

History 278: Africans in the Americas, 1492-1808

MW 8:00-9:15AM

1221 Mosse Humanities Building

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Between 1492 and 1808, Africans represented the largest immigrant stream to the Americas, outnumbering European migrants by a ratio of more than 3:1. The purpose of this course is to increase the student's knowledge of the African presence in the Americas until 1808, when the English outlawed the Atlantic slave trade, sharply curtailing African arrivals in North America and the British Caribbean. The course does not simply emphasize the structure and demography of the slave trade. While these topics are important, more vital are the multiple ideas and cultures that shaped and defined Africans as they were transported across the Atlantic world. From the perspectives of the Africans themselves, social, cultural, and political issues were far more important to their sense of self than were the economic imperatives that preoccupied their European masters. Thus, after a brief introduction of the demographic and economic aspects of the trade, the course will concentrate primarily on the continuities and transformations of African structures and belief systems in the Atlantic world.

One of the central skills of historical thinking is the ability to imagine the world from the perspective of someone in a circumstance different than one's own. Throughout the semester, students in this course will have opportunities to develop the skills of historical imagination, most often through the close reading and interpretation of primary sources. You will leave the course with a grounding in *how* to think about the African diaspora as well as a better idea of *why* this is important.

Readings

Lisa A. Lindsay, *Captives as Commodities: The Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Pearson, 2008)

James H. Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (UNC, 2011)

Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (UNC, 1998)

Links to all other readings—journal articles, book chapters, etc.—can be found under course “content” on your Learn@UW site.

Procedures and Requirements

The course will consist of lectures and informal class discussions. Students will be expected to attend every class session and to participate actively in discussions. Exam questions will come directly out of lectures AND assigned readings. Not everything in the readings will be discussed in class, however, so it is essential that students complete ALL of the assigned readings.

Students will be expected to have read all of the week's readings BEFORE class meetings. Thus, readings for Week 2 should be completed BEFORE Monday January 23. You should be prepared to respond to the questions raised on the syllabus for each week's readings.

There will be five evaluations. Below are the dates and their percentage of your final grade:

1. Map Quiz	01/30 (5%)
2. Primary Source Analysis I	02/20 (17.5%)
3. Midterm Exam	03/15 (30%)
4. Primary Source Analysis II	04/24 (17.5%)
5. Final Exam	05/10 (30%)

A: 94-100 AB: 88-93 B: 83-87 BC: 77-82 C: 72-76 D: 66-71 F: 65 and below

Late assignments will lose one letter grade per day and will not receive feedback. For example, if you submit your first primary source analysis paper on February 21, one day late, an "A" paper will automatically become an "AB" paper, and so on. Contact me PRIOR to the due dates if you require an extension for medical reasons, family reasons, etc.

Instructions for the two primary source analysis papers can be found on pages 9-10 of this syllabus. The midterm exam will be in class on Wednesday March 15. The final exam is scheduled for May 10 at 5:05 pm.

Need Help?

If you have questions about the course or assignments, please first consult the syllabus. If you still have questions, you may contact me by email or come to my office hours. If you do contact me by email, use your @wisc.edu email address and adhere to professional email etiquette. I will do my best to respond within one business day.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is a very serious offense that can pose a real threat to your success and to the integrity of our broader learning community. I will strictly enforce the university policies on academic honesty. Ignorance about definitions of plagiarism will not be an acceptable excuse. If you are unsure of the rules about plagiarism, come see me or check here:

http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html

Disability

Disability guidelines for course accommodations may be found at the UW McBurney Disability Resource Center site: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>

