

Comparative Slavery in the Americas

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HIS 366.001
Fall 2012
Class Time: TTh 1:30-2:45PM
Class Meets: Krug Hall 7

Course Description: The Atlantic World was made by the contact between Africans, Europeans, Native Americans and others in the era that began with Columbus and culminated with the independence of most American colonies in the late 18th through 19th centuries. Two-thirds of those who crossed the Atlantic during the formation of this “New World” were Africans. With the exception of the Spanish, all the European empires settled more Africans in the New World than Europeans. From mines in South America to Caribbean sugar plantations to the farms, seaports and urban centers of North America, enslaved Africans became integral to nearly every facet of the Atlantic world. Their forced labor helped generate the economies of empires; their culture became an integral part of communities; and their struggles played critical roles in shaping the historical and political developments of the region. Drawing on historical scholarship and primary sources (documents, personal narratives, and eyewitness accounts written at the time), this course takes a comparative approach to the history of trans-Atlantic slavery as it developed in different regions and social contexts in the Americas and the Caribbean from the 15th through 19th centuries. Beginning with the Middle Passage, working through the Age of Revolutions and culminating in the emancipation movements of the 19th century, we will examine the ways in which the enslaved sought to create viable lives while struggling against localized systems of bondage. We will also consider the moral paradox of European, and later American, societies that espoused enlightened ideas of liberty and equality, while relying on slave labor to build their wealth and power.

Learning Objectives: By successfully completing this course, students will better understand the central role slavery played in the history of the western hemisphere; the diverse forms in which human bondage could take place across cultures and geographies; the ways in which slavery influenced notions of race, gender, class and labor; the dynamics and contestations of power between the enslaved and the master class; the pervasive legacy of slavery in the Americas and the Atlantic world; and, through critical readings historical works and primary sources, gain a better comprehension of how historians use evidence to investigate the past.

Required Books:

- Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1998).
- David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford Univ Press, 2006).
- Henry Louis Gates, Jr. ed., *The Classic Slave Narratives* (Signet Classics, 2002).
- Darlene Clark Hine and David Barry Gaspar, ed., *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Univ. of Indiana Press, 1996).
- All other **required** readings will either be available in the “Course Documents” on our Blackboard course web site, indicated (**BB**) on the syllabus. There will also be online article links and multimedia.

**** Please check Blackboard frequently for announcements (changes to readings, schedule, etc.)**

Course Evaluation:

Class Participation: Class participation will be based on your attendance, your overall contribution to discussion and how prepared you are to engage with the class and subject matter. You should expect to join in all classroom activities and any class discussions. Paying attention to lectures, visual media AND your reading assignments are thus vital to your ability to participate with your classmates.

Homework Assignments: Short homework assignments will be assigned regularly via BB. Their purpose is to help you better engage the readings, prepare you for class discussions and aid in studying for your exams. There are no make-ups for homework assignments.

Requirements: You are responsible for turning in no less than 6 HW assignments for the totality of the course: two before the 1st Exam, two before the Midterm and two before the Final. You must hand in **homework assignments by 1pm on the due date via Blackboard.** The assignments will usually consist of question(s) or required brief essays/analysis regarding your reading assignments. Each of your responses should show that you have fully comprehended and reasoned through the readings and/or visual material (required length- 2 pgs). You will NOT receive extra credit if you do more than six. Please keep copies of all work in case of Blackboard problems. You will be allowed to drop your lowest homework.

Research Paper: You will write a 5-page paper on a topic relating to how the historical legacy of slavery has remained (or become) relevant in modern times. Building on the course themes and topics, your paper should discuss your topic's historical context, analyze its emergence as a subject of contemporary interest, and examine the perspectives of historians and others as to why it remains meaningful, important, or controversial. You may select a topic from the list provided on Blackboard or develop your own topic, with my prior approval. I suggest that, early on, you scope out whether the library has materials related to your proposed topic.

