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History Department 2020 Summer Reading Suggestions

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Department of History

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2020 Summer Reading Suggestions for USM History Majors and Minors, Incoming Students, and Alumni (and anyone else who is interested)

In response to the recent killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, while in the custody of four members of the city's police force, the subsequent and continued protests around the nation, and the ongoing presence of systemic racism, Glenn Cummings, USM's President, recently issued a statement that included: "USM stands with those committed to dismantling racial inequities. Racism not only limits — it also kills. To stand silent in this moment is to stand with racism. Please stand as an anti-racist with USM."

An important part of the anti-racist work of dismantling racial inequities is self-education, doing the work of learning about the hundreds of years of oppression and injustice that provide the context to our contemporary struggles. For historians, context is key to all that we do. Faculty members in the Department of History at USM have come together to suggest a series of texts that we find both personally significant and think will be helpful in coming to a greater understanding of the events, actions, and inactions that have led us to this current moment in the United States and globally. This list reflects our diverse geographical areas of expertise and research, and is by no means exhaustive. We continue to learn from one another, and from our students. We welcome student suggestions on books and pieces you think we should read; this is a conversation. We encourage you to cast a wide net in your anti-racist reading and learning. Here is a place to start.

USM's 2019-2020 Common Read: Ibram X. Kendi, *How to be an Anti-Racist* (2019).

*This text was selected as USM's common read in 2019-2020. Dr. Ibram X. Kendi was slated to be USM's commencement speaker in May 2020. He will instead deliver the 2021 commencement address. **If you need a copy of this book, please send your name and mailing address to Professor Libby Bischof, elizabeth.bischof@maine.edu, and she will mail it to you.***

FACULTY READING RECOMMENDATIONS:

Professor Leroy Rowe (Incoming Department Chair, History)

Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (2015).

Stevenson's book is about the legacy of white supremacy living on in modern day institutions of justice and our own culpability; we have bought into a fear of the biological black male criminal and have resigned ourselves to seek refuge in the criminal justice system...much like the lynch mob.

Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (1964).

King's book is a moral justification for civil disobedience at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, when white ministers questioned how could King be a minister and yet involve himself in breaking the law.

David Zucchino, *Wilmington's Lie: The Murderous Coup of 1898 and the Rise of White Supremacy* (2020).

Zucchino's book covers the 1898 massacre of black voters in Wilmington and how subsequent generations have covered up the truth or simply pushed it under the rug--including the black community.

Professor Libby Bischof, History

Paul Ortiz, *An African American and Latinx History of the United States* (2018)

This concise, readable, and ambitious text spans over two centuries and aims to tell a more inclusive narrative history of the United States, placing African American, Latinx, and Indigenous voices at the center. This is a social history told from the bottom up, rife with class struggles.

Sarah Lewis, ed., *Vision and Justice: A Civic Curriculum* (2019)

To

Download (free): [A Civic Curriculum](#)

In the summer of 2019, Harvard University Art Historian Dr. Sarah Lewis convened a symposium on Vision and Justice, based on her landmark issue of Aperture, Vision & Justice, in 2016. This civic curriculum, free to all via the link above, is a brilliant collection of interviews, articles, photographs and reflections related to race and visual culture, especially in terms of the intersections of art, race, activism, and civic spaces.

Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (July 1852)

To Download (free): ["What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" \(1852\)](#)

Arguably Frederick Douglass's most famous speech, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" was delivered in Rochester, New York, in July of 1852. While Douglass passionately argued for the abolition of slavery in this speech, he also highlighted the hypocrisy of America's founding principles: "At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could I reach the nation's ear, I would, to-day, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced." A must read for all Americans.

Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War*

In beautifully written prose, Abenaki scholar and Amherst College Professor Lisa Brooks demonstrates how centering indigenous resistance and reading the landscape with an indigenous lens can transform the way we understand historical documents and events in her retelling of a complex 17th century war in New England with drastic consequences.

