Course Description
This course will explore the history of African American struggles for freedom in the United States from the 18th and 19th centuries through the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Using a combination of secondary and primary sources, film and other media, we will, discuss, debate and begin to formulate answers to questions about the nature of black freedom struggles over these centuries. Some debates will have finite endings. For example the question of whether or not black Americans should take up arms to end their bondage during the time that slavery was legal in the United States ceased to be a debate following the end of the Civil War and legal slavery. On the other hand, African Americans began debating the pressing question of how to address their subordinate position in the United States even before the end of the Revolutionary War and continued to do so well into the twentieth century. Separation? Emigration? Migration? Accommodation? Protest? Armed self-defense? Nonviolence? The roles of black women and men in these struggles? We must also ask ourselves how do we measure resistance and freedom struggles? What roles do education, land ownership, voting rights, political positions, and freedom of expression play in our understanding of black freedom struggles.