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AMH 4573: African American History Since the Late Nineteenth Century
Fall 2017 // MW 2:00-2:50 + Hybrid, GC 287A
Professor Dan Royles, Department of History
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Office: DM 385b
Office Hours: M 11:00-1:00

Harlem

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

—Langston Hughes (1951)

Course Description

The dream of justice and equality for people of African descent in the United States has been deferred time and again. The emancipation of four million enslaved Black men, women, and children at the end of the Civil War was followed by violent lynch mobs and the rise of legalized segregation in the former Confederacy. Decades later, Southern Blacks moved north in search of greater freedom and opportunity, but instead were met with rampant discrimination and race riots. The successes of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 60s was followed by the rise of a system of mass incarceration that—if nothing changes—will send one in three Black men to prison in his lifetime. In 2008, the United States elected its first Black president; in 2017, white supremacists rallied by torchlight, their faces uncovered.

The world has changed radically over the last 150 years. So why does this cycle of racism and violence seem to repeat itself time and again? How did African Americans fight back against entrenched racism and anti-Black violence? How did they carve out spaces for community in the midst of such an oppressive system? Where did they find joy?

As you will see, the answers to these questions can vary greatly by space, time, gender, sexuality, and social class. Although we often talk about “the Black community” as a single entity, it speaks with a multitude of voices. For example, we will read about the work of Black women intellectuals, including their writings about gender discrimination and sexual respectability. We will also learn about the ways that activists throughout the African diaspora drew inspiration from one another’s “soul style” during the 1950s, 60, and 70s to advance Black liberation in the United States, Great Britain, and South Africa.

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At the same time, we will see that this story does not stop at U.S. borders. Ideas about liberation, political rights, and Black Power have flowed through the African diaspora, connecting African Americans to sub-Saharan African and the Black Caribbean. African American activists have also at times used the international stage to advance Black rights in the United States, or sought refuge abroad from the white supremacist violence they experienced at home. Toward the end of the course we will also use Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Americanah* to examine race and racism in the contemporary United States from an outsider's perspective, and consider the extent to which the American brand of white supremacy has been globalized.

As we go through the course, we will also develop skills in thinking and communicating like historians. These include paying attention to issues of context and complexity, making and supporting arguments with evidence, and reading and thinking critically. Such skills are not only useful in studying history—they are key to success in your other courses, and employers look for them when thinking about who to hire. But more importantly, these skills are vital to understanding the world around us, connecting with other people, and taking part in democratic life.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, my goal is for you to:

- Better understand the last 150 years of United States history through the lens of African American experiences.
- Think critically about how differences of gender, sexuality, class, and place intersect with race to shape not just a single African American experience, but many.
- Understand the ways that African American history has been shaped by the interaction of local, regional, national, and international forces and events.
- Be able to find, analyze, and compare primary and secondary sources, and understand the difference between the types of sources that historians use.
- Be able to think like a historian, and use that thinking to analyze the most pressing problems facing the United States today, including inequality, mass incarceration, and health disparities.
- Learn a lot, think deeply, work hard, and be able to say that you had fun while doing it.

Global Learning Outcomes

Since this is also a **Global Learning Foundations course** that counts toward your Global Learning Foundations requirement, you will also:

- See that African American history cannot be understood in isolation from developments in other parts of the African diaspora, including the Caribbean and post-colonial Africa. (Global Awareness)
- Recognize that African American history is comprised of multiple stories, representing diverse experiences and perspectives. (Global Perspective)
- Consider different perspectives on a problem or controversy related to African American history and attempt to reach a resolution about it. (Global Engagement)

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Active and Team-Based Learning

Many of our class meetings will involve **active learning**. You can expect this course to include a mix of lecture, discussion, in-class writing, and activities in small groups. I expect that you will take notes during lecture and discussions, and that you will come to class having completed any assigned reading for the day. I will divide you into teams early in the semester, based on the results of a short survey. You will work with this team to complete both learning activities in class and the **digital exhibit** that you will present at the end of the semester.

