Professors Sarah Barringer Gordon and Kathleen Brown
Thursdays 10:15-1:15

RUNNING AWAY. (See page 345.)

Course description
This seminar invites students to do original research into the stories of Black refugees and those who hunted or helped them – including escaped, kidnapped, sojourning, and other temporary or permanent residents of Pennsylvania, antislavery activists and conductors on the Underground railroad, judges, lawyers, U.S. commissioners, and more. These stories unfolded through contentious freedom suits, daring escapes, newspaper wars, gun fights and thuggery, treason cases, and more.

We have assembled an archive of statutes, legal cases, testimony, judicial and administrative decisions, newspaper stories, images, memoirs, maps, and more to help students get started with their research. Many of these materials have never been the subject of sustained study or placed in their historical context. In addition, students will have opportunities to pursue additional research at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, a co-sponsor of the course. Students will choose their topics in consultation with the professors and will produce research reports in written, digital, or cinematic formats. We will also be working on mapping, digitizing rare materials, and podcasts, among other innovative approaches to telling the stories of free state slavery.

Students are expected to contribute to the course website, a platform that will be available to the public as well as to the Penn community, and we aim to provide new information and venues for research. The course therefore will involve considerations of how best to convey what we learn, as well as explorations of historical methods and collaborating archives.

Course requirements
Mandatory attendance at all class meetings and trips to archives
Identification of sources memo: due February 16
Research project proposal: due March 2
Research project outline/plan and bibliography: due March 23
Project draft: due April 13
Final project due: May 1

Course guidelines, etiquette, and protocol
Collaboration: This course rewards research collaboration and generosity, but students will be responsible for producing their own final project. Students will be encouraged to share resources when appropriate, to collaborate on content for the course website, and to develop skills in constructive criticism of peers.

Language: Nearly all of the primary sources we will encounter use racial terms that are not appropriate for use in the present day. Learning how to interrogate these sources without echoing problematic language is one of the course goals.

Distressing content: the subject matter of this course includes violent, racist, and distressing descriptions and images. Students are encouraged to make use of the university's many resources for wellness.

Jan. 12 Course Introduction & Discussion of Sources on course website
Jan 19 Trip to Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Jan 26 workshop—choosing sources/

Feb. 2 Identification of sources memo due
Feb. 9 workshop – multiple formats and venues for your work
Feb. 16 workshop—using secondary literature to develop a project and proposal
Feb. 23 workshop—how to create a project proposal

Mar. 2 research project proposal due: peer discussion
SPRING BREAK
Mar. 16 workshop: developing an outline and bibliography
Mar. 23 outline/plan and bibliography due
Mar. 30 optional peer workshop: dealing with unexpected obstacles

April 6 optional peer workshop: writing/filming/producing
April 13 project draft due: peer workshop
April 20 drafts returned: final class
May 1: final paper due