Requirements: Your paper must be double-spaced, 12 point font, with 1" margins, 5 pages long, plus full citations. It must have a clear thesis statement, a well-reasoned argument, and supporting evidence. At minimum, it must include analysis of (and specific citations from) **at least 2 history books and/or scholarly articles.** You may supplement them with online sources, but do not rely on Wikipedia, online encyclopedias, or other such websites. You must correctly cite *all* sources -- including websites, primary sources, journal articles, history books, etc. -- in footnotes or parenthetical notes. If the latter, you must include a bibliography. **Your paper is due Thursday, December 6.** You must hand it in both as a printed hardcopy in class and electronically via Blackboard's SafeAssign. Late papers will be penalized (unless documented illness or emergency).

Film Reviews: There will be 2 short (3 pages) film review essays based on visual media presented either in class or for out-of-class viewing.

Narrative Reviews: There will be 2 short (3 pages) review essays based on assigned slave narratives.

Exams: All exams will be **in-class exams** consisting of multiple choice, short-answer and essay questions. Exams should be taken at the scheduled times. The First Exam will be on , the Midterm on and the Final Exam on . In cases of a **documented** illness or life emergency **ONLY**, you may request a make-up exam.

Grading:

First Exam	15%
Midterm	15%
Final Exam	15%
Research Paper	20%
Narrative Reviews (2)	10%
Film Reviews (2)	10%
Homework Assignments	10%
Class Participation	5%

Class and University Policies:

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to attend all classes (that means arriving on time and staying for the duration- hint: *Quizzes*) and to actively participate in class discussion and activities. Attendance is required and will be recorded at each session. Unexcused absences, habitual lateness, and early departures will adversely impact your grade. If you miss class due to illness, a life emergency, or other serious reason, please let the instructor know as soon as feasible and provide documentation when you return.

Classroom Behavior:

*Cell Phones, Blackberries, PDAs, iPods, etc. should be off and put away during class. This means no texting as well. If you have an emergency, feel free to step outside for phone use. Take care not to abuse this policy.

*Laptops: Laptop computers are fine for use during class for note-taking only.

Respectful Exchange of Ideas: History is often a matter of perspective. Discussion is encouraged—in fact required. Be mindful however to be polite, courteous and respectful to your classmates.

Communication with Instructor: Please feel free to e-mail me at the address above. I will attempt to check my email at least twice daily. If you need to meet with me, I am available during office hours listed above.

Academic Integrity: George Mason University has very strong and clear policies regarding academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.). Penalties could include an F in the course, and is required to be reported to the Academic Judiciary Committee. An explanation of what constitutes plagiarism can be found here: <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>.

Student Behavior: George Mason University expects students to maintain standards of personal integrity that are in harmony with the educational goals of the institution; to observe national, state, and local laws and University regulations; and to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn.

Americans with Disabilities Act: If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Equity and Diversity Services: <http://equity.gmu.edu/dadAct.html>. They will help determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Warning of Graphic Material: The subject matter of this course—both in imagery and description—can and will at times be graphic. Understanding that each individual's level of sensitivity can be different, if some part of the course is overly distressing or disturbing please feel free to discuss such problems with the instructor.

Preliminary Course Schedule

Please check Blackboard (**BB**) regularly for updates or revisions.

T, 8/28 – Introduction to Course

Course Overview and Syllabus
Historical Roots of Slavery

Readings:

Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 27-47 *This reading is optional as it will be covered in this day's lesson.

Th, 8/30- Rise of the Atlantic Plantation Complex

Readings:

Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 77-88

Optional: Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex*, pp. 3-10; 17-27 (**BB** link)

T, 9/04- The Iberian Conquest of the Americas

Readings:

Las Casas, *Destruction of the Indies*, (**BB** doc)

Requerimiento- 1513 (**BB** PDF doc)

Restall, "Black Conquistadors," 171-182 (to top paragraph)

Th, 9/06- From Indigenous to African Labor

Readings:

Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 95-99

"Boiling it Down," 39-51 (**BB** doc)

T, 9/11- The Trans Atlantic Slave Trade

Readings:

Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 88-91; 100-102

Lindsay, "Why Did Africans Sell Slaves?" 54-65 (**BB** link)

Olaudah Equiano, *Classic Slave Narratives*, 31-54

Th, 9/13- The Middle Passage

Readings:

Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 91-93

Rediker, *The Slave Ship*- Selected Excerpts (**BB** link)

Olaudah Equiano, *Classic Slave Narratives*, 54-61

Bly, "Crossing the Lake of Fire," 178-85 (**BB** link)