Required Materials

- Brittney Cooper, *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women*
- Nella Larsen, *Passing*
- Tanisha C. Ford, *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Race*
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah*

These books are available through the FIU bookstore. You are also welcome to purchase them secondhand through online booksellers. Additional readings listed on the syllabus will be available on the open web, through the library's web services, or posted to Blackboard.

I recommend that you obtain physical copies of the readings for this course. If you choose to read do, be sure to use Maria Konnikova's strategies for screen reading from "[Being a Better Online Reader](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/09/magazine/better-online-reader.html)" <goo.gl/jOiUxt>. Either way, you must bring a copy of the readings and your notes with you to each class. You should also print out primary source readings so that you can critically annotate them—we will talk about this more in class.

Grade Components

Syllabus Quiz: One of your first assignments will be a Syllabus Quiz, covering the policies and major deadlines for this course. The goal of this assignment is to make sure that everyone is familiar with these, to help you all be successful in this course. You will take the Syllabus Quiz in Blackboard, and you may attempt it up to three times; only your highest score will count toward your final grade. The Syllabus Quiz will be available in Blackboard by noon on Wednesday, August 23rd, and you will have until 11:59 PM on Sunday, September 3rd to complete it.

Participation: This class depends on participation, which means more than simply showing up to class. You should come to every class having completed any readings and assignments for that day, and be ready and willing to participate. This can mean answering a question that I pose to the class, asking a question about something that confused you, responding to someone else's question or comment, actively contributing to group work, or sharing something that interested you with the class. You should also **listen actively** by taking notes on lectures, film viewings, and discussions. I strongly urge you to take notes by hand, rather than on a laptop or tablet—studies show that students who take notes by hand retain more and do better on tests than do those who type their notes on a laptop or tablet <goo.gl/EJhYU8>.

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Since this is a hybrid class, a portion of your grade will also be based on participation in discussion boards via Blackboard. Each week you will have a prompt to respond to, or a research exercise to complete and write about, on Blackboard. Your posts should be 250-400 words long. In addition, you'll write at least two comments of around 75-100 words on one another's posts. If you want to respond to someone else's comment, or reply to someone's comment on your post, that's fine—so long as you have at least two comments each week. Posts will generally be due by 11:59 PM on Sundays, and blog comments will be due by the beginning of class on the following Wednesday. Your two lowest discussion board scores will be dropped when calculating your final grade.

I may periodically also ask you to prepare short homework assignments based on the readings. These will be factored into your participation grade.

Weekly Quizzes: Each week you will take a short quiz. These will be based on that week's assigned readings, as well as material we've covered in class up to that point. The goal of these quizzes is to help you stay on track with the reading and review material as we go along. These will be done on Blackboard and for most weeks must be started by noon on Wednesday (I will notify you of exceptions to this). You will have twenty minutes to complete each quiz. Make-up quizzes will only be granted in cases of illness or emergency.

Final exam: There will be a cumulative exam based on course readings and material presented in class during the final week of regular classes.

Digital Exhibit: In this project, you will work in teams to create a digital exhibit for the [African American AIDS History Project](http://afamaidshist.org) <afamaidshist.org>. Your team will choose and research your topic, divide up tasks, create the project, and present it to the class during the final week of regular classes. This project will ask you to conduct research in both primary and secondary sources, and to think about how to present historical information online. You will have several opportunities to work with your group during class.

The digital exhibit assignment will build on the following short writing assignments, which you will complete individually. These will be submitted to Turnitin via Blackboard.

Primary Source Analysis: A 2-3 page analysis comparing two primary sources for your digital exhibit, due Friday, November 3rd at 11:59 PM.

Secondary Source Critique: A 4-5 page critique of a major secondary source for your digital exhibit, due Sunday, November 26th at 11:59 PM.

