

Fighting Slavery in the United States
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This lecture series is a sequel to an earlier course covering an earlier period. This six-week course offers you the opportunity to meet a large and often unfamiliar cast of characters—both Black and white, enslaved and free—who developed a range of tools and tactics, means and methods to escape enslavement or try to resist it in the period between the drafting of the United States Constitution in 1787 and 1865, the year that marked the end of the Civil War.

WK1:

Why Slavery Spreads: Charles Pinckney's Counter-Revolution. Reconstructs the conservative campaign to minimize further slave resistance and shore up the security of southern slave societies in the decades after the Revolution, using the provisions of the 1787 United States Constitution as a case study.

Black Avengers. Examines the causes, course, and consequences of the Haitian Revolution, the single largest slave revolt in the history of the world, and the only one that had so far succeeded.

WK2:

Why Slavery Spreads: The Second Middle Passage

Reconstructs the rise of the domestic slave trade within the United States after 1808, a vast internal market that saw the forced migration of hundreds of thousands of enslaved people from the Chesapeake to the new Cotton Kingdom.

Surviving King Cotton

Reconstructs the efforts of the trafficked victims of the domestic slave trade to shape their own sales, rebuild shattered families and communities, and repeatedly subvert their owner's aspirations of achieving absolute mastery.

WK3:

Walker, Turner and Black Immediatism

Compares northern black activists' barrage of anti-slavery petitions to the bloody violence of enslaved rebels further South in the 1820s and 1830s, using David Walker and Nat Turner as mirrored case studies.

Garrison's Thousand Witnesses

Explores William Lloyd Garrison's famous 1831 embrace of immediatism, an uncompromising new stance among white antislavery activists in America.

WK4:

Why Slavery Spreads: Roger Taney and the Nationalization of Slavery.

Examines the strange career of Roger Taney, an antislavery lawyer from Maryland who later came to be despised abolitionists everywhere, and who was widely blamed for the coming of the Civil War itself.

Frederick Douglass and Militant Abolitionism

Explores the post-1840 rise to prominence of talented and vocal free black activists such as Frederick Douglass who challenged southern slaves to take responsibility for their own emancipation and fight for their freedom, “even to death.”

WK5:

Two Harriets.

Compares the antislavery impact of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1852), and Harriet Tubman, the most well-known conductor on the Underground Railroad.

The Black Heart of John Brown

Reconstructs John Brown’s failed 1859 raid on the federal arsenal at Harper’s Ferry and his subsequent execution in the context of rising concern about militant abolition activity in southern states.

WK6:

The Slaves’ War

Examines enslaved people’s successful efforts to turn the Civil War into the largest slave revolt in world history, and to compel President Abraham Lincoln to issue the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation.

The Black Phalanx

Explores why so many free black men rushed to join the Union Army, reconstructs the experiences of the 179,000 black men took up arms against the Confederacy, and evaluates the impact on the course of the Civil War.