

George Mason University
Department of History and Art History

Fall 2012
Monday, 7:20-10:00 PM
Classroom: Thompson Hall 1017
Office Hours: Monday 4-6

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HISTORY 615-002: SLAVERY, RACE, AND THE AMERICAN FOUNDING

This course explores the contests over slavery and race that emerged in the Atlantic world in the era of the American Revolution. Discussions of race and slavery intersected with emerging ideologies of republicanism, natural rights, citizenship, free trade, and Christianity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Slavery was contested around the Atlantic by a cosmopolitan group of black and white opponents. It was debated and legislated on within each of the national empires that operated in the eighteenth-century Atlantic. It occupied a controversial place in the new United States and gave shape to emergent northern and southern sections of the young nation, even as economic and political changes transformed the institution. And amidst all of these other transformations, slavery continued to be a point of conflict in communities, churches, families, and individual consciences. This course will survey the growing literature on these issues, focusing on three main themes: understanding individual experiences and identities in this era of upheaval; exploring what the “age of democratic revolutions” meant for slavery and race; and considering how racial ideologies and the persistence of slavery shaped the nature of democratic change in this era.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation:

Active and informed participation in discussion is the central element of the class. Our meetings will consist entirely of discussion of the assigned readings, so it is essential that you do the reading (both the main text and any required supplemental readings) and come prepared to discuss it.

Participation is judged on quality more than quantity, but it is impossible to judge quality without a sufficient sample size, and active, regular participation is itself a form of quality--the course is more enjoyable for everyone, and more intellectually rewarding, when as many people as possible contribute consistently and cogently to our discussions.

Weekly Reaction Papers:

You must write eight (8) one-page reaction papers on the weekly reading. The particular weeks are up to you and don't need to be decided in advance, just make sure you do eight. Also note that an additional week will be taken up by your extended book review essay, and another by leading discussion (see below) -- you may not write a one-page reaction for

those two weeks.

The reaction papers should have **one paragraph summarizing the book's argument** and project as succinctly and specifically as possible, and **another paragraph on your critical response** to this argument/project and its execution in the book (in this case "critical" does not necessarily mean negative, but rather engaged and analytical). Your response should focus on substantive intellectual and interpretive issues rather than matters that are primarily aesthetic or formal (e.g. there were too many big words, it was boring, you felt maps would have been useful, or you would have preferred footnotes to endnotes). These papers are due in class on the day we discuss the reading.

Essays:

In addition to the reaction papers, you will write two extended essays for this class.

1) Extended Book Review (6-7 pages): On a week of your own choosing, you must write an extended analysis of the reading for that week. This should not be a chapter-by-chapter summary of the main book's contents, but rather a higher-level analysis of the argument and the key evidence/themes that support and develop it. You should also consider the contrast or complement offered to the main book's argument and themes by the supplementary readings for that week. This paper is due in class on the day we discuss the reading you are writing on. (This must be a different week from the week you are leading discussion [see below], and you may not do a reaction paper for the week you do the book review.)

2) Final Paper: There are three options for the longer final paper topic:

Option One -- a thematic analysis of course readings. You may identify a theme or issue in the course and write a 12-15 page essay analyzing that theme, using at least four of the books and at least four of the supplementary readings. We will discuss potential topics or topic areas in class and set up a schedule for selecting a topic -- you will need to have the final topic approved, just so that I can make sure it seems workable with the material at hand. This paper is meant to focus on the assigned reading, but some outside reading may be required if it seems essential to the topic you choose.

Option Two -- topical historiography paper. If you have a specific interest in a particular topic, you may elect to write a paper exploring the existing literature on that topic, laying out the major works and interpretations, existing debates, underexplored or neglected areas, and possible future directions for research. This option requires substantial extra reading, so it is most appropriate for those who would particularly benefit from building this kind of deep background -- those intending to do research on the topic, or those for whom specific historiographical and bibliographic knowledge is important. The ideal length of these papers will vary depending on the nature of the topic explored, but 15 pages should be considered a realistic minimum. Consult with me if you wish to pursue this option.

Option Three -- primary source research paper. Students with a research agenda in early American history may do a medium-length, focused primary source research paper as the final paper for this course. Consult with me if you want to pursue this option.

The default due date for the final paper is Monday, December 17, but for projects requiring substantial additional reading or research, we can negotiate a workable deadline.