Grading Breakdown

Grade Distribution:

- Syllabus Quiz (5%)
- Participation (in class and on Blackboard) (20%)
- Weekly Quizzes (10%)
- Final Exam (20%)
- Primary Source Analysis and Secondary Source Critique (10% each)
- Digital Exhibit (25%)

Grading Scale:

Letter Grade	Range	Letter Grade	Range
A	Above 93	B-	81-83
A-	91-92	C+	77-80
B+	87-90	C	71-76
B	84-86	F	70 or less

Support

I am happy to read and offer comments on assignment drafts up to 72 hours before a deadline. This is to give me enough time to offer you thoughtful comments, and for you to incorporate my feedback into your final draft of an assignment.

There are also resources on campus to help you with history courses, and with writing in general:

The History Tutors: There are several history graduate students working in the history department main office (DM 390), whose job is to tutor students in history classes. They are experienced upper-level history majors and graduate students who can help with papers, preparing for exams, or keeping on top of class in general. To set up an appointment, please visit their website: history.fiu.edu/tutoring.

The Center for Excellence in Writing: The Center for Excellence in Writing is freely available to you. The staff can help you with all aspects of writing, from approaching a question and brainstorming to techniques for editing. Their website is: writingcenter.fiu.edu.

Classroom Policies

Attendance and Participation: Learning is a social activity, so it is necessary for you to come to class, and be ready to participate. I will be taking attendance. You have two unexcused absences to be used over the course of the semester. Additional unexcused absences will affect your participation grade in the class. If you are more than ten minutes late, you'll be marked absent for the day. Excused absences will be granted for legitimate, verifiable reasons. These include illness or injury, religious holidays, military service, and legal requirements such as jury duty.

If you are absent from class, whether excused or unexcused, you are responsible for finding out what we did that day **FROM A CLASSMATE**. Don't email me to ask, "What did we do?" "Can I see your notes?" or "Did we do anything important?" Instead, talk to your classmates about what we did, and ask to see their notes. Of course, this is no substitute for being present in class.

Classroom Behavior: Please arrive on time and stay until the end of class. This is a matter of respect for me and for your classmates. If you must arrive late or leave early, please do so with as little disturbance as possible. While I understand that emergencies may arise, please use the bathroom before class to avoid leaving in the middle. In accordance with the Student Code of Conduct (pg. 11), you have the right to agree, disagree, challenge, and question the opinions and

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comments of others, including myself. However, you may not disrespect others—including myself—or act in a way that makes others uncomfortable. It is against FIU policy to harass and/or discriminate against any student, faculty member, or employee on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, marital status, ethnic/national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, or other legally protected categories. For more information or to make a complaint, please contact the FIU Office of Equal Opportunity Programs and Diversity. <goo.gl/XXuXFk>

Cell Phones and Electronics: Please silence your cell phone and keep it put away during class. This means no checking e-mail, no checking social media, and no texting. If your phone rings during class or I catch you using your phone to do one of the above, **you must bring enough cookies for the entire class to our next meeting.** Repeated violations will reduce your participation grade.

Some of you may wish to bring a laptop or tablet to class in order to take notes, to refer to electronic copies of the reading. [NB: You may not use your smartphone to access the reading—the screen is too small.] If you do so, please show respect to me, your classmates, and your own learning by not checking e-mail and social media, or browsing the Internet during class. Research on electronics use in the classroom <goo.gl/ipyyR> shows that this not only detracts from your learning, but from the learning of the people around you. If I see you doing the above during class, **you must bring enough cookies for everyone to the following class session.** Repeated violations will reduce your participation grade.

During some activities, I will ask you to close laptops or to put tablets away completely. This is so that we can all focus more directly on engaging with one another and the course material. In this case, I expect you to show respect to me and to one another by doing so.

Communication: I prefer to be addressed as “Professor Royles” or “Dr. Royles.” If you would like to be addressed using a different name than the one listed on the roster, please let me know.

Please feel free to come to my teaching office (Mondays, 11:00-1:00) if you have *any* questions or would like to continue our discussion from class. If you can’t make it to my office hours but would like to set up an appointment, please send me an email with at least three (3) specific times that you are available to meet.

