

History 288
Reconstruction Paper Guidelines
Due by email on Tuesday, May 10 at 5pm

Overview

Reconstruction papers should offer a biographical profile of a historical figure from the era who can illustrate (or challenge) some of the key insights from Eric Foner's book, *A Short History of Reconstruction* (Rev./Updated 2015). All papers should be about 12-15 pages, typed, double-spaced and should include a title page with descriptive title and Chicago-style footnotes. Bibliographies or works cited pages and any appendixes are optional. Late papers will be penalized 5 points per day.

General Suggestions

- The key to a good profile is to choose wisely. Consider three factors: 1) Relevance to Foner's book, 2) Availability of evidence, and 3) Your personal interest in the subject.
- Begin your research in high quality reference sources like American National Biography, or with good, recent biographies. Use footnotes, bibliographies and suggestions for further reading as pathways for deeper research. Also, make sure to collect key terms that you can use to refine your digital searches (Google, JSTOR, Library catalogue, etc.).
- Standard paper outlines might look like this:
 - **Narrative introduction** that focuses the reader's attention on a revealing, insightful moment in the subject's Reconstruction-era career and then provides an introductory paragraph that offers a clear direction for the profile and a thesis statement about the subject's significance for the period and for Foner's interpretation.
 - **Background section** that summarizes the subject's entire life and career, probably using a wide array of strong secondary sources with selective quotation from key primary sources
 - **Case study section** that offers a kind of close reading of a particularly revealing episode or theme in the subject's life or career during Reconstruction and thus demonstrates an ability to find and carefully analyze significant primary sources
 - **Analytical section** that connects this in-depth study of a subject's life with broader themes in Reconstruction history. Here is where students should draw heavily upon Foner's work, though it is also entirely appropriate to engage other scholarship on the period.
 - **Thoughtful conclusion** that ties together the narrative opening with elements of biographical summary, case study focus, and analytical breadth.