

History 925

Slaves' Politics and the Politics of Slavery

Prof. Stephen Kantrowitz
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Fall 2009

Wednesday, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Office: 5110 Humanities
263-1844
skantrow@wisc.edu

This course explores the history of the United States, from the Revolution to the late nineteenth century, through the relationship between slavery and politics. It explores:

- critical developments in slavery (as an economic and social institution) and in American political life;
- the institutional and cultural connections between politics and slavery, ranging from slavery's shaping impact on American regionalism and economic development to the ways "slavery" functioned as a metaphor and as point of reference for a wide range of political actors;
- how ideas of "freedom" in the U.S. took their shape from ideas about and experiences of slavery;
- slaves' and freedpeople's political ideologies and expressions.

This syllabus contains a schedule of common readings, writing assignments, and "absent historiographies"--important themes in the scholarship which, while not fully represented on the syllabus proper, are essential background for students of the period.

Common readings focus primarily on the United States, but the syllabus as a whole seeks to direct students' attention outward.

First, the syllabus reaches out to comparative histories of slavery and emancipation; to recent developments in the histories dubbed "Atlantic World" and "African Diaspora"; and to transnational approaches broadly. All of the works available for individual reports emerge from or have been strongly influenced by one or more of these historiographies. We also have several weeks of common readings drawn from this work.

Second, the syllabus is sprinkled with interventions by literary scholars, who have done so much important recent work on this period, particularly in African American history. A full engagement with the scholarship on this era must encompass not only the run of historical journals (including but not limited to *The William and Mary Quarterly*, *The Journal of the Early Republic*, *The Journal of Southern History*, *Slavery & Abolition*, *JAH*, *AHR*, and many more), but also the last decades of *American Quarterly*, *American Literary History*, and others.

Readings

Books for purchase (Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative, 426 W. Gilman):

Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South*
Walter Johnson, *Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*

Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*

Martha S. Jones, *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830-1900*

Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America*

Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780-1860*

Drew Gilpin Faust, *James Henry Hammon and the Old South: A Design for Mastery*

Eric Foner, *Reconstruction, 1863-1877: America's Unfinished Revolution*

Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation*

Eugene Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World*

Robert Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity*
[we will read much but not all of this work]

Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity* [an excellent overview for those without much background; small portions are assigned for this course]

The above books should also be on 3-hour reserve at the WHS circulation desk.

Other readings available as follows:

Articles are available via MADCAT and "FindIt," or JSTOR, Project Muse, History Cooperative etc., all via the E-Resources Gateway at <http://library.wisc.edu>

Book chapters and excerpts are available via e-reserves for this course (accessible via MyUW or Learn@UW)

Requirements

This course requires you to read, to write, and to speak. The readings and writing assignments are described below; the requirement to speak is a less quantifiable but equally important part of your training as a working historian. I expect everyone to participate in each week's discussion, especially if you have not turned in a response or an individual report that week.

Writing Assignments

1) Individual Reports: Each student will choose one work from those listed under "reports" and produce a two-part paper.

The first part should be a book review of no more than 700 words that addresses the book on its own terms, providing a description of its main arguments, method, and sources, and a brief assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. The point of such a review is to provide scholars from related fields with a summary of sufficient sophistication that they can determine whether or not this book will be useful or important to their work.

The second part should be a reflection of 350-500 words addressing the work's relationship to the rest of the week's readings and, where relevant, prior readings from the course syllabus. This reflection should be couched as an argument or hypothesis about the implications of this work's arguments, methods, conclusions, or sources (or any combination of those) for work on U.S. slavery, emancipation, or politics. You may construe this assignment as broadly as you need to in order to make an interesting and sustainable argument.

Individual reports are due no later than 8 p.m. on the Tuesday before class and must be submitted via the "discussion" link on learn@UW. Your fellow students and I will read these reports before coming to seminar on Wednesday.

Note: Books for individual reports have not been placed on reserve. Once you have chosen a book, you should immediately seek it out in the library system or elsewhere.

2) Responses to Readings: All students must post six response essays--synthetic reflections on one week's readings, drawing out common themes, juxtaposing arguments or methods, or making other connections among and between the assigned materials. These responses should be 250+ words in length (but in no case longer than 500 words). They must be posted to the discussion list no later than midnight before Wednesday's class, but they may be posted as early as you wish. The "discussion" list is an open forum, which means that you may (and are encouraged to) read other student's postings. You may respond to prior postings, but your response must have an argumentative core that makes sense whether or not one has read the other postings.