Course Schedule

- Week 1** **Introduction to the Course**
- 1/18 **Lecture:** Review Syllabus and Defining the African Diaspora
- Week 2** **Slavery and Economy in Africa**
- Reading:** Lindsay, Captives as Commodities, 54-83; John K. Thornton, “Slavery and African Social Structure,” in *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, 1998): 72-97.
- 1/23-1/25 **Lectures:** African slavery and economies before European arrivals; Senegambia, Bight of Benin
- Did the Atlantic slave trade transform African forms of slavery? How? Was European trade destructive to African societies? How? Why?
- Week 3** **The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas: Why Africans?**
- Reading:** Lindsay, Captives as Commodities, 22-53; James H. Sweet, “The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought,” *William and Mary Quarterly LIV* (1997), 1-24. James Sweet, “The Hidden Histories of African Lisbon,” in Jorge Canizares, Matt Childs, and James Sidbury, eds. *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade* (Penn, 2013), 233-247.
- 1/30-2/1 **Lectures:** European background to the Atlantic slave trade; Fifteenth-century European slavery
- Video:** “The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross. Episode 1: The Black Atlantic (1500-1800)”
- Why African labor? Or, why didn’t Europeans do their own work? Was the decision to enslave Africans in the Americas purely an economic one? Were Europeans culturally predisposed to seeing Africans as “outsiders”? How? Did race play any role in this? Did Europeans themselves ever become “Africanized”? How?
- MAP QUIZ IN CLASS ON MONDAY 1/30
- Week 4** **Enslavement, the Middle Passage, and the Politics of the Slave Trade**
- Reading:** Lindsay, 84-111; Stephanie Smallwood, “Turning African Captives into Atlantic Commodities,” in *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Harvard, 2007): 33-64; Linda

Heywood, "Queen Njinga Mbandi Ana de Sousa of Ndongo/Matamba," in McKnight and Garofalo, 38-51

2/6-2/8

Lectures: Who is to blame for the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade? And does it matter? Social death? Reparations?

Video: "Wonders of the African World: The Slave Coasts"

Students should consider the following questions in response to the video: How does Gates approach the issue of slavery in Africa, before and during the era of the Trans-Atlantic trade? What are Gates' biases? Who is the implied audience for the video? Based on your understanding of African history leading up to the Atlantic slave trade, is Gates' rendering of African history balanced/accurate? Using earlier readings, assess Gates as a historian.

Week 5

Primary Sources and the Atlantic Slave Trade

Reading: Look at www.slavevoyages.org ; Olaudah Equiano, "Chapter 2," in *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* at: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/equiano1/equiano1.html#p45>

Vincent Carretta, "Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa? New Light on an Eighteenth-Century Question of Identity," *Slavery and Abolition*, 20, 3 (December 1999), 96-105; Paul Lovejoy, "Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, alias Olaudah Equiano, the African," *Slavery and Abolition* 27 (2006): 317-347.

2/13-2/15

Lectures: Introduction to "The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database." Trade Patterns, Middle Passage. Equiano baptismal record and other similar sources. Burney historical newspapers and explanation of Primary Source Analysis I assignment.

Week 6

Africans in the Markets of the Atlantic

Reading: Stuart Schwartz, "Sugar Plantation Labor and Slave Life," in *Slaves, Rebels, and Peasants* (Illinois, 1992), 39-63; William Dusinger, "Mothers and Children," in *Them Dark Days: Slavery in the American Rice Swamps* (Georgia, 2000): 235-247; Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *The American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 1231-1249.

2/20-2/22

Lectures: Worlds of Labor; urban and rural; comparisons of case studies in Jamaica, South Carolina, Brazil

To what extent were slave lives defined by the market and by work? How prevalent were disease, death, and social alienation? Did slaves generally suffer “social death”?

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS I DUE IN CLASS ON MONDAY 2/20

Week 7 Gender and Sexuality in Africa and the Diaspora

Reading: Hilary McD Beckles, “Female Enslavement and Gender Ideologies in the Caribbean,” in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery* (Continuum, 2000), 163-182; James H. Sweet, “Mutual Misunderstandings: Gesture, Gender, and Healing in the African Portuguese World,” *Past and Present* 203 Supplement 4 (2009): 128-143; Sue E. Houchins and Baltasar Fra-Molinero, “The Saint’s Life of Sister Chicaba,” in McKnight and Garofalo, 214-239.

2/27-3/1 **Lectures:** Gender and Sexuality in Africa and the Diaspora. Male and female roles, importance of women, various gender expressions; motherhood

How were African ideas about gender challenged by enslavement in the Americas? How did Europeans ignore their own gender conventions in their application of African slavery?

