

## Summer 2025 Knowledge for Freedom Seminar

Dickinson College / Summer 2025

Seminar: M/T/W/TH/F 930am to 12pm

Classrooms: Denny 317 (lecture), Denny 212 (discussion)

Plus various afternoon and weekend activities and field trips

*“The least a man can do at such a time is to declare himself and tell where he stands. I believe in freedom with the same burning delight, the same faith, the same intense abandon which attended its birth on this continent more than a century and a half ago.”*

—E.B. White, September 1940

### Faculty

- *Director:* Prof. Matthew Pinsker // Email: pinskerm@dickinson.edu
- *Assistant Director:* Prof. Todd Mealy // Email: tmmealy@comcast.net
- *Assistant Director:* Prof. Cooper Wingert // Email: cwingert@fordham.edu

### Overview

Slavery, or the idea of holding people as property, might well be the most insidious repudiation of American democratic ideals. And yet, slaveholding was both widespread and long-entrenched in the United States, a country that has always prided itself on embracing individualism and universal natural rights. How was such a fundamental contradiction even possible? That is the kind of searing question that will help open a gateway toward both deeper learning and more engaged citizenship in the Knowledge for Freedom seminar. Students who successfully conclude this program and complete their final web-based projects will receive free Dickinson College credit for the equivalent of a History 101 general topical survey course.

### Required Books & Pamphlets (distributed free)

- Andrew Delbanco, ed., *The Portable Abraham Lincoln* (Penguin, 2009 ed.)
- James Oakes, *The Radical and the Republican: Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and the Triumph of Antislavery Politics* (WW Norton, 2007)
- Matthew Pinsker, ed., *Dickinson & Slavery: A Report to the Community* (2019) [[WEB](#)]
- Matthew Pinsker, ed., *Knowledge for Freedom Source Book* (2025) [[PDF](#)]
- John Stauffer and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds., *The Portable Frederick Douglass* (Penguin, 2016)

### Course Policies

For details on course policies, especially those regarding attendance, participation, accommodations for disabilities, plagiarism and general learning objectives, visit the link above.

## **Workshops, Activities and Field Trips**

Each afternoon, seminar participants will participate in various workshops, covering topics such as the college admissions process, research, writing and multi-media production. Seminar participants will also undertake historical walking tours on campus and in town and will enjoy extended field trips to places such as Gettysburg, Harrisburg, and Washington, DC. For details on these trips, visit the links above.

## **Participation**

Students will be responsible for regular attendance and participation in the daily seminar sessions for two weeks, about 2.5 hours per day. In addition, students will be expected to fully attend separate afternoon workshop sessions and various other program activities. The best way to participate in this seminar (and in most college classes) is to come prepared with thoughtful questions. The most important questions usually concern possible connections with other texts or experiences, designed to draw broader insights and deeper understanding about context and meaning. All participants will receive a written evaluation of their participation.

## **Close Reading Reflections**

During the July seminar, all students will produce one short close reading reflection essay with document video, posted at the [2025 student project website](#) –with first draft due to grad TAs by Sunday afternoon, July 20 and final draft due by Monday night, July 21. Students are expected to begin working with both undergrad tutors and grad TAs in daily workshop sessions during the first week of class to ensure that they are making good progress in the development of their reflection essay posts. Reflections should analyze one of the course texts in close reading style, about 500 to 1,000 words or 2 to 3 pages (single spaced), with 2-3 images (properly credited and captioned) and with one short video or podcast reading (link included in post) that attempts to bring to life a short snippet (20 to 60 seconds) from the assigned text. Students may select ANY document from the [course texts list](#) –from 2025 or from previous years. These assignments will be evaluated for analysis, prose and multi-media effort. Models for these reflections are available on the assignment page. The best close reading reflection posts will be published online. Students pursuing optional college credit will also produce a second close reading reflection post with document video (due by mid-August).

## **Final Essays**

Students seeking optional college credit will need to continue to meet remotely with Prof. Pinsker at weekly one-hour Zoom office hour sessions for four weeks following the conclusion of the residential seminar experience. They will work with him to produce a second close reading reflection post (see above) and a final essay (about 2,000 to 2,500 words or roughly 4 to 6 pages, single spaced) that draws lessons about how best to achieve change in American democracy through comparing and contrasting the antislavery strategies of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. All post-campus work will be due by the end of August posted at the [2025 student project site](#). Final essays should include properly captioned and credited images as well as Chicago-style footnotes, citing wherever relevant the primary source texts from the course syllabus as well as secondary sources provided by the program, including James

Oakes's dual biography. Outside research beyond these materials is allowed but not required. Final essays will be graded on prose quality, research, and depth of analysis. Models for these final essays will be available on [the assignment page](#). The best student essays will also be considered as models for future seminar students and for inclusion in Prof. Pinsker's online Student Hall of Fame gallery. Late projects will be penalized up to 5 points each day.

