

HERTOG 2022 POLITICAL STUDIES PROGRAM

SLAVERY & THE AMERICAN FOUNDING

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This course will probe and reveal fundamental questions about the status of slavery and race in the American Founding, the tension between moralism and constitutionalism, and the problem of creating and sustaining a multiracial society on the basis of the original principles of the American regime.

Course Materials

- Course Reader

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.

Relevant pages include [The Federalist](#), [Tocqueville](#), [Walter Berns](#), [Martin Diamond](#), [Harry Jaffa](#), and [Herbert Storing](#).

Monday, July 11, 2022

9:30 AM to 12:30 PM ET

Session I: Appealing to the Founders

Readings:

- Abraham Lincoln, Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Oct. 1854
- Declaration of Independence (Final Version)
- Declaration of Independence (Jefferson's Draft)

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is at stake in the question of extending slavery into the territories in the 1850s? Why was this issue so controversial?
- 2) What are the pros and cons of appealing to the Founders as authorities in a contemporary debate, as Lincoln does? Does Lincoln persuade you that the Founding generation would have agreed with him?
- 3) What is the structure of the Declaration of Independence?
- 4) What difference would it have made if Jefferson's draft of the Declaration had been accepted rather than the version we know?

Tuesday, July 12, 2022

9:30 AM to 12:30 PM ET

Session II: A Revolutionary Dilemma

Readings:

- Thomas Jefferson, Queries VIII, XIV, XVIII, from *Notes on Virginia*, 1785
- Thomas Jefferson, Observations on DeMeunier's Manuscript, June 1786
- James Madison, *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787*, p. 73–81, 275–76, 285–87, 411–12, 502–08
- James Madison, Memorandum on Colonizing Freed Slaves, 1789
- Memoir of Madison Hemings
- Memoir of Israel Jefferson, 1873
- Henry Stevens Randall, Letter to James Parton, 1868

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What position did Jefferson and Madison take on slavery in the 1780s? What obstacles did they foresee to ending slavery?
- 2) What was the range of opinions about slavery at the Constitutional Convention?
- 3) Based on the documents presented here, what should we think about Jefferson's relationship with Sally Hemings? If the story told in Madison Hemings's memoir is true, what difference does that make for our judgment on Jefferson?

Wednesday, July 13, 2022

9:30 AM to 12:30 PM ET

Session III: A Way Out

Readings:

- St. George Tucker, *A Dissertation on Slavery*, 1796, p. 1–41, 76–106

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How does Tucker judge slavery in the United States in the light of natural rights and natural equality?
- 2) What do we learn from Tucker's text about the actual conditions of life for black people in the United States at this time?
- 3) What is Tucker's proposed solution to the problem of slavery? Was his proposal likely to work? Why or why not, in your opinion?

Thursday, July 14, 2022

9:30 AM to 12:30 PM ET

Session IV: The Founders' Failure

Readings:

- Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Edward Coles, 1814

- John Taylor of Caroline, Author's Preface, Letters 13–14, from *Arator*, 1813
- James Madison, Letter to Robert Walsh, Nov. 1819
- Jefferson, Letter to John Holmes, Apr. 1820
- Jefferson, Letter to Albert Gallatin, Dec. 1820
- Jefferson, Letter to John Adams, Jan. 1821
- John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs*, Vol. 5, 1782, p. 1–12
- John C. Calhoun, Speech on the Reception of Abolition Petitions, 1836

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Based on Jefferson's letter to Coles and John Taylor's discussion of Jefferson in *Arator*, did Jefferson's position on slavery change by the end of his life? If so, how?
- 2) What position do Jefferson and Madison take on extending slavery to the territories? How is that position similar to or different from Lincoln's position in the 1850s?
- 3) According to John Quincy Adams, was the Founding a success or a failure? Why?
- 4) How does Calhoun's position on slavery and race differ from Jefferson's?