T, 9/18- Atlantic Creoles: The “Charter Generations”

Readings:

Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 17-28; 29-43

Video: *Africans in America*- Indentured Servants (**BB** link)

Richard Frethorn- English Indentured Servant (**BB** doc)

Th, 9/20 Slavery in the Early the Atlantic

Readings:

Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 47-59; 64-76

Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 103-111

Richard Ligon, *History of Barbados* (**BB** doc)

T, 9/25- Slavery in the Early Atlantic

Readings:

Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 77-90; 95-108

Linebaugh & Rediker, “Hydrarchy: Sailors, Pirates, and the Maritime State,” 162-173 (**BB** doc)

Lokken, “Marriage as Slave Emancipation,” 175-200 (**BB** doc) *Skim

Th, 9/27

*Class does not meet. Study for First Exam.

T, 10/2- First Exam

Th, 10/4- Slave Lives and Experiences- Colonial America

Readings:

Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 125-140

Video: *Africans in America*- (**BB** link)

T, 10/9

*Class does not meet. Good time to get ahead on readings!

Th, 10/11- Slave Lives and Experiences- The Caribbean

Readings:

Mary Prince, *Classic Slave Narratives*, 229-63

“Black Female Slaves and White Households in Barbados,” Hines and Gaspar, *More Than Chattel*, 111-122

T, 10/16- Slavery and Tobacco in the Chesapeake

Readings:

Berlin, *Many Thousand Gone*, chapter 5

Th, 10/18- Slavery in the Low Country (Carolinas and Georgia)

Readings:

Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, chapter 6

T, 10/23- Gender and Slavery

Readings:

Linda Brent, *Classic Slave Narratives*, thru chapter 18

“Hard Labor,” Hine and Gaspar, *More than Chattel*, 194-209 (first half of page)

Th, 10/25- Gender and Slavery

Readings:

Linda Brent, *Classic Slave Narratives*, chapter 19 to end

“Venus in Chains: Representations of Sex and Slavery in the Caribbean Basin” (**BB** link)

T, 10/30- Slave Life and Culture

Readings:

Isaac Mendes Belisario - John Canoe Costume, Jamaica, 1837-1838 (photos) (**BB** link)

“The Slave Experience:” (PBS) - selected readings and audio (**BB** link)

Sensbach, *Rebecca’s Revival* - excerpt (**BB** doc)

Th, 11/1- Second Exam

T, 11/6- Subversion and Resistance

Readings:

“Slave Women and Resistance in the French Caribbean,” Hine and Gaspar, *More Than Chattel*, chapter 12

Movie: *Burn!* (**BB** link)

Th, 11/8- Slavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic: America

Readings:

Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 219-234, 256-266, 291-304

PBS- *Africans in America*- Colonel Tye (**BB** link)

PBS- *Africans in America*- Elizabeth Freeman (Mum Bett) (**BB** link)

T, 11/12- The Haitian Revolution and Its Impact

Readings:

Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 157-169 (to end 2nd paragraph)

Video: *Égalité for All* (PBS) (**BB** link)

*Research Paper Topics Due

Th, 11/15- Freedom on the Margins

Readings:

“Slave Women in 18th Century Charleston,” Hine and Gaspar, *More Than Chattel*, 97-106

Anna Kingsley: Free Woman – OAH (**BB** link)

“Free Women of Color” by Agostino Brunias (painting) (**BB** link)

T, 11/20- Slavery in 19th Century America

Readings:

Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, chapter 10

Frederick Douglass, *Classic Slave Narratives*, chapters 1-6

Th, 11/22- Thanksgiving Holiday

T, 11/27- Slavery in 19th Century America

Readings:

Frederick Douglass, *Classic Slave Narratives*, read to end.

The Richmond Enquirer on Nat Turner's Rebellion (**BB** link)

Th, 11/29- Slavery in 19th Century America

Readings:

Video: *Solomon Northrup's Odyssey*

T, 12/4- The Antislavery Atlantic

No Readings

Work on Research Paper/Any Outstanding Work

Th, 12/6- Freedom's Aftermaths and the Legacies of Slavery

No Readings

Final Review

*Due- Research Paper

T, 12/18- Final Exam