Leading Discussion:

Once during the semester you will lead the first hour of discussion on the core reading (because of the number of students, most weeks will have a pair of discussion leaders). This is NOT intended as a presentation of your own ideas, but rather as an opportunity to shape the discussion and set the agenda for the first part of class **by asking questions designed to promote useful discussion**. Discussion leaders for the week should meet with me briefly after the preceding class to exchange ideas about substantive issues and pedagogical strategies for the discussion, and should submit a list of potential questions/ideas a day or more ahead of time for feedback and advice.

We will organize the discussion-leading schedule at our first meeting.

Grading:

Reaction Papers: 20%

Book Review: 20%

Final Paper: 30%

Class Participation (including leading discussion): 30%

REQUIRED READINGS**Structure of Weekly Readings:**

Each week, one book will serve as the core reading that we all will read. There will also be a selection of additional supplementary readings of chapter or article length that relate to some aspect of the core reading. You will be required to read ONE of these supplementary readings each week in addition to the core reading, and, along with others who have read the same supplementary material, to explain it to the rest of the class and bring it into the discussion when relevant. I'll ask people to sign up for particular supplementary readings the week before they are due, in order to assure that each of the readings is covered by at least a couple of people.

Core Reading:

The following books are required reading for everyone:

Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism*. University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us From Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic*. University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England*,

- 1780-1860. Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Liberty*. Beacon Press, 2006.
- James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic*. Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition*. Hill and Wang, 2008.
- David Waldstreicher, *Runaway America: Benjamin Franklin, Slavery, and the American Revolution*. Hill and Wang, 2004.
- Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.
- Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810*. University of Georgia Press, 1991.
- Eva Shepard Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation: Emancipation in Virginia from the Revolution to Nat Turner's Rebellion*. Louisiana State University Press, 2006.

Required Supplementary Readings:

The supplementary readings are available online through the GMU Library. The easiest way to access them is through the library's homepage (library.gmu.edu). You can use the "E-Journals" tab to find the journal and the databases or publisher's site where it can be found. From there, you can do an author, title, or keyword search to find the article.

It is recommended that you bring a paper copy of the reading to refer to in class.

HELPFUL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN DOING THE READING

- What is the book or article's overall argument and historiographical orientation?
- What more specific arguments make up this larger whole?
- How do these points relate to other works we have read and to the field as a whole?
- In what ways do they build on precedents and ideas in other works?
- In what ways do they challenge or reject other interpretations or approaches?
- Is the argument persuasive and/or interesting?
- Is it particularly creative, important, or insightful? In what ways?
- What sorts of evidence and primary source material does the author use?
- Are these sources new or underutilized? If not, does the author use old material in new ways?
- Does the evidence support the argument? Does the interpretation of the evidence make sense?
- How does the author account for the inherent biases and limitations of the evidence?
- Does the author ignore or minimize important issues that might undermine or change the argument?

Obviously, no one is going to come into class having covered all angles of all of these questions--that's why we have discussion--but giving them serious thought before coming to class can provide the basis for more fruitful discussion.

A NOTE ON USING BOOK REVIEWS

In thinking about the answers to questions like the ones above it is perfectly legitimate--indeed, almost expected--to read book reviews from scholarly journals. Reviews are designed to help situate a book in a larger field of literature and assess what contributions it makes, so they can be valuable tools when you are learning a new field.

That said, *reviews are never an acceptable or adequate substitute for your own opinion about a book*. It is best (i.e. most productive and helpful to your own academic and intellectual development) to form your own opinions before reading reviews. Used in this way, they can serve as a spur to your own thinking as you react to the reviewer's assessment of the book and the ways in which it parallels or diverges from your own.

Reviews also vary widely in depth, quality, and focus, so it is important to read multiple reviews, particularly from more specialized journals (big journals like *JAH* and *AHR*, for instance, give reviewers so little space that the reviews are often very superficial in comparison to those in *William and Mary Quarterly*, *Journal of the Early Republic*, *Journal of Southern History*, and especially *Reviews in American History*).

HONOR CODE STATEMENT

All work in the course is governed by the George Mason University honor code:

*To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: **Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.***

For details on how the honor system at GMU works, consult the university catalog:

<http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=5&navoid=410#Honor>

More information can also be found at the GMU [Office of Academic Integrity](#).

