

History E-1659:

LINCOLN:

Understanding Abraham Lincoln Through His Writings

**Harvard Extension School
Fall 2016, Thursdays 5:30-7:30
[Harvard Hall 103]**

Faculty

Thomas A. Horrocks, Independent Scholar and former library administrator at Houghton Library (Harvard University) and the John Hay Library (Brown University):
thomasahorrocks@gmail.com; 617-576-3483 (home) and 617-818-6892 (cell).

**John Stauffer, Professor of English, African and African American Studies,
and American Studies: stauffer@fas.harvard.edu; 617-642-7108 (cell)**
Office Hours: Wed. 3-4 in Barker Center 267; and by appt.

Course Description:

This course explores the life and historical significance of Abraham Lincoln, one of the greatest nonfiction writers in English, through a close examination of his letters, speeches and other writings. We read and discuss Lincoln's famous as well as little-known writings and explore the private and public man in historical context. We examine Lincoln's evolution from his early poverty to aspiring poet and humorist, lawyer and reformer, Whig and Republican, into (arguably) the greatest president.

Lincoln's writings engage the critical issues of his time—and ours: the purpose and function of government; federal versus local authority; meanings of freedom and equality; the status of blacks (and other minorities) in American society; civil liberties; and debates over a welfare state.

The course is open to both undergraduate and graduate students. It is designed to help students improve their reading, writing, public speaking, and research skills in addition to learning about

Lincoln and the Civil War era. Classes are discussion format. One class (September 15) meets at Houghton Library and introduces students to Houghton's extraordinary Lincoln collection.

Required texts (available at Harvard Coop or Amazon.com):

Harold Holzer and Thomas A. Horrocks, ed., *The Annotated Lincoln* (Harvard University Press, 2016 [TAL])

Course Packet (readings marked *): the course packet readings will be on the course website, easily downloadable and printable.

Note: you may also read the Lincoln texts online from: Roy P. Basler, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/>

Recommended Texts:

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (Simon & Schuster)

Course Requirements:

•**Weekly readings (50-70pp), plus active class participation (20%)**

•**Three “pithy commentaries.”** In these short, 2-page polished reflections, you might do a single “close reading” or analysis, make connections between readings, or raise a question that you would like to explore further in a paper or discussion. These pithy commentaries are invaluable for developing critical writing skills and exploring new ideas. They often lead to original essays. Feel free to be creative with them.

You may choose which weeks to submit your 3 pithy commentaries, but each commentary must pertain to the readings of the week you submit it. You cannot submit more than one pithy commentary for a given week. You may, however, submit more than 3 pithy commentaries for extra credit. There are no letter grades, but rather “√” (for satisfactory), “+” (for commendable), or “++” “+++” etc. (for work that is dazzling). Please print two copies of your commentaries and hand them to us in class. (25%).

•**One 5-page paper (1200-1300 words), due October 6 in class.** These short papers may focus on any topic covered in class. Please print two copies of your paper and hand them to us in class. (20%)

•**Final paper, due December 16 at 5 p.m.** Please print two copies of your paper and deliver them to 267 Barker Center. (30%)

Final papers may take one of two forms:

1) A creative project inspired by the writings of Lincoln, such as a play, screenplay, short story, visual rendering, or contemporary speech.

Note: Creative projects must also include a 2-3 page critical essay that describes how the project relates to the course—especially the ways in which the readings and discussions contributed to or inspired the project

2) 10-page essay that includes at least 5 primary and secondary sources.

•**Final Paper Proposal, due November 3 in class.** These 1-2 page proposals should include a description of the topic, questions you hope to answer, and key sources. (5%)

Grading:

Class participation:	20%
Pithy commentaries:	25%
5-page paper:	20%
Final Paper Proposal:	5%
Final Paper:	30%

Late papers and missed classes:

If an emergency arises, please let us know as soon as possible. We will grant extensions on papers without penalty as long as you contact us prior to the paper's deadline. If you request an extension 0-24 hours prior to the deadline, we'll grant you a one-day extension; if it is two days prior to the deadline, we'll grant you a two-day extension; and so on, with a limit of a two-week extension under normal circumstances. This policy encourages you to plan ahead and be forthcoming with us about problems that interfere with your coursework.

If you are sick and think you may miss class, let us know in advance if at all possible and we will not penalize you for the absence. If you miss class more than twice, you will

need a note from a professional (such as a doctor or dean) explaining the absence to avoid being penalized in your class participation grade.

Without an extension, late pithy commentaries will receive a "zero" and graded papers will be penalized by one-third of a grade per day (i.e., "A-" to "B+").

Missing a class without contacting us prior to it, or a note, will result in a 10% reduction of your class participation grade.

You can reach John Stauffer by text and phone (617-642-7108). He receives too many emails to be able to respond to all of them within twenty-four hours, so if you want a prompt response, please text or call.

You can reach Thomas Horrocks by text and phone (617-818-6892).