Friday, July 15, 2022

9:30 AM to 12:30 PM ET

Session V: The American Struggle

Readings:

- John C. Calhoun, Speech on the Oregon Bill, 1848
- Frederick Douglass, The Meaning of the 4th of July for the Slave, 1852
- Alexander Stephens, Cornerstone Speech, 1861

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Both Lincoln and Calhoun appeal to the founders in the controversy over slavery in the territories. Which has the stronger argument, based on the evidence you have seen?
- 2) Is Frederick Douglass positive or negative about the Declaration of Independence and the Founders?
- 3) Frederick Douglass and Alexander Stephens offer very different judgments of the Declaration of Independence. Does their dispute change our sense of the meaning and weight of the document?

Key Dates

Colonial America

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| 1619 | The first enslaved Africans are brought to the English colony of Jamestown, VA. |
| 1641 | Massachusetts becomes the first North American colony to recognize slavery as a legal institution. |
| 1672 | The King of England charters the Royal African Company, thereby encouraging the expansion of the British slave trade. |
| 1688 | Pennsylvania Quakers adopt the first formal anti-slavery resolution in American history. |
| 1705 | The Virginia Slave Code codified the status of slaves. |
| 1751 | George II repeals the 1705 Virginia act. |

The Fight for Independence

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| 1767 | The Virginia House of Burgess boycotts the British slave trade in protest of the Townsend Acts. GA and the Carolinas follow suit. |
| 1770 | Escaped slave, Crispus Attucks, is killed by British forces in Boston. He is one of the first colonists to die in the war for independence. |
| 1774 | The First Continental Congress bans trade with Britain and vows to discontinue the slave trade after December 1.
CT, RI, and GA prohibit the importation of slaves. |
| 1775 | In April, the first battles of the Revolutionary War are waged between the British and Colonial armies at Lexington and Concord, MA.
In July, Gen. George Washington, revising an earlier edict, orders recruiting officers to accept free blacks in the American Army. More than 5,000 blacks, mostly Northerners, fought against the British. |
| 1776 | The Continental Congress adopt the Declaration of Independence .
DE prohibits the importation of African slaves. |
| 1777 | VT is the first of the 13 colonies to abolish slavery and enfranchise all adult males.
NY enfranchises all free propertied men regardless of color or prior servitude. |
| 1778 | VA prohibits the importation of slaves. |

- 1780** DE makes it illegal to enslave imported Africans. PA begins gradual emancipation.
A freedom clause in the MA Constitution is interpreted as an abolishment of slavery. MA enfranchises all men regardless of race.
- 1781** **Articles of Confederation** ratified.
- 1782** Paris Treaty signed. VA, followed by other Southern colonies, encourages private manumission.
- 1783** VA emancipates those slaves who served in the colonial forces against Britain, provided that the slave's master gives permission.
MD prohibits the importation of African slaves.
- 1784** RI and CT begin gradual emancipation. NC prohibits the importation of African slaves.
Jefferson's proposal to restrict the westward expansion of slavery fails.
- 1785** NY passes a gradual emancipation law, prohibits the importation of slaves, and allows masters to manumit slaves without posting bonds.
- 1787** **Constitutional Convention** takes place from May 14 to September 17.
In July, Congress enacts the **Northwest Ordinance**, outlawing slavery in the new territories (later OH, IN, IL, MI, and WI).
RI forbids residents from participating in the slave trade. SC ends domestic and international slave trade.

The Early Republic

- 1788** CT and MA forbid residents from participating in the slave trade. SC permits domestic slave trade to continue.
- 1789** **U.S. Constitution** ratified.
- 1791** Slave insurrection in the French colony of St. Domingue begins the bloody process of founding the nation of Haiti, the first independent black country in the Americas.
- 1792** George Washington reelected.
- 1793** Invention of the cotton gin, making production of cotton more profitable.
The First **Fugitive Slave Law** is passed, allowing slave owners to cross state lines in the pursuit of fugitives and making it a penal offense to abet runaway slaves.

