D	600 to fewer than 650 points/60 to less than 65%
F	fewer than 600 points/less than 60%

## RESOURCES

I'm always happy to talk with you about your work. My office hours are after our class, 1:45–2:30 each day, and by appointment. I encourage you to email if you know you want to talk during office hours; then you won't have to wait if it's a busy office hours day/week. Please let me know if my office hours conflict with your schedule, and we'll figure out a mutually convenient time to meet. I've listed my office number, my office telephone number, and my email address on the first page of this syllabus. I make it a priority to return emails within 24 hours; if you email me late at night, I may not be able to respond until the morning.

I also encourage you to meet with tutors from the USCB Writing Center (Library 219) about your work at least once over the course of the semester. When you meet with tutors—and I urge you to meet with two or three tutors if you don't click with your first—you'll learn what it means for your

work to be public facing. Writing tutors are the best kind of intellectual company: they'll offer comments, suggestions, constructive criticism, and they'll help you think about your work afresh. Writing tutors have been among my most important teachers. From them, I figured out how I learn best and how I can teach myself what I want to learn most. To make an appointment, visit [http://www.uscb.edu/academics/academic-success-center/writing\\_center/](http://www.uscb.edu/academics/academic-success-center/writing_center/).

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

*USCB Plagiarism Policy:* Plagiarism, even a first offense, will result in a failing grade for the course. For more information on campus policies see the USCB Academic Bulletin or Student Handbook (which lists regulations and repercussions relating to the honor system) at the [USCB website](#). Intellectual communities are founded on principles of honesty and fair use: teaching, learning, and the advancement of knowledge all depend on actions that support these principles. One of the most important things you will learn as college students is how to make meaningful contributions to your intellectual communities—locally at USCB but also more globally—with full credit to all of the minds that have participated and inspired you. Please know that you should always feel comfortable asking me, or any other professor, when you have questions about properly and generously crediting sources for your assignments. Please know, too, that when you're feeling pressed for time, you should talk to me. It's my pleasure to meet with you and work with you on negotiated deadlines—and then help you think about the paper part-by-part. I'd much rather that than have you turn in a paper that doesn't do justice to your potential to write honestly.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have physical, psychological, or learning disabilities that might affect your work in this class, please contact Jodi Watts with the Office of Disability Services at [jcwatts@uscb.edu](mailto:jcwatts@uscb.edu) or 843-208-8264 as soon as possible. The Career Services/Disability Services Office will determine appropriate accommodations based on medical documentation. Please refer to the USCB Student Handbook, the USCB Academic Bulletin, or the USCB website for more information.

## COURSE ETIQUETTE

You may be invited to use your computer or smart phone, if you have one, during class activities, but I expect you to be professional. Please silence electronic devices before class. Please don't check your texts, emails, or social media, since that's inconsiderate to me and the other people in this class.

## COURSE SCHEDULE & RESERVATIONS

The course syllabus is a plan for the semester. Deviations announced to the class in advance may be necessary to address your needs and interests. If we need to revise the course syllabus (most likely the course schedule), we'll talk about the changes together, and I'll re-post it to Blackboard. All assignments and deadlines are listed on the course schedule below. For each date, I've listed the reading that you'll need to complete *before* that class period.

DATES		READING
ASSIGNMENTS, DEADLINES, REMINDERS		
Monday, 9 May		
Course Introduction: Local/Global Reading; <i>The Port Royal Experiment</i> Teaser/ Trailer; <i>Voices of the Civil War</i> Ep. 9, <i>Port Royal Experiment</i> ; Ep. 17, <i>Combahee River Raid</i> ; Ep. 23: <i>Robert Smalls</i>		
Tuesday, 10 May	Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” and “Slavery in Massachusetts” (Blackboard)	
<i>Freedom Trail</i> “Walking” Tour		
Wednesday, 11 May	Fanny Kemble, from <i>Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838–1839</i> Part 1: from Philadelphia to Georgia (Blackboard)	
<i>Africans in America</i> Screening		
Thursday, 12 May	Fanny Kemble, from <i>Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838–1839</i> Part 2: Butler Island. December 30, 1838–February 16, 1839 (Blackboard)	
Friday, 13 May	Fanny Kemble, from <i>Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838–1839</i> Part 3: St. Simon’s Island. February 16, 1839–April 19, 1839 (Blackboard)	
Week 1 Reflection due		
Monday, 16 May	William and Ellen Craft, from <i>Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom</i> Preface and Part 1 (pp. 1–50)	
<i>Memory Palace</i> Podcast Ep. 14, “The Messrs. Craft”		
Tuesday, 17 May	William and Ellen Craft, from <i>Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom</i> Part 2 (pp. 51–69) and Introduction: “William and Ellen Craft in Transatlantic Literature and Life” (pp. vii–xxv)	
<i>Finding Freedom’s Home: Mitchelville Archaeology</i> Screening		
Wednesday, 18 May	William and Ellen Craft, from <i>Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom</i> Supplementary Readings (pp. 73–82, 86–88, 98–100, 106–108) Barbara McCaskill, from <i>Love, Liberation, and Escaping Slavery: William and Ellen Craft in Cultural Memory</i> (USCB Library ebook, pp. 55–86)	
<i>Mitchelville Park</i> Field Trip		
Thursday, 19 May	Charlotte Forten Grimké, from <i>The Journals of Charlotte Forten Grimké</i> Introduction (pp. 3–55; just peruse this) “Life on the Sea Islands” from <i>The Atlantic</i> , May–June 1864 (Blackboard)	
<i>Penn Center: Legacy of Change</i> and <i>Penn School: Experiment in Freedom</i> Screening		
Friday, 20 May	Charlotte Forten Grimké, from <i>The Journals of Charlotte Forten Grimké</i> Journal 3: Boston, August 13, 1862–August 17, 1862 (pp. 375–377); Worcester/At Sea, October 21, 1862–October 28, 1862 (pp. 382–390)	
Week 2 Reflection due <i>Penn Center</i> Field Trip		
Monday, 23 May	Charlotte Forten Grimké, from <i>The Journals of Charlotte Forten Grimké</i> Journal 3: St. Helena Island, October 29, 1862–February 12, 1863 (pp. 391–449)	
Rabbit Hole Reflection due		
Tuesday, 24 May	Charlotte Forten Grimké, from <i>The Journals of Charlotte Forten Grimké</i> Journal 4: St. Helena Island, February 15, 1863–May 15, 1864 (pp. 451–511)	
<i>Charlotte Forten’s Mission</i> Screening		
Wednesday, 25 May	Thomas Wentworth Higginson, from <i>Army Life in a Black Regiment</i> and <i>Cheerful Yesterdays</i> (Blackboard)	
<i>Beaufort</i> Walking Tour		
Thursday, 26 May	Project Work Day	
Friday, 27 May	Full-Circle Conversations and Project Presentations; John Greenleaf Whittier, “At Port Royal” and “Sung at Christmas by the Scholars of St. Helena’s Island, S.C.”; Robert Lowell, “For the Union Dead” (Blackboard)	
Map-Making/Annotating Projects Due		