Professor Ashley Towle, History

Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (2016)

Anderson contextualizes current race relations by examining how white supremacy has stifled black progress and democracy through violence and structural racism from the Civil War to the present day.

Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (1975)

In this seminal work, Morgan attempts to explain the “American paradox” of how Virginia could be both the birthplace of the American Revolution and race-based slavery by arguing that freedom for whites was only possible with the racial enslavement of Africans and Amerindians.

Chad Williams, Kidada E. Williams, Keisha N. Blain, eds., *Charleston Syllabus: Readings on Race, Racism, and Racial Violence* (2016)

In the wake of the Emanuel AME Church massacre in Charleston, South Carolina, historians collaborated to put the massacre into context with America’s history of racial violence. This volume offers a collection of essential primary and secondary readings on the history of race and racial violence in the United States from its founding to the present day.

Professor Adam Schmitt, History and Education

Matthew F. Delmont, *Why Busing Failed: Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation* (2016)

Delmont explores white racism through resistance to busing/school desegregation, showing both how racism is a systemic issue not solely relegated to the South and the role the media plays in framing national controversies.

Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (2010)

In this work, O'Brien shows how mid-1800s local historians in southern New England denied Native Americans modernity and established the myth of Native American extinction in order to assert/bolster their own claims of supremacy and legitimacy.

John Willinsky, *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire’s End* (1998)

Willinsky applies a post-colonial lens to thinking about curriculum, both in terms of the various ways empire sought to educate its subjects of a white supremacist social, cultural, and political order through museums and world’s fairs and how this imperial project lives on in the school curriculum of today.

Professor Amy M. Smith, History

George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (1970)

Soledad Brother contains letters that Jackson wrote in prison from 1964 until 1970. In 1960, at the age of eighteen, George Jackson was accused of stealing \$70 from a gas station and he spent the next ten years in Soledad Prison, seven and a half of them in solitary confinement. Jackson's letters speak to the rising consciousness of black prisoners and their search for racial justice from inside the system.

Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (2005)

Kruse looks at the connections between race and conservative politics by mapping out patterns of white flight in post World-War II Atlanta, Georgia. White flight meant much more than simply whites moving to the suburbs; it was an act to preserve racial segregation. Kruse helps readers see the links between race, suburbanization, and the rise of the New Right.

Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (2017)

Gordon documents one of the largest social movements of the first half of the twentieth century. Members of the 1920 Klan movement numbered between four to six million and their ideology continues to be part of the social and cultural fabric of the United States today. Gordon shows how the Klan's melding of Christian values and racial bigotry are still with us.

Professor Abraham J. Peck, History

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (2005 edition)

A seminal discussion of decolonization in Africa. Over the course of five chapters, Fanon covers a wide range of topics, including patterns in how the colonized overthrow the colonists, how newly independent countries form national and cultural consciousness, and the overall effect of colonialism on the psychology of men and women in colonized countries. A volume that allows the student to compare and contrast the effects of colonialism with the institutionalization of white supremacy in the United States and the overall effects of colonialism and white supremacy on the psychology of those living under both oppressive systems.

Daniel Okrent, *The Guarded Gate: Bigotry, Eugenics, and the Law That Kept Two Generations of Jews, Italians and other European Immigrants Out of America* (2019)

An intellectual history of nativist ideology and ideologues from the mid-19th century to the first comprehensive immigration restriction law of 1924. He explores who these nativist leaders were and how their elite status allowed them to pass off bogus claims as science. Nativist leaders were among the most distinguished men of the country: upper-class, highly educated and Protestant, men who personally had nothing to fear from new immigrants. But they had already established a system of oppression against

Native Americans and African Americans and used eugenics as a way of reducing or totally excluding those groups who would threaten their white supremacist control.

Tim Madigan, *The Burning: Massacre, Destruction, and the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (2003)

This book details the worst race riot in American history. The town of Greenwood, Oklahoma, a segregated part of Tulsa known as the Black Wall Street, was at the height of its prosperity. The elements of hatred, racism, and mistrust between its black residents and neighboring Tulsa's white population exploded on the morning of June 1, 1921 and led to the murder of at least 300 African Americans and the total destruction of Greenwood. Not only was Greenwood never rebuilt but the town fathers of Tulsa sought to hide the existence of the riot until the 1970s and 1980s.