1794	Congress enacts the federal Slave Trade Act of 1794 prohibiting American vessels to transport slaves to any foreign country from outfitting in American ports.
1795–1820	During a period of religious revivalism, known as the “Second Great Awakening,” slaves convert to Christianity in large numbers for the first time.
1796	Washington’s Farewell Address. Adams elected president.
1798	GA prohibits international slave trade.
1800	Jefferson elected president. Congress prohibits U.S. citizens from exporting slaves.
1801	Congress extends the VA and MD slavery laws into DC, establishing a federally authorized slave code.
1803	Louisiana Purchase for \$15,000,000. Lewis & Clark expedition.
1804	Jefferson reelected. The U.S. prohibits the importation of slaves from foreign territories into LA. In PA, the Underground Railroad is officially established. NJ enacts laws meant to introduce gradual emancipation.
1807	UK Parliament outlaws British participation in the African Slave Trade.
1808	US bans African slave trade. James Madison elected president.
1809	Abraham Lincoln born in Kentucky.
1812	War of 1812. Madison reelected.
1816	The American Colonization Society was founded to transport freeborn blacks and emancipated slaves to Africa, leading to the creation of a colony that became the Republic of Liberia in 1847. James Monroe elected president. Collapse of the Federalist Party.
1818	Frederick Douglass born in MD.
1819	U.S. law declares slave trading to be a capital offense. VA and NC remove restraints on interstate slave trade. Economic crisis with the Panic of 1819.
1820	The Missouri Compromise forbids slavery in the LA territory north of Missouri’s Southern border. Under its terms, ME is admitted to the Union as a free state and MO as a slave state. Monroe reelected.
1822	Liberia is founded as a colony for blacks fleeing America.