Note that two of these responses--for the seminar meetings on Sept. 9 and Nov. 18--are required of all students. You may submit responses for any other four weeks in addition to these two.

3) Final Essay: All students will write an end-of-term essay of approximately 1500 words (including notes), to be turned in via the learn@UW "dropbox" no later than **8 pm, Dec. 16**. This essay should draw together the readings from three or more weeks of the syllabus (or the equivalent), possibly including a few additional texts drawn from relevant "absent" historiographies. You may think of the "responses" described above as trial runs for this paper, which should seek to make a comparatively broad claim or set of claims about a subset of the course readings. Your essay should identify a previously unarticulated but important theme or approach running through these works, challenge or modify an existing or emergent consensus or approach, or do some other, comparably significant intellectual work. You may engage the explicitly comparative or transnational works as much as you wish.

Grading

Participation in discussion:	30%
Individual report:	15%
6 responses @ 5%:	30%
Final essay:	25%

Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

Note that readings are assigned for our first meeting on Sept. 2. These will be available before late August via the learn@UW "content" link and/or library e-reserves for this course.

Sept 2: Starting Points

readings

Edward Baptist and Stephanie Camp, "Introduction: A History of the History of Slavery in the Americas," in *New Studies in the History of American Slavery*, 1-18

Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 3-19

Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37 (Fall 2003), 113-124

Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the History of Atlantic Slavery: Between Resistance and Oblivion," *American Historical Review [AHR]* (forthcoming).

absent historiography: African slave trade, colonial North American slavery

Sept 9: Slavery, the American Revolution, and African American Radicalism

readings

Edmund Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox," *The Journal of American History [JAH]* 59:1 (June 1972), 5-29.

F. Nwabueze Okoye, "Chattel Slavery as the Nightmare of the American Revolutionaries," *WMQ* 37:1 (Jan., 1980), pp. 4-28

François Furstenberg, "Beyond Freedom and Slavery: Autonomy, Virtue, and Resistance in Early American Political Discourse," *JAH* 89:4 (March 2003), 1295-1330.

Joanna Brooks, "The Early American Public Sphere and the Emergence of a Black Print Counterpublic," *The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series [WMQ]* 62:1 (Jan. 2005)

Manisha Sinha, "To 'cast just obliquely' on Oppressors: Black Radicalism in the Age of Revolution," *WMQ*, January 2007, 149-160?

reports

Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Liberty*

absent historiography: early national religious transformations ("Second Great Awakening"); New France and British North America; "Republicanism"

Writing

Reading these articles with care, and exploring their references to (and quarrels with) one another, what conclusions can you offer about the evolution of scholarship on the relationship between the American Revolution, slavery, and African Americans?

Sept 16: Revolutionary Slaves

readings

Eugene Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World*

Robin Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution," *WMQ* 63:4 (Oct. 2006), 643-674

James Sidbury, "Saint Domingue in Virginia: Ideology, Local Meanings, and Resistance to Slavery, 1790-1800," *Journal of Southern History [JSH]*, 63 (Aug. 1997)

Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World," *African Studies Review* 43:1 (April 2000), 11-45

reports

David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823*

Laurent DuBois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804*

absent historiography: Vesey conspiracy and Turner revolt; American marronage, Seminole Wars

Sept 23: Slavery and Freedom in the Making "North" and "South"

readings

Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South*

Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and 'Race' in New England, 1780-1860*, 1-10

Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 102-111, 230-244

Barbara J. Fields, "Conscript Slaves: The Problem of Free Blacks in a Dual System," ch. 4 of *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland in the Nineteenth Century*, 63-89

reports

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

Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*

absent historiography: Indian slavery and Indian slaveholding; New Spain and Mexico; free blacks in the early republic

Sept 30: Slave Culture, Hegemony, and Authority

readings

Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, 3-49, 587-660

Walter Johnson, *Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*

Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*, 1-61

Dylan C. Penningroth, "My People, My People: The Dynamics of Community in Southern Slavery," in Baptist and Camp, eds., *New Studies*

reports

Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, "African 'slavery' as an institution of marginality," in Miers and Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa* (Madison, 1977), 3-81 **and** Jonathan Glassman, "The Bondsman's New Clothes: The Contradictory Consciousness of Slave Resistance on the Swahili Coast," *Journal of African History*, 32 (1991), 277-312.

Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*

absent historiography: Stanley Elkins, John Blassingame, Deborah Gray White, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, James Oakes

Oct 7: The Emergence of African American Politics**readings**

Van Gosse, "'As a Nation, the English Are Our Friends': The Emergence of African American Politics in the British Atlantic World, 1772-1861," *AHR* 113 (Oct. 2008)

Shane White, "'It was a Proud Day': African Americans, Festivals, and Parades in the North, 1741-1834" *JAH* 81 (June 1994), 13-50

John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North*, 353-397

Martha Jones, *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830-1900*, 1-117

Robert S. Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity*, 1-143

reports

James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic*

Jeffrey Kerr-Ritchie, *Rites of August First: Emancipation Day in the Black Atlantic World*

absent historiography: Paul Gilroy; Wilson Moses

Oct 14: Varieties of Northern Antislavery**readings**

Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780-1860*

Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality*, xiii-64

reports

Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938*

Christopher L. Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism*

Thomas Bender et al., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation*

absent historiography: evolution of abolitionism; Free Soil and the Republican party; black emigration movements; fugitives and antislavery militancy in the 1840 and 1850s

Oct 21: Conjuring Blackness**readings**

Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*

David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, 95-131

Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, 3-37

absent historiography: immigration and nativism

Oct 28: Proslavery Politics

Drew Gilpin Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery*

Stephanie McCurry, "The Two Faces of Republicanism: Gender and Proslavery Politics in Antebellum South Carolina," *JAH* 78 (March 1992), 1245-1264

Kenneth Greenberg, "The Nose, the Lie, and the Duel in the Antebellum South," *AHR* 95 (1990), 57-74.

reports

Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550-1835*

Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom*

absent historiography: Antebellum Southern class politics; origins and political history of Secession; "Honor"; Antebellum Southern intellectual history; "race science" and scientific racism; free blacks in slave societies

Nov 4: Slavery, Slaves, and Civil War

readings

Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War*

Hahn, *Nation*, 62-115

reports

Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898*

Matthew Guterl, *American Mediterranean: Southern Slaveholders in the Age of Emancipation*

absent historiography: Wartime Republicans and Democrats; Confederate politics of slavery

Nov 11: America's Unfinished Revolution

readings

Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*

Michael Vorenberg, "Reconstruction as a Constitutional Crisis," in Thomas J. Brown, ed., *Reconstructions: New Perspectives on the Postbellum United States*, 141-171

report

Demetrius L. Eudell, *The Political Languages of Emancipation in the British Caribbean and the U.S. South*

Kim Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won: Afro-Brazilians in Post-Abolition Sao Paulo and Salvador*

absent historiography: state political studies of Reconstruction; Union slave states

Nov 18: Black Political Struggles in the South

readings

3 Steven Hahn, *Nation*, 116-363

§ Elsa Barkley Brown, "Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom"

report

Dylan Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth Century South*

James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa*

absent historiography: labor and commodity histories of Reconstruction

response: How successfully does Hahn's analysis of Reconstruction modify or challenge Foner's?

Nov. 25 – No Class Meeting

Dec 2: Emancipation and the "Woman Question"

readings

Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation*

Jones, *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830-1900*, 119-208

report

Pamela Scully and Diana Paton, eds., *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World*

absent historiography: the "rape-lynch" complex and "social equality"

Dec. 9: Postemancipation Societies in International Perspective

readings

Steven Hahn, "Class and State in Postemancipation Societies: Southern Planters in Comparative Perspective." *AHR* 95 (Feb. 1990): 75-98

Frederick Cooper, Thomas Holt, and Rebecca Scott, *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies*, introduction

Matthew Guterl and Christine Skwiot, "Atlantic and Pacific Crossings: Race, Empire, and 'the Labor Problem' in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Radical History Review* 2005 (91), 40-61

reports

Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation*

Rebecca Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery*

absent historiography: convict lease and convict labor; legal segregation and disfranchisement; Populism and white supremacy