

HIST 608 – winter 2019
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HIST 608: Slavery in the Americas

Course description

The main goal of this colloquium is to expose students to a variety of methodological and historiographical approaches to the history of slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean. In order to place this history and the assigned reading materials in the context of the broader history of slave regimes, we will include content that deals with slavery in the United States. We will examine central topics to the history of slavery such as the slave trade, plantation regimes, gender and family patterns, forms of resistance and adaptation, the abolition process, and the making of post-abolition societies.

Slavery is an almost universal phenomenon, but it cannot be reduced to a single model or template. It entailed, at different times and in different spaces, quite diverse configurations of legal, economic, social, and racial patterns. These differences do not exist only across countries or continents but also within them: local and regional patterns ought to be given central attention.

The historiography of slavery has changed dramatically over time and especially during the last three or four decades. The use of different theoretical paradigms and methodological strategies has enriched our understanding of its multiple dimensions. The assigned readings attempt to offer examples of those different approaches.

The main outcome of this colloquium will be a 20-page historiographical essay dealing with a specific topic, period, and space within the Americas. Students will discuss with the instructor ideas for their essays during week 3. Once a topic has been chosen the instructor will assist students with the selection of materials (monographs, edited volumes, articles, review essays) to be covered. An annotated bibliography will be due on week 6.

In addition, each student will be in charge of introducing one of our weekly topics and readings. This will be a 20-minute presentation.

Beginning in week 2, each student will submit, by the end of the day on the Sunday before class, a 2-3 page reaction paper about the assigned readings, highlighting the main contributions made by the authors, their theoretical and methodological foundations, and their possible flaws or limitations. In addition, students should pose a few questions to be addressed during our class discussion. These weekly assignments will be circulated via Canvas so that everyone could read them ahead of our class meeting.

Grade breakdown

Attendance, participation, and oral presentation: 20%

Weekly reaction papers: 20%

Bibliographical exercise: 20%

Historiographical essay: 40%

What you can expect to learn in this course

- A broader knowledge of the history of slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean between the late 15th century and the late 19th century
- A clear understanding of the relationship between slavery and processes of racial, gender, and class formation in the region
- The role of slaves and slave communities and families in the shaping of slave societies
- A solid grasp of the international historiography on slavery and the changes over time in theoretical and methodological approaches
- A deeper understanding of what writing comparative history entails –its promises, advantages, and limitations.

Schedule of meetings and assignments

Week 1 (Jan. 7): Introduction to the colloquium. The origins and nature of slavery

Readings:

Orlando Patterson, “The Constituent Elements of Slavery,” in *Slavery and Social Death. A Comparative Study* (Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 1-14.

Robin Blackburn, “Introduction: Slavery and Modernity,” in *The Making of New World Slavery. From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (Verso, 1997), pp. 1-27.

Week 2 (Jan. 14): Slave trade

Readings: Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship. A Human History* (Viking, 2007).

David Eltis and David Richardson, “Introduction,” *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 1-19.

Week 3 (Jan. 21): MLK holiday. No class. The instructor will schedule individual meetings with students during this week.

Week 4 (Jan. 28): Native and African Slavery in North America. Guest: Prof. Brett Rushforth.

Readings:

Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance. Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

Leland Donald, "Slavery in Indigenous North America," *Cambridge World History of Slavery*, vol. 3 (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 217-247.

Week 5 (Feb. 4): Slavery, Family, and the Law. Guest: Prof. Michelle McKinley

Readings:

Michelle McKinley, *Fractional Freedoms. Slavery, Intimacy, and Legal Mobilization in Colonial Lima, 1600–1700* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Sue Peabody, "Slavery, Freedom, and the Law in the Atlantic World, 1420–1807," *Cambridge World History of Slavery*, vol. 3 (Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 594-630.

Week 6 (Feb. 11): The Plantation Complex

Readings:

Stuart Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 1550-1835* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Peter Kolchin, "Antebellum Slavery: Organization, Control, Paternalism," *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (Hill and Wang, 1993), pp. 93-132.

Week 7 (Feb. 18): Slavery and Revolution in the French Caribbean

Readings:

Lauren Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens. Revolution & Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "An Unthinkable History," in *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995), pp. 70-107.

Week 8 (Feb. 25): The Impact of the Haitian Revolution

Readings

Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror. Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Leslie Alexander, "The Black Republic: The Influence of the Haitian Revolution on Black Political Consciousness, 1816-1862," in *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, eds. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (Routledge, 2009), pp. 57-79.

Week 9 (March 4): Abolition

Seymour Drescher, *Abolition. A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

John Ashworth, "The Relationship between Capitalism and Humanitarianism," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 92, No. 4 (Oct., 1987), pp. 813-828.

Week 10 (March 11): Post-Abolition Societies

Reading:

Rebecca Scott, *Degrees of Freedom. Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery* (Harvard University Press, 2005).

Final papers due: March 22, 2019

Electronic submission only