Schedule:

Week 1 (September 1): Introduction to the Course; Lincoln's autobiographical notes. In the second hour we will discuss these and the other readings

Letter to Jesse Fell, enclosing Autobiography, December 20, 1859 (TAL, pp.325-27)
 Autobiography Written for John Locke Scripps, ca. June 1860 (TAL, pp. 351-58)
 Communication to the people of Sangamo County, March 9, 1832 (TAL, pp. 25-29)
 Letter to the Editor of the *Sangamo Journal*, June 13, 1836 (TAL, pp. 30-31)

Week 2 (September 8): The Private Lincoln: Popular Storyteller, Aspiring Poet, and Self-Made Man

Letter to Joshua F. Speed, February 25, 1842 (TAL, pp. 62-63)
 The "Rebecca" Letter, August 27, 1842 (TAL, pp. 64-69)
 "My Childhood-Home I See Again," [February 25?], 1846 (TAL, pp. 73-76)
 Letters to Thomas Lincoln and John D. Johnston, December 24, 1848 (TAL, pp.97-99)

Week 3: (September 15): Meet at Houghton Library

Week 4: (September 22): Lincoln the Lawyer and Reformer

Address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, January 27, 1838 (TAL, pp. 36-45)
 Address to the Springfield Temperance Society, February 22, 1842 (TAL, pp. 53-61)
 Notes for a Law Lecture, [July 1, 1850?] (TAL, pp. 104-06)

Week 5: (September 29): Lincoln the Whig Politician

Letters to Benjamin F. James, November 24 and December 6, 1845 (TAL, pp. 70-72)
 Speech in Congress against the War with Mexico, January 12, 1848 (TAL, pp. 82-92)
 Letter to William H. Herndon, February 15, 1848 (TAL, pp. 93-94)
 Speech in U.S. House of Representatives on the Presidential Question, July 27, 1848
 (*course packet)

Week 6: (October 6): Lincoln and Anti-Slavery***SHORT PAPER DUE IN CLASS***

Remarks and Resolution concerning the Abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia, January 10, 1849 (TAL, pp. 100-03)
 Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act at Peoria, Illinois, October 16, 1854 (TAL, pp. 133-171)
 Fragments on Slavery, [April 1, 1854?] (TAL, p.131-32)

Week 7: (October 13): Lincoln on Dred Scott and a House Divided

Speech on the *Dred Scott* Decision, June 26, 1857 (TAL, pp. 187-200)
 “House Divided” Address, June 16, 1858 (TAL pp. 209-18)

Week 8: (October 20): Lincoln Debates Stephen A. Douglas

Fourth Debate [at Charleston, Illinois] with Stephen A. Douglas, September 15, 1858 (TAL, pp. 279-310)

Week 9: (October 27): Election and Inauguration as President

Address at Cooper Union, New York City, February 22, 1860 (TAL, pp. 328-50)
 Fragment on the Constitution and the Union, ca. January 1861 (TAL, p. 364)
 First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1861 (TAL, pp. 376-86)
 *Draft of First Inaugural Address (course packet)

Week 10 (November 3): Lincoln as Commander-in-Chief

Letters to General John C. Frémont, September 2 and 11, 1861 (TAL, pp. 410-12)
 Proclamation Suspending the Writ of Habeas Corpus, September 24, 1862 (TAL, pp. 456-57)
 Letter to Erastus Corning and Albany Democrats, June 12, 1863 (TAL, pp. 489-98)
 Letter to General Ulysses S. Grant, July 13, 1863 (TAL, p. 501)
 Letter to General George G. Meade, July 14, 1863 (TAL, pp. 502-05)
 Letter to Mrs. Lydia Bixby, November 21, 1864 (TAL, p. 550-51)

Week 11 (November 10): Lincoln as an Anti-Slavery President

Signing Message Accompanying Approval of D.C. Emancipation, April 16, 1862 (TAL, pp. 438-39)

Address to a Deputation of Freedmen, August 14, 1862 (TAL, pp. 443-47)

Response to Horace Greeley, August 22, 1862 (TAL, pp. 448-49)

Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, September 22, 1862 (TAL, pp. 452-55)

Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863 (TAL, pp. 477-80)

Letter to James C. Conkling, August 26, 1863 (TAL, pp. 508-13)

Week 12 (November 17): Lincoln and Secular Scripture

Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863 (TAL, pp. 516-17)

Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865 (TAL, pp. 563-66)

Thanksgiving (November 24): No class**Week 13: (December 1): Lincoln and Reconstruction, Reunion, and Memory**

Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, December 8, 1863 (TAL, pp. 527-29)

Letter to Louisiana Governor Michael Hahn, March 13, 1864 (TAL, pp. 530-31)

Proclamation Concerning Reconstruction, July 8, 1864 (TAL, p. 538-39)

Lincoln's "Last Speech," April 11, 1865 (TAL, pp. 569-76)

Week 14: (December 8): No Class (Students work on final papers)**FINAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 16 AT 5 p.m. 2 copies at 267 Barker Center**

Thomas A. Horrocks is an independent scholar and former library administrator. He received a Ph.D in history from the University of Pennsylvania and is the author, editor, and co-editor of seven books, including *The Living Lincoln* (2011), *Lincoln's Campaign Biographies* (2014), and *The Annotated Lincoln* (2016).

John Stauffer is Professor of English, African and African American Studies, and American Studies at Harvard. He is the author, co-author, or editor of 20 books, including *GIANTS: The Parallel Lives of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln* (2008), which was briefly a bestseller. He is the recipient of the Frederick Douglass book Prize, the Lincoln Prize Runner-Up, the Iowa Author Award, and a Boston Authors Club Award. His essays and reviews have appeared in *Time*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Huffington Post*, and in scholarly journals and books.