## Grade Distribution

*NOTE: all participants will receive comments on their participation and grades on their first close reading post shortly after the regular program concludes. Other grades and an overall course grade will only be distributed in early September for those seeking college credit.*

Seminar Participation.....	35 percent
First close reading post.....	15 percent
Second close reading post.....	15 percent
Final Essay.....	35 percent

## Week 1: Background on Slavery and Freedom

- Monday 7/14 –Framing Freedom
  - 7am to 9am = Breakfast available (HUB)
  - 930am to 945am = Announcements (Denny 317)
    - Featured text —[Phillis Wheatley, On Being Brought From Africa \(1773\)](#)
    - Featured text —[Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence \(1776\)](#)
  - 945am to 1045am = Context lecture: [Age of Enlightenment](#) (Pinsker)
  - 1045am to 11am = Break
  - 11am to 12pm = Subtext discussion (Mealy / Denny 212)
  - 12pm to 1pm = Lunch available (HUB)
  - 130pm to 245pm = Workshop: Close Reading (staff / Denny 112)
    - Register laptops and devices on campus network
    - [Kline Center online fitness orientation](#)
  - 3pm to 430pm = Activity: Campus tour (Admissions / outside Old West)
  - 445pm to 630pm = Dinner available (HUB)
  - 7pm to 9pm = Dorm activities (Massey's ice cream –free)
  - 9pm to 11pm = Personal time / lights out
- Tuesday 7/15 –Framing Slavery
  - 7am to 9am = Breakfast available (HUB)
  - 930am to 945am = Announcements (Denny 317)
    - Featured text —[Constitutional debates over slavery \(1787\)](#)
    - Featured text —[US Constitution and Slavery \(1787\)](#)
  - 945am to 1045am = Context lecture: Constitution Making (Mealy)
  - 1045am to 11am = Break
  - 11am to 12pm = Subtext discussion (Pinsker / Denny 212)
  - 12pm to 1pm = Lunch available (HUB)
  - 130pm to 245pm = Field trip: [CCHS](#) (21 N. Pitt St) **(Meet at Denny)**

- 3pm to 430pm = Admissions Activity: Finding Your College (Denny 112)
  - 445pm to 630pm = Dinner available (HUB)
  - 7pm to 9pm = Dorm activities
  - 9pm to 11pm = Personal time / lights out
- Wednesday 7/16 –Douglass and Abolitionism
    - 7am to 9am = Breakfast available (HUB)
    - 930 to 945am = Announcements (Denny 317)
      - Featured text —Sojourner Truth, woman’s rights speech (1851)
      - Featured text —Douglass, Fifth of July Speech (1852)
      - Featured text —Frances Harper, Bury Me in a Free Land (1858)
    - 945am to 1045am = Context lecture: Douglass and Abolitionism (Mealy)
    - 1045am to 11am = Break
    - 11am to 12pm = Discussion with Lenwood Sloan (Denny 317)
    - 12pm to 115pm = Lunch available (HUB)
    - 130pm to 430pm = Visit to State Capitol (meet outside Denny)
    - 445pm to 630pm = Dinner available (HUB)
    - 7pm to 9pm = Dorm activities (**Optional** Brainstorming meetings)
    - 9pm to 11pm = Personal time / lights out
- Thursday 7/17– Lincoln and the House Divided
    - 7am to 9am = Breakfast available (HUB)
    - 930am to 945am = Announcements (Denny 317)
      - Featured text —Abraham Lincoln, private letters (1841, 1855)
      - Featured text —Lincoln, House Divided speech (1858)
    - 945am to 1045am = Context Lecture: Lincoln and Republicans (Pinsker)
    - 1045am to 11am = Break
    - 11am to 12pm = Subtext discussion (Mealy / Denny 212)
    - 12pm to 1pm = Lunch available (HUB)
    - **115pm to 245pm** = Field trip: UGRR
      - Dickinson & Slavery (Meet at Old West)
      - Old Courthouse
    - 3pm to 430pm = Admissions Activity: Application Process (Denny 112)
    - 445pm to 630pm = Dinner available (HUB)
    - 7pm to 9pm = Dorm activities (**Required** Brainstorming meetings)
    - 9pm to 11pm = Personal time / lights out
- Friday 7/18 –Lincoln’s Secession Crisis, and Ours
    - 7am to 9am = Breakfast available (HUB)
    - 930 to 945am = Announcements (Denny 317)
      - Featured text —Lincoln, First Inaugural (1861)
      - Featured text —Douglass Editorials (1860-61)
    - 945am to 1045am = Context lecture: Secession Crisis (Pinsker)
    - 1045am to 11am = Break
    - 11am to 12pm = Workshop: Close Reading session (Denny 212)
    - 12pm to 1pm = Lunch available (HUB)