Week 8 Kinship, Lineage, and Family

Reading: James Sweet, “Defying Social Death: The Multiple Configurations of African Slave Family in the Atlantic World,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 70 (2013): 251-272; Walter Hawthorne, “Being now, as it were, one family”: Shipmate bonding on the slave vessel *Emilia*, in Rio de Janeiro and throughout the Atlantic world,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 45 (2008): 53-77; Nicole von Germeten, “Juan Roque’s Donation of a House to the Zape Confraternity, Mexico City, 1623,” in McKnight and Garofalo, 83-104.

3/6-3/8 **Lectures:** Kinship and Lineage in Africa and the Americas; Kinship webs, ship mates, runaway communities; warrior societies and secret societies

How useful is the concept of “family” in understanding the interior lives of African slaves in the Americas?

Week 9 Review and Midterm Exam

3/13 Review for Midterm Exam

3/15 MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS

3/20-3/22 SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Week 10 Spirituality, Religion, and Healing in Africa

Reading: Sweet, *Domingos Álvares*, chapters 2-5

3/27-3/29 **Lectures:** What is religion? How does one distinguish religion from “spirituality”? Pre-European examples: Senegambia (Islam?), Bight of Benin (vodun), Central Africa (nature, ancestors).

Video: “A Reasonable Man”

How does one characterize the religious beliefs of Africans in zones of enslavement? Were there any “pure” or orthodox ideologies?

Week 11 African Healing in the Diaspora

Reading: Sweet, *Domingos Álvares*, chapters 6-10

4/3-4/5 **Lectures:** Transformations in African Healing in Brazil, St. Domingue, and New York: Calundu, Calenda, Lundu, Batuque, Candomble, Ring Shout

How did African healing change from Africa to the Americas? What was gained? What was lost? How might one best characterize slave resistance in Brazil? Was it covert, overt, some combination of the two? Where does slave resistance begin and end? Was everything resistance? What is intellectual history? Did Africans make contributions to the intellectual history of the modern world? How?

Week 12 African Contributions to Runaway Communities, Rebellions, and Revolution: Haiti

Reading: John Thornton, “‘I am the Subject of the King of Congo’: African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution,” *Journal of World History* 4 (1993): 181-214; Michel Rolph Trouillot, “An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event,” in Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (Beacon, 1995): 70-107; Kathryn Joy McKnight, “Elder, Slave, and Soldier: Maroon Voices from the Palenque del Limón, 1634,” in McKnight and Garofalo, 64-81.

4/10-4/12 **Lectures:** Runaways, Maroons, and Rebels: From Santo Domingo to Haiti (Yanga, Benkos Bioho, Cudjoe, Palmares, etc.). Haitian Revolution. Film Clip from “Quilombo.”

How should we assess peace treaties signed by African runaway communities, esp. when they often agreed to return future runaways? How important was the African influence on the Haitian Revolution, particularly compared to American and French influences of “equality, liberty, and fraternity”? How should we assess the return to subsistence farming in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution? What does Trouillot mean when he describes the Haitian Revolution as a “non-event”?

Week 13 Islam, Language, Names, and Oral Traditions

Reading: Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 59-87 and 154-185; Olabiyi Yai, “Texts of Enslavement: Fon and Yoruba Vocabularies from Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Brazil,” in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed. *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery* (Continuum, 2000): 102-112.

4/17-4/19 **Lectures:** Islam in the African Diaspora: Portugal, Santo Domingo, Peru, Salvador, and the US. Language diffusion, name shifting, and oral traditions. African language vocabularies, dictionaries, etc.

Audio: WPA narratives: “Remembering Slavery”

Islamic diaspora or African diaspora? Was Islam divisive in slave communities? How important was language in the maintenance of culture, history, and tradition? What were the psychological impacts of losing language and names? To what extent were Africans able to maintain elements of language and oral tradition?

Week 14 Social Hierarchies: Africans v. African Americans

Reading: Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 186-243

4/24-4/26 **Lectures:** Differential Treatments of Africans and African Americans—Work, Manumission, Marriages. Freedmen? Frank Tannenbaum, the Church, and Manumission.

Was there a strict social hierarchy in slave communities of the Americas? Did this hierarchy differ across time and space? How? Was the hierarchy sharper in North America, Latin America, the Caribbean? Why?

