

**Grasping American Freedom**  
**Interdisciplinary Honors Seminar**  
**(090:295:01)**

Tuesday/Thursday, 3:55 to 5:15 PM  
Ruth Adams Building 018

Prof. Andy Urban  
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Office Hours: 1 – 3PM, Thursday, or by appointment  
Ruth Adams Building 205E

**Course Description**

As a concept, freedom is difficult to grasp...

In polls and surveys, Americans routinely cite freedom as the principle most important to them personally and for the nation as a whole. At the same time, however, despite the nearly unanimous belief that freedom is essential to Americans and to the United States, no one agrees on how this idea should be enacted, and what it actually means culturally, politically, legally, and psychologically. Why do Americans cherish and passionately guard freedoms and liberties, yet are unable to reach a consensus on what it is they are protecting? If freedom is a purportedly natural feature of what it means to be human, why is it that this idea only gains concrete meaning when analyzed as part of a complex series of social relationships governed through the contractual language of rights and privileges? Should freedom be a sacred value, or are we better off viewing it as just one value amid many other equally important ones?

Using a wide array of primary sources, this seminar will pay close attention to how Americans have articulated freedom during different historical moments and under different circumstances. Engaging with novels and films, we will examine freedom as a question of art and culture. Turning to popular culture, we will explore freedom as a ubiquitous presence in music, advertisements, and in vernacular expressions of American patriotism. We will look at specific articulations of the freedom of movement, the freedom to control and share intellectual property, and freedom in relationship to imprisonment.

*Required Readings*

- Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (ISBN# 9780393331998)
- Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations* (ISBN# 9780807050255)
- David Oshinsky, *“Worse Than Slavery”* (ISBN# 9780684830957)
- James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room* (ISBN# 9780385334587)

In addition to the above books, the assigned chapters, articles, and primary sources have been (or will be shortly) posted as .pdf files on the course's SAKAI site, under the heading "Resources."

**Readings correspond to the day they will be discussed and should be completed before the seminar begins. PLEASE BRING THE READINGS TO CLASS.**

Please make sure that you are receiving and checking SAKAI announcements via email, as I regularly use the site to update class information, assignments, etc. You are responsible for keeping up-to-date with class information and making sure that you are connected.

Attendance in the seminar is mandatory. Each student is allowed one unexcused absence during the semester. Each additional unexcused absence will result in deduction from your participation grade. Please do not text, use the internet, chat online, etc. during our seminar. If you do you will be marked as absent for that class.

### **Assignment and Grading Summary**

*Additional information on the essay assignments will be provided in separate handouts.*

**"Freedom Essay" – First version 5%; Second version 15%**

At the start of the semester and at the end, you will be write essays that review what the concept of freedom means to you, and how your engagement with classroom materials has altered this understanding.

### **Response Papers – 30% (10% each)**

During the semester, you will complete three short response papers that address the significance of the authors, lectures, and discussions in relationship to that unit's theme. (There are four units total, meaning that you can skip writing a response paper for one of the units. But you are still required to know and stay up-to-date on that unit's readings! And everyone is required to do a response paper for Unit One.)

**Online Visual Essay/Final Project – In-class presentation 5%  
Final paper 25%**

Each of you will be responsible for researching and curating an online essay – using visual, textual, and new media sources – that addresses the topic of your choice relating to freedom and its meaning in the United States.

**Participation/Attendance – 20%**

**Grading Scale:**

92-100=A; 87-91=B+; 81-86=B; 77-80=C+; 70-76=C; 60-69=D; 0-59=F

**Note:** there are no minus grades at Rutgers.

**This course satisfies the SAS Core Goal: WCD (t, u, v)**

**Student is able to:**

(t)--Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry

(u)--Evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly

(v)—analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights

**Class Policies**

If you have to miss class due to sickness, an emergency, or another excused reason, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

Unexcused late assignments will receive a deduction.

**Special Accommodation Requests**

All special accommodation requests must be brought to my attention during the first two weeks of class. Full disability policies and procedures are available for review at:

<http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>.

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html>

**Academic Integrity Policy**

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>

Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.

Honor Pledge:

I pledge on my honor that I will adhere to all aspects of the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy

By accepting this syllabus and enrolling in this course, you assume responsibility for knowing the above policies and the possible penalties – including suspension and expulsion – should you violate the Honor Pledge.

Take an interactive tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

<http://sccweb.scc-net.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/Intro.html>

Please see the last page of this syllabus for additional information on plagiarism.

## **Class Schedule and Assigned Readings**

Tuesday, September 3 – Introduction

### **UNIT ONE: What is Freedom? Terms, Concepts, and Ideas**

Thursday, September 5

- Hannah Arendt, “What is Freedom?” from *Between Past and Future*
- Nikolas Rose, “Governing,” from *The Powers of Freedom*

Tuesday, September 10

- Bill of Rights:  
[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill\\_of\\_rights\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html)
- Thomas Paine, “Of the Origin and Design of Government in General...” from *Common Sense* (1776)
- John Locke, excerpt from *Two Treatises of Government* (1690)
- Eric Foner, “Introduction,” from *The Story of American Freedom*

Thursday, September 12 – NO CLASS

(I will be in Austria for a conference. We will substitute this meeting for our October 12 trip to Philadelphia.)