- 130pm to 245pm = Workshop: League of Women Voters (Denny 112)
- 3pm to 430pm = Activity: Scavenger Hunt
- 445pm to 630pm = Dinner available (HUB)
- 7pm to 10pm = Dorm activities
- 10pm to 11pm = Personal time / lights out
- Saturday 7/19 – Field Trip to Gettysburg
  - 7am to 9am = Breakfast available (HUB)
  - 9am to 4pm = Activity: Field trip to Gettysburg (**Outside Denny at 9am**)
    - Featured text —Lincoln, Gettysburg Address (1863)
  - 445pm to 630pm = Dinner available (HUB)
  - 7pm to 10pm = Dorm activities
  - 10pm to 11pm = Personal time / lights out
- Sunday 7/20 –Close Reading assignments
  - 7am to 9am = Breakfast available (HUB)
  - 930am to 430pm = Denny 112 computer lab available
  - 10am to 12pm = **Optional** Close Reading support (Tutors)
  - 12pm to 1pm = Lunch available (HUB)
  - 1pm to 4pm = **Required** Close Reading Draft Review (Grad TAs)
  - 445pm to 630pm = Dinner available (HUB)
  - 7pm to 10pm = Reading & writing time
  - 10pm to 11pm = Personal time / lights out

## Week 2: The Other Lincoln-Douglass Debates

- Monday 7/21 –New Birth of Freedom
  - 7am to 9am = Breakfast available (HUB)
  - 930am to 945am = Announcements (Denny 317)
    - Featured text —Douglass, Mission of the War (1864)
    - Featured text —Anna Dickinson, Perils of the Hour (1864)
    - Featured text —Douglass, Emancipation Memorial (1876)
  - 945am to 1045am = Context lecture: Defining Unionism (Pinsker)
  - 1045am to 11am = Break
  - 11am to 12pm = Subtext discussion (Mealy / Denny 212)
  - 12pm to 1pm = Lunch available (HUB)
  - 130pm to 245pm = First Generation workshop (Denny 112)
  - 3pm to 430pm = Project work / Debate prep (TBD)
  - 445pm to 630pm = Dinner available (HUB)
  - **7pm = Close reading reflections due Monday night**
  - 7pm to 9pm = Dorm activities (Massey's ice cream –free)
  - 9pm to 11pm = Personal time / lights out
- Tuesday 7/22 – Rebuilding America
  - 7am to 9am = Breakfast available (HUB)
  - 930am to 945am = Announcements (Denny 317)

- Featured text – Reconstruction Amendments (1865-70)
  - Featured text — Emma Lazarus, New Colossus (1883)
  - Featured text — E.B. White on Freedom and Democracy (1940-43)
- 945am to 1045am = Debate: Post-War Compromises (Mealy / Pinsker)
- 11am to 12pm = Subtext discussion (Denny 212)
- 12pm to 1pm = Lunch available (HUB)
- 130pm to 245pm = Debate prep (TBD)
- 3pm to 430pm = Admissions Activity: Essays & Interviews (Denny 112)
- 445pm to 630pm = Dinner available (HUB)
- 7pm to 9pm = Dorm activities
- 9pm to 11pm = Personal time / lights out
- Wednesday 7/23 –Field Trip to DC
  - 7am to 730am = EARLY Breakfast only (HUB)**
  - 730am to 9pm = Activity: Field trip to Washington DC
  - 9pm to 11pm = Personal time / lights out
- Thursday 7/24 –Age of Reckoning
  - 7am to 9am = Breakfast available (HUB)
  - 930am to 945am = Announcements (Pinsker / Denny 317)
    - Featured text — Esther Popel, “Flag Salute” (1934)
    - Featured text — MLK, Letter from Birmingham Jail (1963)
    - Featured text — Amanda Gorman, “The Hill We Climb” (2021)
  - 945am to 1045am = Context lecture: Civil Rights, Then & Now (Mealy)
  - 1045am to 11am = Break
  - 11am to 12pm = Subtext discussion (Pinsker / Denny 212)
  - 12pm to 1pm = Lunch available (HUB)
  - 130pm to 245pm = Debate prep (TBD)
  - 3pm to 430pm = Admissions Activity: Financial Aid (Denny 112)
  - 445pm to 630pm = Dinner available (HUB)
  - 7pm to 9pm = Dorm activities (PowerPoint presentations)
  - 9pm to 11pm = Personal time / lights out
- Friday 7/25 –Closing Activities
  - 10am to 1130am = **Team Lincoln vs. Team Douglass Debates** (Stern 102)
  - 1130am to 12pm = Photos with Gettysburg Address lectern (Stern 102)
  - 12pm to 1pm = Luncheon with parents / guardians (Stern Great Room)

Likely dates for OPTIONAL online college credit sessions:

- Tue July 29: 10am to 11am
- Thu July 31: 10am to 11am
- Friday Aug 8: Second close reading due**
- Wed Aug 20: 10am to 11am
- Wed Aug 27: 11am to 12pm
- Friday Aug 29: Final Projects due**