

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN AND ITS CULTURAL CONTEXTS

IRP, Spring 2015, Syllabus

Coordinators: Eileen Brener & Tom Grant

When Harriet Beecher Stowe, the famous author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), met President Lincoln in the White House in 1862, he is purported to have said: "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!" Although his response is apocryphal, it is arguably true that no other single document was as consequential in causing the Civil War. We will examine the novel in the context of the author's active political life during the antebellum period, the novel's subsequent influence in the development of American popular culture, including still-abiding racial stereotyping, as well as the novel's more recent defense by feminists as a great American novel.

This study group will operate as a seminar, so everyone's active participation would be appreciated.

Readings:

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Elizabeth Ammons (editor), Norton Critical Editions, Second Edition, 2010, ISBN 978-0393933994, \$12.50.
Coursepack: Approximately \$15.

Schedule:

Class 1: Author's "Preface," & Chapters 1-6: Families Under Slavery

Class 2: Chapters 7-12: Escape & Pursuit: Stowe's Satirical Vein

Class 3: Chapters 13-17: Molding Readers' Opinions

Class 4: Chapters 18-20: Schooling the Slaves: Miss Ophelia

Class 5: Chapters 21-26: Blurring Bloodlines

Class 6: Chapters 27-30: Topsy & Eva

Class 7: Chapters 31-34: Sold Down River: Enter Legree

Class 8: Chapters 35-38: Woman's Superior Magic: Cassy's Triumph

Class 9: Chapters 39-45: The Two Georges: HBS's Chosen Resolution
& William Allen letter, p. 463

Class 10: The Slave's Viewpoint: excerpts in the text, pp. 391-412
Stowe's "The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin, pp. 413-429
Frederickson essay. pp. 429-38

Class 11: The Great American Novel? Contrary Arguments
essays by James Baldwin (p. 495) & Jane Tompkins (p. 501)

Class 12: Summing Up
Visit by HBS's celebrated biographer, Joan Hedrick,
Prof of History, Trinity College, Hartford