Otherwise, the best way to reach me is by email, at droyles@fiu.edu. During the week I will respond to emails within 24 hours; over the weekend I will respond to email within 48 hours. Please allow this much time for a response before sending a follow-up email. Before you email me, please consult the guidelines to emailing professors <goo.gl/ynZBnA> to make sure that you come across as professional and responsible in your correspondence.

I will also use email to communicate important information about the course, including updates to the reading schedule. Please check your FIU email at least once a day to make sure you receive these.

Late Policy: Written assignments are listed with specific, hard deadlines. Any work submitted thereafter will be graded down by a full letter grade for every 24 hours (or fraction thereof) that it is late. Hence, a brilliant, flawless assignment submitted at 5:30 PM when the deadline was 5:00 PM will receive—at best—a B+. I will not accept work that is more than a week late. Exceptions to these rules may be granted in the form of a deadline extension. If you need a deadline extension due to extenuating circumstances, please contact me with as much advance notice as possible.

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Scholastic Dishonesty: According to the FIU student handbook (p. 11) “In meeting one of the major objectives of higher education, which is to develop self-reliance, it is expected that students will be responsible for the completion of their own academic work.” Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, **plagiarizing** and **cheating** on assignments or examinations. For the purposes of this class, the following will be treated as scholastic dishonesty:

- submitting a piece of work written by anyone else as though it were your own
- copying text into an assignment from a book, journal article, or Internet resource
- drawing ideas or information from sources without attribution

I take cheating and plagiarism very seriously, and any of these will result in a penalty ranging from a zero on the assignment to failure in the course and reporting to the University. **If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty or plagiarism, see me.**

Note to Students with Disabilities: If you have or believe you might have a disability-related need for modification or reasonable accommodations in this course, contact the Disability Resources Center <drc.fiu.edu>. I am very happy to work with you and with them to accommodate you in the best way possible. If you are not certain whether or not you have a disability that may warrant an accommodation, I strongly urge you to get in touch with the Disability Resources Center. Even if you do not need accommodation, I highly advise you to let me know if you have a disability that might affect your performance in this class.

Accommodations: If you foresee any potential problem meeting any of the requirements of this course—including attendance and prompt submission of assignments—please see me as soon as possible. **It is easier for everyone to address an issue before it becomes a problem.**

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and to honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedure and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Finally, I reserve the right to change the syllabus to facilitate better learning.

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Reading Schedule

(complete assigned readings on the **Wednesday** of the week for which they are listed)

Week 1: Introduction to the Course; A Brief History of the Civil War and Reconstruction

Read:

- Annette Gordon-Reed, "What if Reconstruction Hadn't Failed?" The Atlantic (October 26, 2015). < <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/10/what-if-reconstruction-hadn-t-failed/412219/>>

Watch:

- What Does It Mean to Think Like a Historian?
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XC2MBuIxlQ>>

Week 2: Race Men and Women during "The Nadir"

Read:

- Caleb McDaniel, "How to Read for History" (August 1, 2008)
<<http://wcm1.web.rice.edu/howtoread.html>>
 - read this before you begin *Beyond Respectability*, and apply Caleb McDaniel's advice to all of the secondary sources that we read in this class
- Brittney C. Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, Prologue and Introduction

Week 3: Looking Ahead—AIDS in Black America

Read:

- Harlon L. Dalton, "AIDS in Black America," *Daedalus* 118, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 205–27. (available through FIU Libraries databases)
- Dan Royles, "Taking it to the Streets: AIDS, Race, and Protest in Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Legacies* (Spring 2016), 26-31. (posted to Blackboard)

Week 4: The Great Migration and the Politics of Respectability

Read:

- Brittney C. Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, Chapters 1 and 2

Week 5: Harlem Renaissance and the "New Negro"

Read:

- Nella Larsen, *Passing*

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Week 6: From Jane Crow to Civil Rights

Read:

- Brittney Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, Chapters 3 and 4

Week 7: The Road to Brown v. Board

Read:

- Tanisha C. Ford, *Liberated Threads*, Introduction-Chapter 2

Week 8: Cold War Civil Rights

Read:

- Tanisha C. Ford, *Liberated Threads*, Chapters 3 and 4

Week 9: Civil Rights to Black Power

Watch:

- [Fannie Lou Hamer's Testimony \(PBS\)](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/summer-hamer-testimony/)
<<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/summer-hamer-testimony/>>

Week 10: Black Feminism

Read:

- Tanisha C. Ford, *Liberated Threads*, Chapter 5-6

Listen:

- [Karen Grigsby Bates, "Moynihan Black Poverty Report Revisited 50 Years Later" \(NPR\)](http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/06/13/190982608/moynihan-black-poverty-report-revisited-fifty-years-later)
<<http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/06/13/190982608/moynihan-black-poverty-report-revisited-fifty-years-later>>

Week 11: Black Gay Renaissance

Read:

- Dwight McBride, "Can the Queen Speak?: Racial Essentialism, Sexuality, and the Problem of Authority" *Callaloo* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 363–379. (available through FIU Libraries databases)

Watch:

- *Tomb Raider: Untied* (dir. Marlon Riggs, 1989) (available through Blackboard)

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Week 12: The Rise of Mass Incarceration

Read:

- [Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration," *The Atlantic* \(October 2015\)](http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/10/the-black-family-in-the-age-of-mass-incarceration/403246/) <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/10/the-black-family-in-the-age-of-mass-incarceration/403246/>>

Week 13: Global Blackness in the 21st Century

Read:

- Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi, *Americanah*

Week 14: #BlackLivesMatter

Read:

- [Alicia Garza, "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement," *The Feminist Wire* \(October 7, 2014\)](http://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/black-lives-matter-2/) <<http://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/black-lives-matter-2/>>

Week 15: Digital Exhibit Presentations

Week 16: Final Exam

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Primary Source Analysis Assignment Sheet
History 4573
Fall 2017
Professor Dan Royles

For this assignment, find two primary sources related to your exhibit topic and write an essay (500-750 words) comparing them. In your essay, you should address the argument of each source, and the purpose of the authors in writing or creating them. Be sure also to describe how each author makes their argument. What evidence do they use? What kind of logic or rhetoric do they use to frame their argument? Be sure to also put the sources in historical context, explaining what they tell about HIV/AIDS in African American communities during the time they were written or created. How do their arguments and perspectives differ? How might those arguments and perspectives be shaped by the authors' personal experience, social location (for example, their race, gender, or class), or ideology?

Format: Please place a Chicago Style bibliographic citation for your document at the beginning of your essay. If you need a refresher on the Chicago Style format, consult the [Chicago Style Citation Quick Guide](#) or access the [full style guide](#) through FIU Library's online resources. If you accessed your document online, please include a working hyperlink. If you accessed your document as a hard copy, please attach an image of it to your essay, so that I can refer to it if necessary while grading. If you refer to any other sources in your essay, be sure to cite them using footnotes. However, keep in mind that your essay should be focused on a single primary source.

This essay will be due by **11:59 PM on Friday, November 3rd** through Turnitin. I will post a submission link for the assignment on the Blackboard page for this course. Note that although this assignment is designed to help you get started on your group project, you must complete this assignment individually. That is, you should feel free to talk about your essay with your group mates, but everyone should turn in a different essay based on a different primary source.

Web Exhibit Assignment Sheet
History 4573
Fall 2017
Professor Dan Royles

For this project, you will work in teams of two or three to create a digital exhibit for the [African American AIDS History Project](http://afamaidshist.org) (afamaidshist.org). Your team will compose a research question, locate primary and secondary sources, create your exhibit, and present it to the class during the final exam period. This project is intended to develop the following skills:

- research
- critical and creative thinking
- communication
- teamwork
- simple web design

Once you pick your topic, your team will use your research skills to find **at least**:

- five *peer-reviewed* secondary sources (monographs, scholarly journal articles, or chapters in scholarly collections; these must be **at least** twenty pages long, not including images)
- ten *textual* primary sources (meaning periodicals, letters, diaries, or literature)
- ten *non-textual* primary sources (meaning images, videos, or objects)

Note that you may use course readings, but they will not count toward the above requirements.