OTHER POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Administrative Dates

Last day to add & to drop with no tuition penalty: September 4

Final drop deadline (with tuition penalty): September 28

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ods.gmu.edu) at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

GMU Email Accounts

Students must use their MasonLIVE email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See masonlive.gmu.edu for more information.

Useful Resources

Writing Center (writingcenter.gmu.edu): A114 Robinson Hall, (703) 993-1200.

Counseling & Psychological Services (caps.gmu.edu): SUB I, Room 3129, (703) 993-2380.

University Catalog: catalog.gmu.edu.

Other university policies: universitypolicy.gmu.edu.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Aug. 27: Introduction & Organization

Edmund S. Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox," *Journal of American History* 59:1 (June 1972): 5-29.

Sept. 3: LABOR DAY (No Class)

Sept. 10: Overview and Origins

David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*.

Supplementary Reading

Robin Blackburn, "The Old World Background to European Colonial Slavery," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, 54:1 (January 1997): 65-102.

James H. Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, 54:1 (January 1997): 143-166.

David Eltis, "Europeans and the Rise and Fall of African Slavery in the Americas: An Interpretation," *American Historical Review* 98:5 (December 1993): 1399-1423.

Sept. 17: Freedom and Unfreedom in the Colonial World of the Founders

David Waldstreicher, *Runaway America: Benjamin Franklin, Slavery, and the American Revolution*.

Supplementary Reading

Jonathan D. Prude, "To Look upon the 'Lower Sort': Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750-1800," *Journal of American History* 78:1 (June 1991): 124-159.

Gary B. Nash, "Franklin and Slavery," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 150:4 (December 2006): 618-635.

Peter A. Dorsey, "To 'Corroborate Our Own Claims': Public Positioning and the Slavery Metaphor in Revolutionary America," *American Quarterly* 55:3 (September 2003): 353-386.

Sept. 24: A Saint in the Wilderness? Early Opposition to Slavery in the Colonial World

Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition*.

Supplementary Reading

Philippe Rosenberg, "Thomas Tryon and the Seventeenth-Century Dimensions of Antislavery," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, 61:4

(October 2004): 609-642.

Mark A. Peterson, "The Selling of Joseph: Bostonians, Antislavery, and the Protestant International," *Massachusetts Historical Review* 4 (January 2002): iv-22.

Jonathan D. Sassi, "With a Little Help from the Friends: The Quaker and Tactical Contexts of Anthony Benezet's Abolitionist Publishing," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 135:1 (January 2011): 33-71.

Oct. 1: British Abolitionism in the Age of Revolutions

Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism*.

Supplementary Reading

Seymour Drescher, "History's Engines: British Mobilization in the Age of Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, 66:4 (October 2009): 737-756.

Dana Rabin, "In a Country of Liberty: Slavery, Villeinage, and the Making of Whiteness in the Somerset Case (1772)," *History Workshop Journal* 72:1 (Autumn 2011): 5-29.

David Richardson, "The Ending of the British Slave Trade in 1807: The Economic Context," *Parliamentary History* 26:4 (Supplement, 2007): 127-140
AND Russell R. Menard, "Reckoning with Williams: 'Capitalism and Slavery' and the Reconstruction of Early American History," *Callaloo* 20:4 (October 1997): 791-799.

Oct. 9 (Tuesday!): The American Revolution and Black Freedom in the British Empire

Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Liberty*.

Supplementary Reading

Randy J. Sparks, "Two Princes of Calabar: An Atlantic Odyssey from Slavery to Freedom," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, 59:3 (July 2002): 555-584.

Sylvia Frey, "Between Slavery and Freedom: Virginia Blacks in the American Revolution," *Journal of Southern History* 49:3 (August 1983): 375-398.

Isaac Land and Andrew M. Schocket, "New Approaches to the Founding of the Sierra Leone Colony, 1786-1808," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 9:3 (Winter 2008).

Oct. 15: Black and White Lives in Post-Revolutionary New York

Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810*.

Supplementary Reading

David N. Gellman, "Race, the Public Sphere, and Abolition in Late

Eighteenth-Century New York,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 20:4 (Winter 2000): 607-636.

Paul A. Gilje and Howard B. Rock, “Sweep O! Sweep O!?: African-American Chimney Sweeps and Citizenship in the New Nation,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, 51:3 (July 1994): 507-538.

Jacquelyn C. Miller, “The Wages of Blackness: African American Workers and the Meanings of Race during Philadelphia’s 1793 Yellow Fever Epidemic,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 129:2 (April 2005): 163-194.