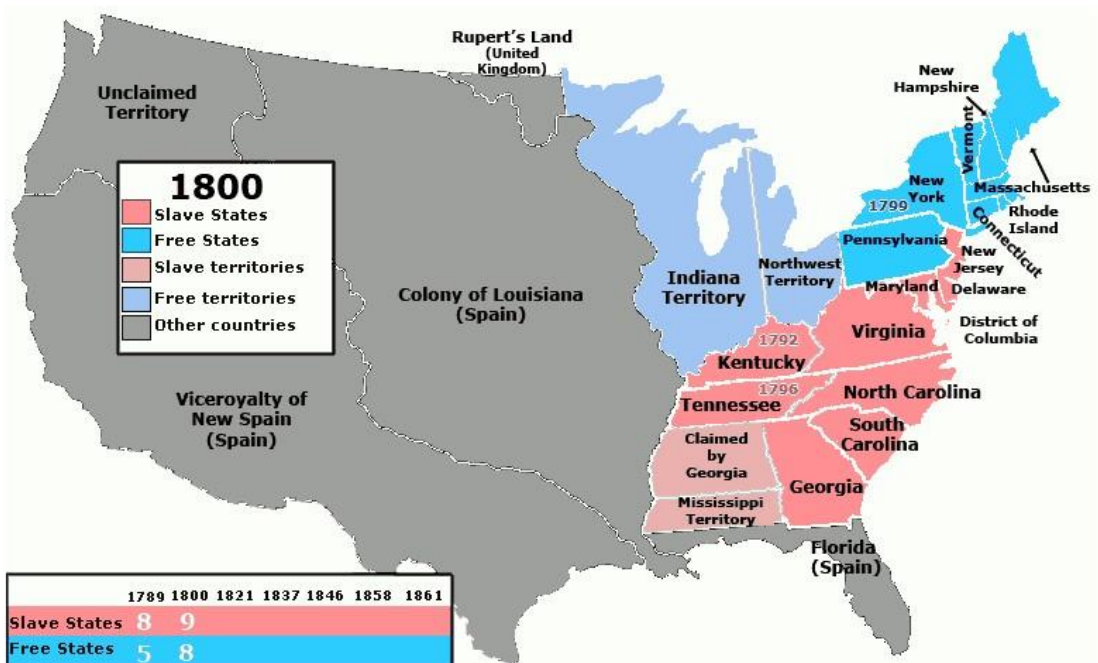
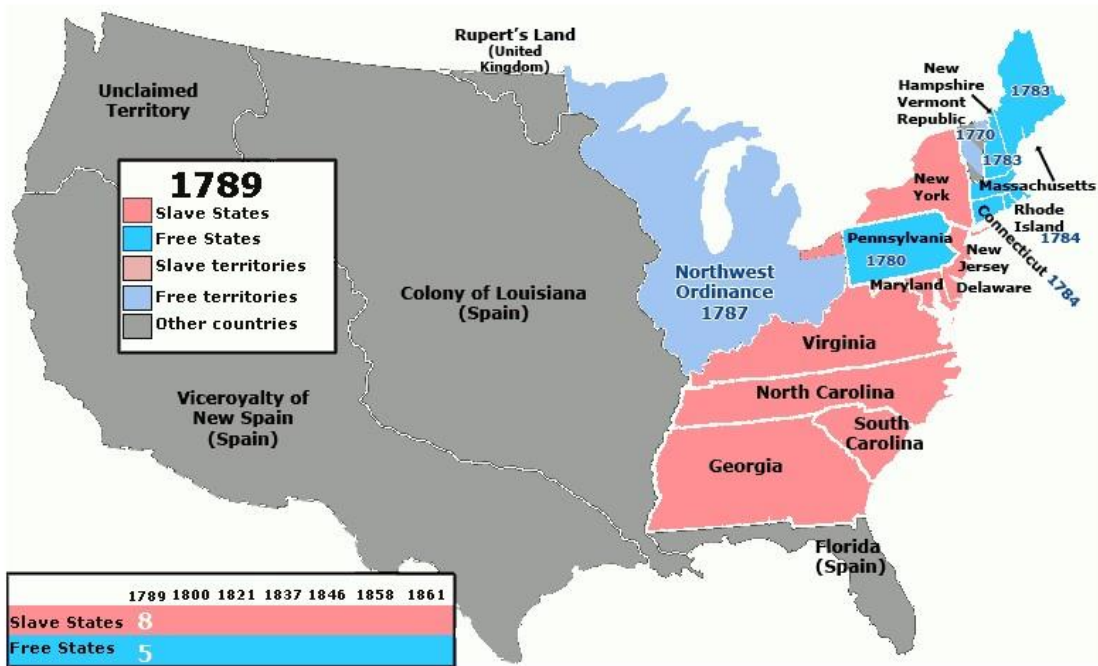
Sectional Crisis

1824	John Quincy Adams elected president in a contingent election, with the support of Henry Clay. John C. Calhoun elected vice president. Democratic-Republican Party splits.
1827	TN officially bans slave trading.
1828	Andrew Jackson elected president, defeating Adams in a landslide.
1829	Mexico abolishes slavery and becomes a refuge for American fugitive slaves.
1830	The slave population in the U.S. numbers more than two million, making the ratio of free to enslaved Americans approximately 5.5:1.
1831	William Lloyd Garrison founds <i>The Liberator</i> , an abolitionist newspaper. The New England Anti-Slavery Society is founded. Debates in VA concerning emancipation mark the beginning of the last antebellum movement toward abolition in the South. Nat Turner, an enslaved Baptist preacher, leads a violent rebellion in Southampton, VA.
1832–33	Nullification Crisis – SC threatens to secede over the Tariff of 1828. Calhoun resigns as VP.
1832	AL removes restraints on interstate slave trade. KY forbids residents from buying and importing slaves.
1833	Creation of the Whig Party in opposition to Jackson. Britain abolishes slavery in all colonies, effective the following year. Philadelphia hosts the 1st American Anti-Slavery Society Convention.
1834	LA removes restraints on the interstate slave trade.
1836	Democrat Martin Van Buren elected president. TX wins independence from Mexico and legalizes slavery.
1837	New York City hosts the first National Anti-Slavery Society Convention.
1838	Frederick Douglass escapes slavery and arrives in NY.
1839	Africans aboard the Spanish slave ship <i>Amistad</i> commit mutiny. When the ship lands off the coast of Long Island, the slaves plead for freedom in court.
1840	Whig William Henry Harrison elected president, but dies just one month into his term. John Tyler succeeds him.