Professor Adam Tuchinsky, History, and Dean, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* (1935) and Eric Foner, *Reconstruction* (1988)

*For most historians, it has become a truism that although the Union prevailed in the Civil War, the Confederacy triumphed in the aftermath, both in the war's eventual political and legal settlement, and in the conflict over the war's memory. From the 1890s and into the 1950s and 1960s, professionally trained historians argued that Reconstruction, the oft-violent effort to reconstitute the place of formerly enslaved African Americans, was a "fool's errand," a misguided attempt in the post-Civil War period to establish the bare semblance of equal citizenship in the South and beyond. Du Bois' **Black Reconstruction** was a notable exception, and his framework became the basis of a revolution in American historical scholarship, distilled by Eric Foner in **Reconstruction**.*

Stephanie Jones-Rogers, *They Were Her Property* (2019), Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds* (1997), Drew Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South* (1985)

White supremacy is a political, economic, social, cultural, and legal framework legitimizing the domination of one class of human beings by another. For most of American history, the universe of white supremacy was an intimate one, unfolding within households that were sustained by, but defined as beyond the reach of, formal law. These three masterworks depict, with unflinching precision, the way in which racial power was exercised--and resisted--on political terrain that was highly localized and defined by gender, race, and class.

David Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (2006) and K. Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism* (2007)

*In **Postethnic America**, American intellectual historian David Hollinger begins with a simple question: why was it that when Alex Haley, in **Roots**, tried to imagine his own family history, the story had to begin with his maternal lineage in Gambia rather than his father's in Ireland? Similarly, the Ghanain-born philosopher, K. Anthony Appiah argues in **Cosmopolitanism** that many of the elements of our local and global culture that we identify with particular national, ethnic, and racial groups are, in fact, the product of cultural exchange. Even though race is a social construction, that does not make it any less real; that said, by understanding exactly how race, and systems of racial domination, have been established historically and culturally, both these works help us see the world differently in fundamental ways.*

Professor Seth Rogoff, History

Kwame Nkrumah, *Towards Colonial Freedom* (1962)

Nkrumah was an important anti-colonial leader in the British Gold Coast territory and would later become the first president of Ghana after Ghana became an independent state in 1957. Nkrumah was one of the most important anti-colonial actors in West Africa from the 1930s through the 1960s. In this piece, Nkrumah is combining anti-colonial political theory with Marxism to launch a powerful critique of both the politics and the economics of the colonial world. Issues of race, for Nkrumah, are linked deeply with economic structures, first and foremost the “developed” nation’s exploitation of natural resources and markets.

Mohandas Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa* (1968)

The author needs no lengthy introduction, but this is an often overlooked text about the development of the core ideas that would animate Gandhi’s anti-colonial, anti-racist protest and resistance movements beginning in South Africa and continuing in India after the First World War.

James Baldwin, *Another Country* (1962)

Since we desperately need a novel on this list, I am proposing this one, mainly because I absolutely love it. It has one of the most compelling, transfixing opening hundred pages of a novel you will ever read, followed by an attempt to deal with the shattering end of this propulsive opening. It rises to incredible heights of humanity -- and seems decades ahead of its time in terms of both the content and its daring formal decisions.

