

Slavery: From Africa to America
AS100.120
Fall 2004

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Course Meets MTW at 9 am
M & T in Hodgson 311
W in Hodgson 301

Course Description

Americans are profoundly ignorant about slavery. Despite its lasting legacy in modern society, economy, and politics, slavery is seldom a topic of public conversation. Multiple taboos surround it. Elementary and secondary schools teach slavery poorly or not at all, fearing the negative consequences of incorrect speech or controversy. Teachers are inadequately trained to teach the subject and often afraid of doing so. Slavery remains a silent topic of American life.

At times, slavery splashes fleetingly into public debate over political issues or discussion surrounding incidents of racial bigotry. Yet slavery and its legacy continue to structure contemporary African and American life in momentous ways. The aftermath of slavery is conspicuous. Slavery remains on peoples' minds on both sides of the Atlantic. We are extremely curious about slavery and want to learn more about it.

This course is an introduction to slavery with an Atlantic focus and specifically designed for university students in the United States. It considers African experiences of enslavement within Africa and North America by examining the African origins and impacts of slavery as well as the subsequent experiences of Africans and their descendants in North American bondage. It also considers the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Roughly equal time will be spent on slavery in Africa, on the one hand, and slavery in North America, on the other. By examining slavery on both sides of the Atlantic and the trade that linked those experiences of slavery, this course emphasizes the African origins of American slaves and the economic system of servile labor that spanned the Atlantic, linking continents. Where studies of slavery in other parts of the world shed light on Atlantic experiences, we will consider them. Readings emphasize both scholarly studies of bondage and individual experiences of enslavement.

Because slavery was a complex system, there are several ways to study it and its constituent elements. The various methods of studying slavery are not fully exclusive. One is to take the experience of the slaves as a primary focus. To do so, we would chiefly examine slave narratives, listening to slaves narrate their lives, their perceptions, and

their feelings about slavery. Narratives come in the form of oral traditions, personal testimonies, and written documents. The observations of non-slaves telling about the lives of slaves would also be of use to examining slavery from the standpoint of the experience of those who were enslaved. Without understanding the lives of slavery's primary victims, we fail to grasp the essentials of slavery and appreciate its continuing legacy.

Another approach to slavery is to examine the experiences of the masters, the enslavers, and the slave traders—the direct dominators and beneficiaries of slavery. Because slavery was a system of subordination and often of forced labor, it required both a slave and a master. Without understanding masters, their reasons for enslaving, their motivations, and how they rationalized their practices, we cannot fully understand slavery as a system. The fact that we universally condemn slavery today must not keep us from carefully studying masters. To study masters, the most useful documents can be the records they produced themselves: diaries, plantation account books, testimonies, court records, letters they wrote, and the like. The observations of travelers and others who witnessed masters at work are also useful here.

Slavery must also be studied as a dimension of economy, society, and law. Studying slavery in this way requires looking at aggregate data and structures to determine the shape and nature of slavery, how it fit into local and international economies, and what role it played in linking disparate regions. Viewing slavery as a dimension of law is necessary, because law set down the structures enabling masters to enforce subordination of their slaves. How many slaves were there in a particular society? What role did they play in the economy? How important was slave labor? What kind of work did slaves perform? How important were slaves to the economy of early north America, for example? How many slaves in a particular society were born elsewhere (captured during their lifetimes) and how many were born into slavery (creoles)? How many Africans crossed the Atlantic as slaves and how many of these people died during the “middle passage”? What laws did masters rely upon or disregard in the relations of enslavement? These sorts of questions are best answered with evidence such as census data, plantation inventories, shipping and merchant data (for the slave trade), economic production statistics, laws, court records, and the like. Although often impersonalized (but not always, as in the case of court records), these data are crucial for understanding slavery.

Finally, we can study slavery as a cultural system. There are different dimensions to this. There is the question of slaves' culture, the world the slaves made in their places of enslavement. How did enslaved people form families? Celebrate important personal and cultural events? Bury their dead? How separate did they keep parts of their lives and experiences from those of their masters? Likewise, masters often formed distinct cultures and these are important to understand. But masters and slaves also interacted in very personal and cultural ways, and these interactions formed part of the system of domination and subordination. What kinds of relationships did masters and slaves form beyond those of laborer and overseer?

Course Goals

Because this is a **History** course, its purpose is to focus on the past and to examine the ways that historians have understood and written about slavery. It is not a call-in program or a free-for-all discussion about slavery based on your current knowledge, understanding, and feelings. Our investigation of the past will be disciplined and we will discuss slavery based on a careful reading of current research and primary sources. My belief is that a rigorous confrontation with research and primary sources will both change the way you think about slavery and lead you to an understanding of the profound ways its legacy structures the present.

Among the principle purposes of this course are the following:

- Breaking the silence about slavery in American society and on the Johns Hopkins University campus.
- Challenging preconceived notions about slavery and confronting you with new and discomfoting data.
- Founding investigation of slavery on the most current research and primary sources.
- Demonstrating slavery as an intercontinentally linked economic system that cannot be understood with reference to one place only.
- Appreciating the diversity of slavery (or slaveries) within Africa and North America.
- Debunking the notion that slavery in North America is the norm against which all other forms of slavery should be measured.