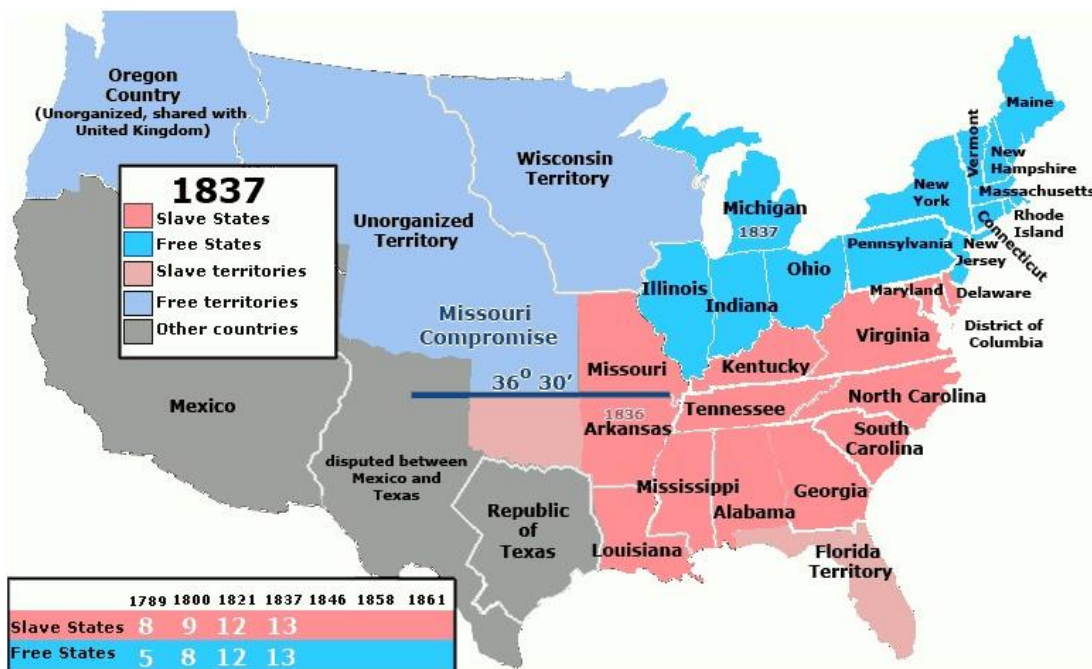
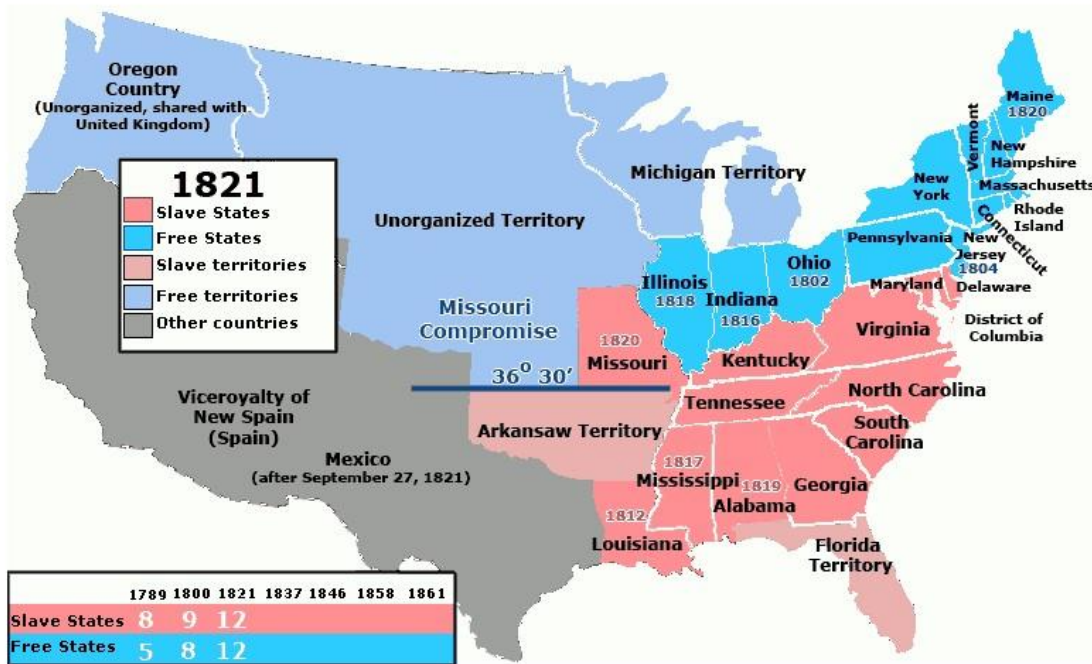
1841	The U.S. Supreme Court declares that the mutinous Africans from the slave ship <i>Amistad</i> are now free.
1842	In the case of <i>Prigg v. Pennsylvania</i> , the U.S. Supreme Court rules that the 1793 Fugitive Slave law is constitutional.
1844	Democrat James K. Polk elected president. OR prohibits slavery.
1845	TX enters the Union as a slave state.
1846–48	Mexican-American War
<i>A House Divided</i>	
1847	Frederick Douglass breaks with William Lloyd Garrison to found a black abolitionist paper called <i>The North Star</i> .
1848	Anti-slavery groups organize the Free Soil Party, a group opposed to the westward expansion of slavery from which the Republican Party will later be born. OR Territory established. IL Senator Stephan A. Douglas introduces a bill to exclude slavery from the territory. Whig Zachary Taylor elected president.
1850	Taylor dies, and Millard Fillmore assumes the presidency. Henry Clay and Douglas broker the Compromise of 1850 , which admits CA to the Union as a free state, allows the slave states of NM and UT to be decided by popular sovereignty, and bans slave trade in DC. A second fugitive slave law , enforced by the federal government, strengthens the rights of slave owners and threatens the rights of free blacks. Many states pass personal liberty laws in response.
1852	Northern Democrat Franklin Pierce elected president.
