Slavery has linked the histories of Africa, Europe, North America, South America, and the Caribbean. Its history—and legacy—is in this sense literally international. At the same time, its wide diffusion across diverse regions, cultures, and historical contexts has complicated the very definition of "slavery," and has made the institution a fruitful and controversial area of research and debate in comparative history.

This graduate seminar on slavery has several purposes: to introduce students to central issues in the historiography of slavery; to study specific case studies drawn from a wide variety of settings; and to develop, in our discussions especially, a comparative approach which actively utilizes insights and findings from "unfamiliar" historical or cultural settings to reinterpret the history of areas in which we specialize.

During the course of the semester, we will discuss readings dealing with the slave experience in the Americas (both North and South, and the Caribbean), Africa, and Europe. Normally, we will discuss not only the "core readings" assigned to the seminar as a whole, but also student review-essays on supplementary readings of direct relevance for the issues raised in the core readings. Our readings will include case studies as well as overarching interpretations, anthropological as well as more conventional historical analyses, older classics as well as recent work.

LECTURES

No lectures, since this is a seminar.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS and EXAMINATIONS

No examinations. Students will be expected to write two in-depth review essays (10-15 pages each) on supplementary readings, and their implications for the week's core reading. A student may arrange to substitute a longer research essay (ca. 30 pages) on a comparative topic in lieu of the two review essays.

GRADING SYSTEM

50% class discussion; 50% written work ("written work" includes whatever brief oral presentations may accompany the review essays).

REQUIRED READINGS

See the comments in the course description. Among the "core readings" will be Frederick Cooper, Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa; David B. Davis, The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution; Carl Degler, Neither Black Nor White; M. I. Finley, The Ancient Economy; Eugene D. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll; C. L. R. James, The Black Jacobins; Franklin W. Knight, Slave Society in Cuba; S. Miers & I. Kopytoff, eds., Slavery in Africa; Alexander Marchant, From Barter to Slavery; Richard Price, ed., Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities; Stanley Stein, Vassouras: A Brazilian Coffee County; Peter Wood, Black Majority; plus articles. These core readings will be rounded out by our extensive supplementary readings, and the review-essays on them.
Course Description

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Proposed Schedule

1. Introduction. Aug. 30

Organizational session. Please note that the following Monday, Sept. 6, is a holiday on the UW calendar. I suggest that during Sept. 7-10, we hold an organizational meeting to set up a calendar of review-essays, and that students unfamiliar with the dimensions of the Atlantic slave trade look at Philip D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census (Madison, 1969), and Herbert S. Klein, The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in the Atlantic Slave Trade (Princeton, 1978).

Unit I. THE COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF SLAVERY IN THE AMERICAS.


Core reading: Carl Degler, Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States (New York, 1971).
Supplementary:


Core Rdng: Alexander Marchant, From Barter to Slavery: The Economic Relations of Portuguese and Indians In the Settlement of Brazil, 1500-1580 (Baltimore, 1942).

Stuart Schwartz, "Indian Labor and New World Plantations: European Demands and Indian Responses in Northeastern Brazil," American Historical Review, 83:1 (Feb., 1978), 43-79.


Core rdng: Franklin W. Knight, Slave Society in Cuba during the Nineteenth Century. (Madison, 1970).

Supplmtry:

a) Manuel Moreno Fraginals, El ingenio: el complejo económico social cubano del azúcar (3 vols., Havana, 1964). Note: Part of this work is published in English translation.


Supplmtry:


Supplmtry:


Core rdng: Peter H. Wood, Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion (New York, 1974).


Supplmtry:

Lucille Mathurin, The Rebel Woman in the British West Indies During Slavery (Kingston, 1975).


George Fredrickson and Christopher Lasch, "Resistance to
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d) Waldemar de Almeida Barbosa, Negros e quilombos em Minas Gerais (Belo Horizonte, 1972).


Supplmtry:


Charles Frostin, Les revoltes blanches à Saint-Domingue aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles (Haiti avant 1789) (Paris, 1975).


UNIT II. BEYOND THE AMERICAS.


Core rdng: Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, eds., Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives (Madison, 1977), Parts I, II, III, VIII.

Supplmtry: Miers and Kopytoff, eds., Slavery, Parts IV-VII.


11. Muslim Slavery in Comparative Perspective. Nov. 15.


Core Rdng: M.I. Finley, The Ancient Economy (Berkeley, 1973).
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David B. Davis, The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture (Ithaca, 1966), Part I. See also the critique of Davis by Finley in Foner and Genovese, eds., Slavery, 256-261.


Supplmtry:

a) Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery (Chapel Hill, 1944).

Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Capitalismo e escravidão no Brasil meridional (Sao Paulo, 1962).

c) Jacob Gorender, O escravismo colonial (São Paulo, 1978).


Core rdng: Genovese, The World the Slaveholders Made, Part I.


Assignments and Grading

This seminar will emphasize discussion and debate. The most important assignment is to contribute actively and articulately your thoughts, insights, and responses to historical issues raised in the core readings and review essays. Collectively, we will strive for a comparative approach, but one which is also sensitive to the particularities of specific regions and case studies.

Tentatively, these are the written assignments. Students will write two in-depth review-essays (10-15 pages each) on supplementary readings, and their implications for the week's core readings. The syllabus lists some possible clusters of supplementary readings, but they are points of departure rather than rigid assignments. In cases of particularly difficult sets of supplementary readings, a student may write a single review-essay of 20-30 pages instead of two review-essays. In addition, a student may arrange to substitute a longer research essay (ca. 40 pages) on a comparative topic in lieu of the two review-essays.

The review-essays should present a succinct summary of the findings and arguments of the readings discussed; a critical analysis of the merits and/or weaknesses of the supplementary readings; and a substantive discussion of the implications of the supplementary readings for the topic and core readings of the week. The precise way you weave together these various functions is open, of course, since you are the author and critic.

Due dates and a calendar of review-essays will be worked out during the first two weeks of class. Tentatively, however, I propose that review-essays be available for distribution to seminar members the Friday afternoon before the Monday meeting to which they apply. I also propose that each week, a seminar member write a non-graded "Comment" (ca. 3-5 pages) that proposes issues for discussion on the basis of the core readings and review-essays.

Grading will be weighted as follows: 40% written work, 60% class discussion.