

HIST 387-004 Commodities in the Atlantic World
Spring 2017, Lecture Hall 3
TR 3 pm – 4:15 pm
Professor Joan Bristol, email: jbristol@gmu.edu
Office hours: Wednesdays 1-3 in Robinson B 345

This course examines the role of disparate commodities such as chocolate, sugar, tobacco, bananas, and cocaine in Africa, the Americas, and Europe. The study of these commodities, and the people who produce and consume them, provides a lens through which to examine fashion, taste, colonialism, global trade, and land and labor systems.

Books, available at the bookstore and on reserve at the Johnson Center library:

Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*

Carney and Rosomoff, eds., *In the Shadow of Slavery*

Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures*

Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine*

Assignments and grading:

1) Three 5-7 page papers (20% each, 60% total). The due dates are noted on the syllabus (February 14, March 23, and May 4) and you will receive specific instructions for the papers.

3) Four quizzes (20% total). These will be simple quizzes (usually True/False) based on the class readings. The quizzes do not require any study beyond reading the assignments.

3) Class participation (20% of the final grade). Participation will be measured by involvement in class discussions (small group and larger class discussions), in-class writing assignments, and other projects. You must attend class regularly in order to participate. Please complete the readings by Tuesday of each week and arrive in class ready to discuss them.

Class policies:

1) Arrive in class on time and stay for the entire class period. If you know you will be late to class or will need to leave early let me know ahead of time.

2) You may bring a drink to class. Do not bring food to class.

3) Turn off cell phones during class.

4) If you use a laptop please sit in the back row so that you do not distract other students.

5) The papers must be handed in at the beginning of class on the days that they are due. If a paper is late 3% of the grade will be taken off for every day that it is late. A paper handed in after class on the day that it is due will count as one day late. Weekends count as days that a paper is late. If you hand in a late paper you must make arrangements with me to hand it in. If you hand it in without making arrangements there is a possibility that you will not get credit.

6) You are responsible for keeping track of assignments and the class schedule. I suggest that you exchange email addresses with another student so that you can catch up on any notes or assignments that you might miss.

7) If you have a disability and need academic accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at (703) 993-2474. Accommodations are arranged through that office.

Honor Code:

This class operates under GMU's Honor Code, which states, "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work." Plagiarism means presenting another person's words, ideas, or arguments as your own without giving that person credit. I am obligated to report all violations of the Honor Code to the Honor Committee.

Schedule:

Week 1 (1/24 and 1/26): What is a commodity?

Reading (for Thursday this week, but for the rest of the semester readings should be done by Tuesday):

1. Joan Bristol, "A Trail of Precious Goods: Colonial Latin American Commodity History," *History Compass*, Volume 11, Issue 11. You can find this online by going through the E-Journals tab on the library website.
2. Bruce Robbins, "Commodity Histories," *PMLA*, Vol. 120, No. 2 (Mar., 2005). You can find this online by going through the E-Journals tab on the library website.

January 30 is the last day to add classes and the last day to drop classes with no tuition penalty.

Week 2 (1/31 and 2/2): Sugar and Slavery

Reading:

1. Mintz, Introduction
2. "Commodifying Labour, Commodifying People," on *Junto: A Group Blog on Early American History*.

<https://earlyamericanists.com/2014/09/25/commodifying-labour-commodifying-people/>

Paper assignment #1 handed out on Tuesday.

Week 3 (2/7 and 2/9): Sugar and Slavery

Reading: Mintz, Chapters 1, 2, 3.

February 13 is the last day to drop classes with a 33% tuition penalty.

Week 4 (2/14 and 2/16): Sugar and Slavery

Reading: Mintz, Chapters 4, 5.

Paper assignment #1 due on Tuesday.

Quiz #1 is Thursday.

Week 5 (2/21 and 2/23): Foodways as Commodity?

Reading: Carney and Rosomoff, Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4.

February 24 is the last day to drop classes with a 67% tuition penalty.

February 27 – March 31 is the selective withdrawal period.

Week 6 (2/28 and 3/2): Foodways as Commodity?

Reading: Carney and Rosomoff, Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Paper assignment #2 handed out Thursday.

Week 7 (3/7 and 3/9): Cotton and Capitalism

Reading:

1. Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the World-Wide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War," *American Historical Review*, 1109:5 (December, 2004): 1405-1438. You can find this online by going through the E-Journals tab on the library website.

2. Watch Sven Beckert's C-SPAN presentation on *Empire of Cotton*

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?324267-1/empire-cotton>

Quiz #2 on Thursday.

Week 8 (3/14 and 3/16): Spring break! Enjoy!

Week 9 (3/21 and 3/23): Chocolate, Tobacco, and Cultural Exchange

Reading: Norton, Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 3.

Paper assignment due on Thursday.

Week 10 (3/28 and 3/30): Chocolate, Tobacco, and Cultural Exchange

Reading: Norton, Chapters 4, 5, 6.

March 31 is the last day to selectively withdraw from a class.

Week 11 (4/4 and 4/6): Chocolate, Tobacco, and Cultural Exchange

Reading: Norton, Chapters 7, 8, 9.

Quiz #3 on Thursday.

Week 12 (4/11 and 4/13) : Cocaine, Medicine, and Criminalization

Reading: Gootenberg Introduction and Chapters 1, 2.

Week 13 (4/18 and 4/20): Cocaine, Medicine, and Criminalization

Reading: Gootenberg Chapters 3, 4, 5.

Paper assignment #3 handed out on Thursday.

Week 14 (4/25 and 4/27): Cocaine, Medicine, and Criminalization

Reading: Gootenberg, Chapters 6, 7.

Quiz #4 on Thursday

Week 15 NO CLASS (I will be at a conference.)

Paper assignment #3 due on Thursday, May 4. Please email it to me in a word document.