1854	The Kansas-Nebraska Act creates the territories of KS and NE and allows popular sovereignty to decide the slave status of each. It also repeals the anti-slavery clause of the Missouri Compromise.
1856	The Republican Party is formed out of the Free Soil Party. Proslavery groups in KS attack the free-soil town of Lawrence. Radical abolitionist John Brown and his followers strike in retaliation, initiating a wave of violence and destruction, known as “Bleeding Kansas.” Democrat James Buchanan elected president.

- 1857** The U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Dred Scott v. Sanford* denies citizenship to all slaves, ex-slaves, and descendants of slaves and denies Congress the right to prohibit slavery in the territories.
- 1858** KS enters the Union as a free state.
Lincoln runs for the Senate from IL against incumbent Stephen Douglas, the Democratic candidate.
- 1859** The last slave ship to bring slaves into the US lands in Mobile Bay, AL.
A group of whites and blacks, led by John Brown, conducts an unsuccessful raid on Harper's Ferry, VA.
- 1860** Abraham Lincoln elected president.
The slave population is now nearly four million, making the ratio of free to enslaved Americans approximately 7:1.
- 1861** SC secedes from the Union. The Union of Confederate States is formed.
Jefferson Davis is elected its president.
The Civil War begins in Charleston, SC.

Maps of Slave States vs. Free States Over Time



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