Required Books

- Lovejoy, Paul E. *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2000. ISBN: 0521784301
- Cooper, Frederick. *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa*. reprint edn. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1997. ISBN = 0435074199
- Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998. ISBN: 0674002113
- Berlin, Ira, Marc Favreau, and Steven F. Miller, eds. *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation*. New York: New Press, 2000. ISBN: 1565845870
- McNeilly, Donald P. *The Old South Frontier: Cotton Plantations and the Formation of Arkansas Society, 1819-1861*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000. ISBN: 1557286191
- Martin, Jonathan D. *Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004. ISBN: 067401149X

Required Coursework

1. Take-Home midterm. Essay questions. Due Friday, October 15, at 4 p.m. in the professor's department mail box. 400 points.
2. Take-Home final. Essay questions. Due Monday, December 13 at 10 a.m. in the professor's department mail box. 400 points.
3. Activity report. Due by Wednesday, November 25 at noon in the professor's department mail box. 200 points.
4. Weekly reaction papers. Due to be turned in to the professor at the end of discussion section each Wednesday. 10 points subtracted for each weekly reaction paper not turned in.
5. Attendance. Attendance at lectures and participation in discussions is expected. Points will be subtracted from the total scores of students who don't attend and participate. Students failing to attend and participate will be dropped to a lower final course grade if *near* a cut-off point between grades when figuring the course grade.

Schedule:

Week 1

September 7-8

Week 2

September 13-15

- Lovejoy, Paul E. *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pages 1-111. [Bookstore, print reserve].
- Piot, Charles. "Of Slaves and the Gift: Kabre Sale of Kin during the Era of the Slave Trade." *Journal of African History* 37 (1996): 31-49. [Electronic reserve].

Week 3

September 20-22

- Lovejoy, Paul E. *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pages 112-164. [Bookstore, print reserve]
- Kopytoff, Igor, and Suzanne Miers. "African 'Slavery' as an Institution of Marginality." In *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, 3-81. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977. [Electronic reserve].
- Robertson, Claire, and Martin A. Klein. "Women's Importance in African Slave Systems." In *Women and Slavery in Africa*, edited by Claire Robertson and

Martin A. Klein, 3-25. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983.
[Electronic reserve].

Week 4

September 27-29

- Cooper, Frederick. *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa*. reprint edn. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1997. Pages 1-149. [Bookstore, Print reserve].

Week 5

October 4-6

- Cooper, Frederick. *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa*. reprint edn. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1997. Pages 153-268. [Bookstore, Print reserve].
- Pier M. Larson, "Narratives of Enslavement: Experiences of Capture and Dispersion within Africa," manuscript. [Electronic reserve]

Week 6

October 12-13

- Lovejoy, Paul E. *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pages 252-289. [Bookstore, Print reserve].
- Slave Narratives: Aaron Kuku; Chisi-Ndjurisiye-Sichayunga; Olaudah Equiano; Joseph Wright [Electronic reserve]

Week 7

October 18-20

- Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998. Pages 1-92 [Bookstore, Print reserve].
- Slave Narratives: Pietro Chilekwa & Swema [Electronic reserve]

Week 8

October 25-27

- Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998. Pages 95-215 [Bookstore, Print reserve].
- Slave Narrative: Samuel Ajayi Crowther [Electronic reserve]

Week 9

November 1-3

- Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998. Pages 219-365 [Bookstore, Print reserve].

Week 10

November 8-10

- Berlin, Ira, Marc Favreau, and Steven F. Miller, eds. *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation*. New York: New Press, 2000. Read: Introducton-70 [Bookstore, Print reserve].
- Chaplin, Joyce E. "Race." In *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, edited by David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick,. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. Pages 154-172 [Electronic reserve].

Week 11

November 15-17

- McNeilly, Donald P. *The Old South Frontier: Cotton Plantations and the Formation of Arkansas Society, 1819-1861*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000. Pages 1-91 [Bookstore, Print reserve].
- Berlin, Ira, Marc Favreau, and Steven F. Miller, eds. *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation*. New York: New Press, 2000. Pages 71-119. [Bookstore, Print reserve].

Week 12

November 22-24

- McNeilly, Donald P. *The Old South Frontier: Cotton Plantations and the Formation of Arkansas Society, 1819-1861*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000. Pages 93-191 [Bookstore, Print reserve]
- Berlin, Ira, Marc Favreau, and Steven F. Miller, eds. *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation*. New York: New Press, 2000. Pages 121-164 [Bookstore, Print reserve].

Week 13

November 29 – December 1

- Martin, Jonathan D. *Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004. Pages 1-104 [Bookstore, Print reserve]
- Berlin, Ira, Marc Favreau, and Steven F. Miller, eds. *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation*. New York: New Press, 2000. Pages 165-207 [Bookstore, Print reserve].

Week 14

December 6-7

- Martin, Jonathan D. *Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004., 105-195 [Bookstore, Print reserve].
- Berlin, Ira, Marc Favreau, and Steven F. Miller, eds. *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation*. New York: New Press, 2000. Pages 209-277 [Bookstore, Print reserve].