Course Description

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 works.

Proposed Schedule


Organizational session. I suggest that we 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


2. (cont'd)

Supplementary:


Core reading:


Supplementary:


Core reading:

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

Supplementary:

4. (cont'd)

Manuel Moreno Fraginals, El ingenio: el complejo económico social cubano del azúcar (3 vols., Havana, 1964). An abridged one-volume version is available in English.


Supplementary:


Lawrence W. Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness (New York, 1978).


Supplementary:

a) Emilia Viotti da Costa, Da senzala à colonia (2nd ed., Sao Paulo, 1982).
6. (cont'd)

Stuart B. Schwartz, new book on slavery in Brazil; and article on slavery in Cambridge History of Latin America.

Francisco Vidal Luna, Minas Gerais: Escravos e senhores (Sao Paulo, 1981).


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

Supplmtry:

Sidney W. Mintz, Caribbean Transformations (Chicago, 1974).


Supplmtry:

a) Price, ed., *Maroon Societies*, Parts I, IV, VI.


8. (cont'd)


Supplmtry:


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


Price, ed., Maroon Societies, Part II.


UNIT II. BEYOND THE AMERICAS.


10. (cont'd)

Supp'lmentry:

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

      Fernando Henrique Cardoso, *Capitalismo e escravidão no Brasil meridional* (Sao Paulo, 1962).
      Jacob Gorender, *O escravismo colonial* (Sao Paulo, 1978).


11. Muslim Slavery in Comparative Perspective. April 11.


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

Supp'lmentry:

       Miers and Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery*, Parts IV-VII.

Core reading: Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Ma., 1982).

Supplementary:


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.


Claire C. Robertson, *Sharing the Same Bowl: A Socioeconomic History of Women and Class in Accra, Ghana* (Bloomington, 1984?).


Assignments and Grading

This seminar will emphasize discussion and debate. The most important assignment is to think through the issues, arguments, and implications of the readings, and to contribute your critical thoughts and insights actively and articulately in discussion. Collectively, we will strive for a comparative approach, but one which is also sensitive to the particularities of specific regions and case studies.

About every other week, a team of two students will lead the discussion for about an hour, and I will lead discussion during the second hour. During the weeks in which I lead the entire discussion, students will turn in a brief paragraph indicating their response to the readings two hours before the seminar begins. I will review the student comments as I prepare for discussion.

Students may elect one of three options for writing assignments.

Option 1: a short critical review of the core reading of a given week (5-8 pages), and a "single-credit" review-essay on supplementary readings and their implications for a given week's core readings (10-15 pages).

Option 2: a "double-credit" review-essay on a substantial amount of supplementary readings, and their implications for a given week's core readings and topic (20-30 pages).

Option 3: a research essay on a comparative topic (ca. 40 pages).

The short critical essays are due at the beginning of the seminar sessions in which the work under review will be discussed. The single-credit and double-credit review-essays are due by Tuesday at 3:45 p.m. in 3211 Humanities during the week to whose core reading the essay pertains. All members of the seminar will read the review-essays before the Friday seminar meeting. Research papers are due by Friday, May 11. Those who wish to submit a first draft of research papers must do so by Friday, April 4.

The review-essays should strive to build a sense of connection and implication that allows supplementary readings to enrich our understanding and discussion of core readings and topics. The essays should normally present a succinct explication of the major findings and arguments of the supplementary readings; a critical analysis of the merits and weaknesses of the 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 author and critic.

The syllabus lists possible clusters of supplementary readings, but these are points of departure rather than rigid assignments. Normally, about two supplementary books will suffice for the purposes of a "single-credit" review-essay, while a "double-credit" essay will analyze the equivalent of about four major books.

Students working on a review-essay for a particular week may choose to elect a "designated skip" on the core readings of the week before the
Assignments and Grading (cont'd)

review-essay is due. The "designated skip" does not completely liberate the student from the core readings. The student should still read carefully any review-essays submitted during the week "skipped," and will also be expected to skim the core readings. Students who choose a "designated skip" should write me a note confirming the skip two weeks in advance.

Grading will be weighted as follows: 50% written work, 50% class discussion. In Option 1, the review-essay counts one-third, and the short critique one-sixth.