Oct. 22: The End of Slavery and the Power of Race in New England

Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and “Race” in New England, 1780-1860*.

Supplementary Readings

Thomas J. Davis, “Emancipation Rhetoric, Natural Rights, and Revolutionary New England: A Note on Four Black Petitions in Massachusetts, 1773-1777,” *New England Quarterly* 62:2 (June 1989): 248-263 AND Roy E. Finkenbine, “Belinda’s Petition: Reparations for Slavery in Revolutionary Massachusetts,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, 64:1 (January 2007): 95-104.

George R. Price and James B. Stewart, “The Roberts Case, the Easton Family, & the Dynamics of the Abolitionist Movement in Massachusetts, 1776-1870,” *Massachusetts Historical Review* 4 (January 2002): 89-115.

Lois E. Horton, “From Class to Race in Early America: Northern Post-Emancipation Racial Reconstruction,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 19:4 (Winter 1999): 629-649.

Oct. 29: The Limits of Change in the Upper South

Eva Shepard Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation: Emancipation in Virginia from the Revolution to Nat Turner’s Rebellion*.

Supplementary Reading

Monica Najar, “Meddling with Emancipation?: Baptists, Authority, and the Rift over Slavery in the Upper South,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 25:2 (Summer 2005): 157-186.

Alexander O. Boulton, “The American Paradox: Jeffersonian Equality and Racial Science,” *American Quarterly* 47:3 (September 1995): 467-492.

A. Glenn Crothers, “Quaker Merchants and Slavery in Early National Alexandria, Virginia: The Ordeal of William Hartshorne,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 25:1 (Spring 2005): 47-77.

Nov. 5: Slavery, Revolution, and Freedom in the Caribbean

Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804*.

Supplementary Reading

Robin Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Democratic Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, 63:4 (October 2006): 643-674.

Julia Gaffield, "Haiti and Jamaica in the Remaking of the Early Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, 69:3 (July 2012): 583-614.

Ada Ferrer, "Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic," *American Historical Review* 117:1 (February 2012): 40-66.

Nov. 12: The United States and the Haitian Revolution

Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*.

Supplementary Reading

James Alexander Dun, "What Avenues of Commerce, Will You, Americans Not Explore!: Commercial Philadelphia's Vantage onto the Early Haitian Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, 62:3 (July 2005): 473-504.

Tim Matthewson, "Jefferson and Haiti," *Journal of Southern History* 61:2 (May 1995): 209-248.

Mitchell A. Kachun, "Antebellum African Americans, Public Commemoration, and the Haitian Revolution: A Problem of Historical Mythmaking," *Journal of the Early Republic* 26:2 (Summer 2006): 249-273.

Nov. 19: Shaping Black Identity in the Revolutionary Era

James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic*.

Supplementary Reading

Alexander X. Byrd, "Eboe, Country, Nation, and Gustavus Vassa's *Interesting Narrative*," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d series, 63:1 (January 2006): 123-148.

W. Bryan Rommel-Ruiz, "Colonizing the Black Atlantic: The African Colonization Movements in Postwar Rhode Island and Nova Scotia," *Slavery and Abolition* 27:3 (December 2006): 349-365.

Eric Burin, "Rethinking Northern White Support for the African Colonization Movement: The Pennsylvania Colonization Society as an Agent of Emancipation," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 127:2 (April 2003): 197-229.

Nov. 26: Slavery and the National Polity

Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic*.

Supplementary Reading

Robin L. Einhorn, "Patrick Henry's Case against the Constitution: The Structural Problem with Slavery," *Journal of the Early Republic* 22:4 (Winter 2002): 549-573.

Reginald Horsman, "The Dimensions of an 'Empire for Liberty': Expansion and Republicanism, 1775-1825," *Journal of the Early Republic* 9:1 (Spring 1989): 1-20.

John Craig Hammond, "'They Are Very Much Interested in Obtaining an Unlimited Slavery': Rethinking the Expansion of Slavery in the Louisiana Purchase Territories, 1803-1805," *Journal of the Early Republic* 23:3 (Autumn 2003): 353-380.

Van Gosse, "'As a Nation, the English Are Our Friends': The Emergence of African American Politics in the British Atlantic World, 1772-1861," *American Historical Review* 113:4 (October 2008): 1003-1028.

Dec. 3: Slavery and the South

Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us From Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South*.

No supplementary readings!