

## HERTOG 2021 SUMMER COURSES

### LINCOLN, WITH DOUGLASS

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Abraham Lincoln is often credited with having saved or re-founded the American Union by giving it a “new birth of freedom.” He is also often recognized as the creator of a new form of public speech. In this course, we will seek to understand Lincoln’s statecraft in conjunction with his literary craft. We will follow Lincoln’s political career as seen through his speeches, letters, and proclamations. Alongside Lincoln’s writings we will consider selected writings from Frederick Douglass, a one-time slave who became a great orator, statesman, and abolitionist.

Throughout the course, we will inquire into the nature of political debate and argument, the role of passion and reason in public speech, and the legacy of the Founding (with particular reference to the issue of slavery).

#### Books:

- The Speeches and Writings of Abraham Lincoln, *ed. Don E. Fehrenbacher* (Library of America 2018)
- Selections from Frederick Douglass

#### Resources

To learn more about the ideas and figures discussed in this course, we encourage you to explore a project supported by the Hertog Foundation: **The Great Thinkers** (<http://thegreatthinkers.org/>) and **Contemporary Thinkers** (<http://contemporarythinkers.org/>) websites. These sites are aimed at introducing important thinkers in Western thought, with a particular emphasis on politics and philosophy.

Relevant pages include John Locke, The Federalist, and Tocqueville (on The Great Thinkers), and Walter Berns, Herbert Storing, Martin Diamond, and Harry Jaffa (on Contemporary Thinkers).

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### Monday, July 26, 2021

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#### 2PM to 5PM ET      Session 1

#### Readings:

- Lincoln, To the People of Sangamo County, March 9, 1832
- Address to the Young Men’s Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois, January 27, 1838
- Fragment on the Struggle Against Slavery
- Douglass, “Is It Right and Just to Kill a Kidnapper?” June 2, 1854

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What is your impression of the 23-year-old Lincoln? What is the nature of his “peculiar ambition”?

2. Why is education “the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in”? What is his attitude toward change in laws? Is he a conservative or a progressive?
3. According to Lincoln, who has the harder task—the revolutionary generation or the current generation?
4. What are the direct and indirect consequences of mob rule, and how are they related to “the perpetuation of our political institutions”? Does Lincoln’s solution—a political religion of reverence for the laws—allow for the possibility of civil disobedience, or is disobedience always uncivil?
5. What is the link between mob law and the threat posed by those who belong to “the family of the lion, or the tribe of the eagle”? Is Lincoln such an individual?
6. What does Lincoln mean by “passion” and “reason”? What is “reverence”?
7. What argument does Douglass make in recommending violent resistance to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law? How does it compare to Lincoln’s Lyceum Address and its insistence of absolute law-abidingness?

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**Tuesday, July 27, 2021**

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**2PM to 5PM ET      Session 2**

**Readings:**

- Address to the Washington Temperance Society of Springfield, Illinois, February 22, 1842
- Selection from William Lloyd Garrison
- Excerpt from Douglass, “American Slavery,” October 22, 1847
- Protest in the Illinois Legislature on Slavery, March 3, 1837
- Fragment on Slavery, 1854
- Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act at Peoria, Illinois, October 16, 1854

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What sort of reformers does Lincoln praise and what sort does he criticize? What does this speech to the Temperance Society reveal about Lincoln’s understanding of human nature and rhetoric?
2. If you were to apply what Lincoln says about the temperance movement to the abolition movement, what lessons would you draw? Does Lincoln’s “Protest” exemplify a different anti-slavery strategy?
3. What is Lincoln’s view of slavery? Is he a bigot? In thinking about these questions, pay close attention to two passages (p. 19 and p. 34) in which Lincoln speaks of the role played by universal feelings in political life.
4. Why does Douglass call the Constitution “radically and essentially slave-holding”? Why does Douglass not endorse political reform as the cure for the nation’s ills? What is wrong with gradual abolition of slavery?

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## Wednesday, July 28, 2021

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1:30PM to 4PM ET

Session 3

### Readings:

- Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act at Peoria, Illinois, October 16, 1854
- Letter to Joshua F. Speed, August 24, 1855
- Douglass, "The Constitution of the United States: Is It Pro-Slavery or Anti-Slavery?" March 26, 1860

### Discussion Questions:

1. What does Lincoln's speech reveal about the relation between public opinion and statesmanship?
2. What are the "lullaby" arguments offered in behalf of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and how does Lincoln dispense with them?
3. What about "the one great argument" (Stephen Douglas's doctrine of popular sovereignty)? What are the elements of Lincoln's critique of Douglas?
4. How has Douglass's argument changed from "American Slavery"? Why does he now argue that the Constitution is anti-slavery?

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## Thursday, July 29, 2021

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2PM to 5PM ET

Session 4

### Readings:

- Speech on the *Dred Scott* Decision at Springfield, Illinois, June 26, 1857
- Address at Cooper Institute, New York City, February 27, 1860

### Discussion Questions:

1. Given what Lincoln said about reverence for the Constitution and the law, is he contradicting his own principles in criticizing the *Dred Scott* decision? What is his view of judicial precedent?
2. What is Lincoln's interpretation of the Declaration of Independence? Why is there so much talk of racial amalgamation in this speech?
3. How does Lincoln establish that the Framers agreed with the Republican rather than the Democratic view of the powers of the federal government respecting slavery in the territories?
4. What is Lincoln's message to the Southerners? Are the Republicans a sectional party? Are they conservative, as Lincoln claims?
5. What is Lincoln's message to the Republicans?

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**Friday, July 30, 2021**

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**2PM to 5PM ET      Session 5**

**Readings:**

- Farewell Address at Springfield, Illinois, February 11, 1861
- First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1861
- Address at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, November 19, 1863
- Letter to James C. Conkling, August 26, 1863
- Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865
- Douglass, Oration in the Memory of Lincoln, April 14, 1876

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What is meant by the “new birth of freedom”? Does it refer to the emancipated slaves? If so, what is Lincoln’s vision of their place within the polity?
2. How does the new birth of freedom relate to the argument of the Lyceum Address about the requirements for the perpetuation of our republic? (You might think too about the ballots and bullets passage of the July 4, 1861 Special Message to Congress.)
3. What interpretation of the Civil War does Lincoln present and why?
4. What is Lincoln’s theology? What is the role of charity in political life?
5. In his speech, Douglass describes Lincoln as “preeminently the white man’s President.” What does Douglass mean by this, and is it intended solely as a criticism of Lincoln?
6. What is Douglass’s final verdict on Lincoln’s priority of Union over emancipation?