Professor Lacey Sparks, History

Randy Sparks, *Two Princes of Calabar: An 18th Century Atlantic Odyssey* (2009)

*Based on their own writings, this book tells the tale of two 18th century West African men who went from slave-trading royalty to slaves and back to royalty--and slave traders--again. *Two Princes* dispels some common American/ Western misconceptions about the nature of the Atlantic slave trade: rather than slavery becoming a product of racism, this book illustrates how racism became the product of slavery. For current-day readers, this book gives a deep look at the international origins of the ideology of racism from the perspective of men who served as both slave traders and enslaved men themselves, telling the story both from the bottom up and from the inside out.*

Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (2004)

Midgley details the roles that British women played in the international abolitionist movement. This text illustrates the complex nature of the movement, showing tension between male and female abolitionist movements in Britain, between women within the same movement, between British and American abolitionists, and perhaps most crucially, between formerly-enslaved abolitionists of color and their

well-meaning but often ignorant white allies. For current-day readers, this book shows how international anti-racist movements can be rife with their own ideological and logistical problems and still achieve monumental and lasting results.

Oludah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Oludah Equiano* (1789)

*In this 1789 autobiography, a freedman tells his own slave narrative; his story became a widely read anti-slavery text in Europe, opening many Europeans' eyes to the brutality of chattel slavery for the first time. Like *Two Princes*, this book also illustrates the differences between West African and American slave systems, challenging the notion that Africans were equally complicit in the trans-Atlantic chattel slave trade since they practiced their own local and transient forms of slavery. For current-day readers, this book brings to life one of the most powerful voices in the abolitionist movement.*

Professor Eileen Eagan, History (Emerita)

Angela Y. Davis, *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* (1975)

Pauli Murray, *Song in a Weary Throat: An American Pilgrimage* (1987)

Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (2015)

Barbara Ransby, Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision (2003)*All four texts focus on the lives and work of women of color who were activists in the 1930s-1970s; the first three texts are primary sources, and the fourth, a biography.*

Professor Jennifer McCutchen, History

Mikaela Adams: *Who Belongs? Race, Resources, and Tribal Citizenship in the Native South* (2016)

Adams investigates how six tribes - the Pamunkey Indian Tribe of Virginia, the Catawba Indian Nation of South Carolina, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida - defined who was "Indian" in the 19th and 20th century Native South. Adams's work rejects the idea that a universal Indian identity or experience shaped the processes of defining tribal membership. Instead, her research emphasizes the ways in which each tribe looked to community needs and interests, as well as their unique historical relationships with federal and state governments, to construct citizenship criteria specific to their peoples and polities.

Ira Berlin: *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (1998)

Berlin's important work on the history of slavery in the 17th and 18th century North American colonies explores the slave experience through different generations and geographical regions. Berlin differentiates between a "society with slaves" - where slavery was one form of labor in a varied economy - and "slave societies" - where slavery and the master/slave relationship shaped all social, political, and economic interactions.

Peter Wood: *Black Majority: Negroes in South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (1974)

“Black Majority” seeks to move away from studies focused on slavery in the Antebellum period to explore how African slaves played a significant and determinative role in the creation and evolution of colonial south Carolina. By 1710, Blacks significantly outnumbered whites in the fledgling Carolina colony. Wood carefully examines the persistence of Africanisms in 18th century Carolina, specifically the cultivation of rice and the development of the dialect of Gullah.

Thomas J. Sugrue: *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (1996)

“The Origins of the Urban Crisis” examines the role race, housing, job discrimination, and white flight played in the decline of urban Detroit. Sugrue argues that Detroit’s decline began far before the race riots of the late 1960s, positing that institutionalized and legalized racism resulted in sharply limited opportunities for Detroit’s black citizens for most of the 20th century, picking up speed in the post World War Two era.

Jennifer L. Morgan: *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (2004)

Jennifer Morgan uses gender as a lens through which better to understand the establishment of race-based slavery in Britain’s colonies, arguing that enslaved women’s reproductive labor was central to the development and maintenance of slavery in early English America. Because slavery was a status inherited through the mother’s line, enslaved women’s reproductive labor produced wealth for slave-owners. When black women were brought from Africa to the New World as slave laborers, their value was determined by their ability to work as well as their potential to bear children, who by law would become the enslaved property of the mother’s master. Consequently, Morgan explores how enslaved women’s gender identity was defined by their shared experiences as agricultural laborers and mothers, and shows how given these distinctions, their situation differed from that of enslaved men.