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS II DUE IN CLASS ON MONDAY 4/24

Week 15 Africans Become African Americans: The Processes of Creolization

Reading: Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 244-292; David Wheat, “A Spanish Caribbean Captivity Narrative,” in McKnight and Garofalo, 195-213; Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African American*

Culture: An Anthropological Perspective (Beacon, 1992), 1-37; Thornton, "African Cultural Groups in the Atlantic World," in Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, 183-205; João José Reis, "From Slave to Wealthy African Freedman: The Story of Manuel Joaquim Ricardo," in Lisa A. Lindsay and John Wood Sweet, *Biography and the Black Atlantic* (Penn, 2013), 131-145.

5/1-5/3

Lectures: African, Ladino, or Creole?: Slavery in the Atlantic World. The End of the Slave Trade: Its Impact and Importance; Review for Final Exam

Did Africans in the Americas recreate specific African cultural institutions, or did they weave together a variety of cultural traditions to create distinctly new African-American cultures? What is the difference between an African, a Ladino, and a Creole?

05/10

FINAL EXAM, 5:05 PM

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENTS

One of the goals of the course is to teach you basic research methods—how to search, verify, and contextualize your findings. You will also learn how to present your research in a coherent fashion, emphasizing clear, concise writing framed in a critical context. I **STRONGLY** urge you to consult with me well in advance of the due dates.

Your primary source analyses should be roughly 3-4 pages typed, double-spaced. Though you do not have to follow the sequence of elements listed below, each primary source analysis should incorporate **ALL** of the following three elements. Mere summary or paraphrase of the document text, without analysis or context, will result in a low grade:

- 1) The first and most basic element is an introductory section that provides a general overview of the assigned text. What type of source is it and what does it contain? Who is the author? Under what conditions was the source written? When and where was it written?
- 2) The second element is a critical analysis of the text. At minimum, this will explain the major personalities, events, and/or institutions mentioned in the text. A good analysis will include some critique of the document's content. The best critiques will analyze the document's use of language, its biases, and implied audience and describe how these factors relate to the overall significance of the source.
- 3) The third element involves placing the source in its proper historical and historiographical contexts. Here, you should explain how and why the text should be understood relative to other historical figures, trends, and events in history. As much as possible, you should also describe how the text fits into ongoing debates about specific problems in the study of diaspora history. You should be able to glean this information from class lectures and other assigned readings.

PRIMARY SOURCE PAPER I

Due in class on Monday February 20

3-4 pages

Using the Burney Historical Newspaper archive, all students must:

- 1) Search for an article related to the slave trade or the African diaspora. Be mindful that your search terms should accord with the terminology of the day, so you will need to substitute “negro” for “black,” “wench” for “woman,” “Gold Coast” for Ghana, etc. Other search terms might include “slave,” “runaway,” “rebellion,” “Jamaica,” “Quamina,” “Quashee,” “Coromantee,” “Eboe,” etc. Be creative in your searches!
- 2) Upon settling on an article, you should use the details in the article—names, places, etc.—to expand your search. You might start by seeing if there are key words in the article that appear in **OTHER** articles in the Burney newspapers. Thus, you would search again in the newspapers, using only those secondary terms. Then, you could move on to other databases at your disposal, including google books, the slave trade data base, etc. For example, if you find an article about a shipboard

slave revolt, you could look to the slave trade data base to see if you can find the ship. You could also look up pertinent details in google books to determine if others have written on your case.

3) Your paper should provide a brief narrative description of your: search process, your findings, and the reasons you think your findings are important (see above guidelines under “Primary Source Analysis Assignments”).

4) You should staple a photocopy of your newspaper article to the back of your 3-4 page paper.

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS II

Due in class on Monday April 24

3-4 pages

1) Listen to the Works Progress Administration (WPA) interviews with Fountain Hughes, Wallace Quarterman, and George Johnson. (You can also read along with the interview transcripts.)

<http://www.loc.gov/podcasts/slavenarratives/index.html>

2) Critique the utility of the WPA interviews as historical sources for American slavery. Use the guidelines given above under “Primary Source Analysis Assignments” and answer the following questions in a 3-4 page paper:

What kinds of information do the recordings reveal?

Is this information reliable?

Why or why not?