Tuesday, September 17

### **ESSAY ONE ON FREEDOM DUE, IN HARD COPY, AT START OF CLASS**

- Winkler “Guns of Our Fathers,” from *Gunfight: The Battle over the Right to Bear Arms in America*
- Isaac Kramnick and Lawrence Moore, “The Godless Constitution,” from *The Godless Constitution: The Case Against Religious Correctness*

Thursday, September 19

- Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, intro & ch. 1

Tuesday, September 24

- Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, ch. 2

Thursday, September 26

- Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, chs. 3-4

Tuesday, October 1

- Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, chs. 1-3

Thursday, October 3

- Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, chs. 4-6

Tuesday, October 8

- Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 7-conclusion

Thursday, October 10

- Adrian Johns, "The Pirate at Home and at Large," from *Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates*
- John Perry Barlow, "Jack In, Young Pioneer!"
- Loz Kaye, "Pirate Bay's 10th birthday is a milestone for internet freedom," *The Guardian*

**Unit One Response Paper Due, Via SAKAI, by 5PM on Friday, October 11**

**UNIT TWO: Freedom and the State**

Saturday, October 12

Field Trip to Eastern State Penitentiary

Tuesday, October 15

- Seth Bruggeman, "Reforming the Carceral Past: Eastern State Penitentiary and the Challenge of the Twenty-First-Century Prison Museum," *Radical History Review*

Thursday, October 17

- Michelle Alexander, "The New Jim Crow," from *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*
- Nicholas De Genova, "Migrant 'Illegality' and the Metaphysics of Antiterrorism: 'Immigrants' Rights' in the Aftermath of the Homeland Security State," from *Border Battles: The U.S. Immigration Debates*

Tuesday, October 22

In-class movie: *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers* (dirs. Judith Ehrlich and Rick Goldsmith, 2009)

Thursday, October 24

No reading, discussion of film

**Unit Two Response Paper Due, Via SAKAI, by 5PM on Friday, October 25**

**UNIT THREE: Economics and Freedom**

Tuesday, October 29

- Karl Marx, excerpts from *Wage Labour and Capital*
- Milton Friedman, "The Relation between Economic Freedom and Political Freedom," from *Capitalism and Freedom*
- Amy Dru Stanley, "Conjugal Bonds and Wage Labor: Rights of Contract in the Age of Emancipation," *Journal of American History*

Thursday, October 31

- Oshinsky, "*Worse Than Slavery*," prologue, chs. 1 & 2
- George Fitzhugh, excerpts from *Cannibals All! Or, Slaves Without Masters*

Tuesday, November 5

- Oshinsky, "*Worse Than Slavery*," chs. 3-5
- "North American Slave Narratives," <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/> - details on this reading assignment to follow

Thursday, November 7

- Oshinsky, "*Worse Than Slavery*," ch. 6 to end.

**Unit Three Response Paper Due, Via SAKAI, by 5PM on Friday, November 8**  
**Visual Essay Outline/Draft Due In-Class, Monday, November 12**

Tuesday, November 12

In-Class Visual Essay Presentations and Workshopping

Thursday, November 14

In-Class Visual Essay Presentations and Workshopping

Tuesday, November 19

In-Class Visual Essay Presentations and Workshopping

**UNIT FOUR: Freedom and Cultural Identity**

Thursday, November 21

In-Class Film, *Easy Rider* (dir. Dennis Hopper, 1969)

Tuesday, November 26

No reading – film discussion

Thursday, November 28 – NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING

Tuesday, December 3

Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, Part One

Thursday, December 5

Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, Part Two, chs. 1-2

Tuesday, December 10

Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, Part Two, ch. 3 – end

**Unit Four Response Paper Due, Via SAKAI, by 5PM on Friday, December 13**

**Final “Visual Essay” due by no later than 11:59PM on Wednesday, Dec. 18, VIA SAKAI**

**Final Essay on Freedom due by no later than 11:59PM on Friday, Dec. 20, VIA SAKAI**

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## **AVOIDING PLAGIARISM**

In this class we will take cheating very seriously. All suspected cases of cheating and plagiarism will be automatically referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs, and we will recommend penalties appropriate to the gravity of the infraction.

**Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline or as required by the instructor**

**Some common examples of plagiarism are:**

- **Copying word for word (i.e. quoting directly) from an oral, printed, or electronic source without proper attribution.**
- **Paraphrasing without proper attribution, i.e., presenting in one’s own words another person’s written words or ideas as if they were one’s own.**
- **Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement.**
- **Incorporating into one’s work graphs, drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, spreadsheets, computer programs, or other nontextual material from other sources without proper attribution.**

A SPECIAL NOTE: Students often assume that because information is available on the Web it is public information, does not need to be formally referenced, and can be used without attribution. This is a mistake. *All* information and ideas that you derive from other sources, whether written, spoken, or electronic, must be attributed to their original source. Such sources include not just written or electronic materials, but people with whom you

may discuss your ideas, such as your roommate, friends, or family members. The more important point: think about what you are basing and argument or assessment on in terms of where it comes from, and how the source must be evaluated.

Judgments about plagiarism can be subtle. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask for guidance from your instructor.