

# HISTORY WORKSHOP

## The Department of History

Tuesdays ~ 12:30-1:30 pm ~ ZOOM

### *Remembering and Forgetting the Maroons of the Great Dismal Swamp: Public History and Memory in the Tidewater*

**Dr. Kathryn Benjamin Golden**

University of Delaware

**March 9, 2021**

**12:30-1:30 pm**

**[Zoom ID: 946 2190 5729](#)**

**P/W: UDHistory**



The Great Dismal Swamp, a space that once covered two thousand square miles of swamp between Virginia and North Carolina's eastern seaboard, was home to thousands of self-emancipated maroons throughout the period of 1700-1865. Marronage, the act of flight from slavery and autonomous life in wilderness spaces, is most often associated with the large-scale communities of maroons found in the Caribbean and Latin America. Yet in North America, the Great Dismal Swamp stands out as having contained the most populous and the longest enduring communities of maroons in the history of the United States. Today, this history remains only marginally visible in the built landscape of the surviving swamp. Texts, plaques, signs, markers, tour narratives, and other discourse at twenty-seven historical sites and sites that publicly inform the historical significance of the Dismal Swamp and the surrounding Tidewater region minimize, distort, segregate, or silence the history of the maroons. The public history of slavery and the local public memory of marronage it conveys continue to be shaped by uneven institutional power and a logic of whiteness that willfully suppresses histories involving white culpability, Black autonomy, and armed, organized resistance. In this talk, I argue that these factors contribute to public forgetting about the Dismal Swamp as a site of marronage, public forgetting about the United States maroons more broadly, and the human history of the swamp itself.