We will spend an entire class session looking at how to find these different kinds of sources, focusing on the services available through FIU and Green Library. Using sources (primary or secondary) from the open web is fine, but you need to evaluate these with an especially critical eye, since anyone can publish just about anything online. Refer to the following guides from the [University of Illinois](http://www.libraryofillinois.edu) (goo.gl/1YLY1), [Yale University](http://www.library.yale.edu) (goo.gl/oWVp47), and [Georgetown University](http://www.library.georgetown.edu) (goo.gl/b9rvj) to help guide you. We will also discuss this in greater detail during class.

Your team will use your sources to create an exhibit for the African American AIDS History Project using the Omeka platform. The website should have a main page, a bibliography page, and at least five additional pages. The main page should describe the topic and its significance for U.S. history in a statement of at least 500 words. Your five (or more) additional pages should analyze your primary sources, putting them in historical context and explaining how they help to answer your research question. These additional pages should have text totaling at least 1,500 words. (Note that these are basic guidelines—I am open to adjusting them on a case-by-case basis if it makes sense for your group's topic and approach.)

After the way, you'll have some benchmarks to help you stay on track:

- pick your groups by the end of **Wednesday, September 27th**; one person from each group should send me an email with the names of the group members
- during the **weeks of October 2nd and October 9th**, I'll meet with each group to discuss your topic and approach

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- by 11:59 PM on **Friday, October 13th**, your team will submit your research question via Blackboard
- by 11:59 PM on **Friday, October 20th**, your team will submit a Chicago-style bibliography of *textual* primary and secondary sources

Note that your group will be graded on the timely completion of these benchmarks, as well as any required revisions to these.

Additionally, the Primary Source Analysis and Secondary Source Critique assignments will help you individually develop content for your group's exhibit. Each of you will submit these assignments through Turnitin links on Blackboard. Due dates for these are as follows (note that these are somewhat from those listed in the original syllabus):

- Primary Source Analysis: due by 11:59 PM on **Friday, November 3rd**
- Secondary Source Critique: due by 11:59 PM on **Sunday, November 26th**

I am also planning to have us meet in a computer lab on **October 11th**, **November 1st**, and **November 20th**. These days will be dedicated to work on your project in one form or another.

Your team will also give a ten-minute oral presentation of your project on either **December 4th or 6th**. You must finish any revisions to your project by **11:59 PM on Friday, December 15th**.

You will be graded according to the timely completion of the research question and bibliography, the quality of the writing and analysis on your site, and the overall quality of your project. You will also be graded individually by your teammates on your contribution to the project. The team with the best project, as determined by a class vote, will also receive an extra 5% on their project grade.

Want to see some examples of similar work? There are a number of exemplary projects in Black history that have been built using Omeka. These include the [Colored Conventions project](http://coloredconventions.org) (coloredconventions.org)—see the [exhibit on the Manual Labor College Initiative](http://coloredconventions.org/exhibits) (goo.gl/cMCWTp) and [Go In South](http://goinsouth.org) (goinsouth.org)—see the [exhibit on the Citizens Republican Club of Philadelphia](http://goinsouth.org/exhibits) (goinsouth.org/crc). If you are considering a project with a heavy mapping or spatial component, you might also look at [projects using Neatline](http://projects.usingneatline.org/demos) (neatline.org/demos), an Omeka plugin.

Finally, if you're worried about the technical component of this assignment, take heart that many students who start the semester saying, "I don't get technology!" have found similar projects to be helpful. During our computer lab sessions, I'll be available to help you work through technical difficulties. The creators of Omeka also offer lots of [screencasts to help you get acquainted with the platform](http://omeka.org/codex/screencasts) (omeka.org/codex/screencasts). In particular, you'll find "Introduction to Omeka 2.0" and "ExhibitBuilder 3.0 Plugin" to be useful.