

LAH5934 / WOH5932: Comparative Slavery

Fall 2025 | Thursdays 4:05-7:05 PM | Keene-Flint 229

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4:30PM & Wednesdays 3:30-4:30PM, Grinter 333

Course Description

This graduate seminar engages with classic works as well as the recent historiography on slavery studies in the Atlantic world to examine the various iterations of the institution between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Though slavery has been a part of human experience for millennia, it is not a static institution. How has it changed over time? How did different societies conceive of, and practiced, slavery? What distinguishes Ancient and Early Modern modes of slavery from colonial practices in the Americas? How did slavery function in different European empires? What explains the endurance of the institution in Brazil, Cuba, and the US South in the nineteenth century? In addition to these questions, we will also interrogate the values and limitations of comparative work, considering methodologies that rely on juxtaposition as well as new integrated comparisons that highlight the ways in which historical actors themselves understood different systems of slavery.

Course Objectives

- Introduce students to main historiographical debates and methodologies in comparative studies of slavery (weekly readings)
- Introduce students to important online repositories relating to the history of slavery in the Atlantic world (weekly presentations of databases)
- Students will build foundational knowledge on Atlantic slavery (weekly reaction papers)
- Students will use foundational knowledge to write a research paper intended as part of a thesis or dissertation (final paper)

Required Texts

All required texts are listed in the weekly schedule. Book orders have been placed with the UF Bookstore, and monographs are also available from online vendors. Some are available as Ebooks from UF Libraries.

Assignment & Grading

Seminar Leadership 5% (x2 = 10%)

Each student is responsible for leading discussions of the main text(s) in question three times over the course of the semester. We will organize seminar leadership on the first class meeting. Students in charge of leading seminar discussions are expected to A) introduce the author(s) of the work(s); B) summarize the main argument, sources, and methodology of the reading(s); C) provide three broad questions for discussion, to be circulated by 10am on the day of the meeting; D) prepare additional questions to ensure discussion moves forward.

Reaction Papers 30% (2.5%/week X 12)

A one or two-page, single spaced response to each week's main text (monograph) that records your main insights from engaging with the work.

Participation 20%

Evidence of completing all assigned readings by engaging actively during each weekly meeting, including: responding to the questions posed by the week's presenter; engaging other classmates in analysis; and posing questions of your own for others to consider. Attendance in graduate seminars is traditionally required for all class meetings. Excused absences upon extenuating circumstances with proper notification only.

Final Paper 40%

In consultation with the instructor and their adviser, each student will develop one of the following:

- a historiography paper that serves as preparation for a Qualifying Exam field or related use
- a research paper intended as part of a thesis or dissertation, provided it relates to slavery in one of the contexts under scope in the seminar

Grading scale

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|----|-----------|--|----|----------|
| A | 94 – 100% | | C | 74 – 76% |
| A- | 90 – 93% | | C- | 70 – 73% |
| B+ | 87 – 89% | | D+ | 67 – 69% |
| B | 84 – 86% | | D | 64 – 66% |
| B- | 80 – 83% | | D- | 60 – 63% |
| C+ | 77 – 79% | | E | <60 |

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

- I. Aug. 21: Introduction: The field of comparative slavery**
 - Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave & Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992 [1946])

**no reaction paper this week*
- II. Aug. 28: Captivity in the Mediterranean**
 - Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Cornell University Press, 2009) [available online @ UFLib]
- III. Sep. 4: Africa and The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade**
 - Toby Green, *The rise of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in western Africa, 1300-1589* (Cambridge UP, 2012) [available online @ UFLib]
- IV. Sep. 11: Slavery & empire building, I: enslaving the natives**
 - John Monteiro, *Blacks of the Land: Indian Slavery, Settler Society, and the Portuguese Colonial Enterprise in South America*, trans. James Woodward and Barbara Weinstein (Cambridge University Press, 2018) [available online @ UFLib]
- V. Sep. 18: Slavery & empire building, II: African colonists**
 - David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640* (Omohundro and UNC Press, 2016)
- VI. Sep. 25: Slavery & empire building, III: Asian slaves in the global Spanish Empire**
 - Tatiana Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico: From Chinos to Indians* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) [available online @ UFLib]
- VII. Oct. 2: The South Atlantic: Africa**
 - Mariana Candido, *An African Slaving Port and the Atlantic World: Benguela and its Hinterland* [available online @UFLib]
- VIII. Oct. 9: The South Atlantic: Brazil**
 - Mary Hicks, *Captive Cosmopolitans: Black Mariners and the World of South Atlantic Slavery* (OI and UNC Press, 2024)
- IX. Oct. 16: New directions in comparative slavery, I: Religion and slavery**
 - Katharine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic* (Penn, 2018)
- X. Oct. 23: New directions in comparative slavery, II: Integrated comparison**

- Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2014) [hard copy on reserve @LibWest, also available online @ UFLib]

XI. Oct. 30: New directions in comparative slavery, III: legal history beyond Tannenbaum

- Alejandro de la Fuente and Ariela Gross, *Becoming Free, Becoming Black: Race, Freedom, and Law in Cuba, Virginia, and Louisiana* (Cambridge University Press, 2020) [available online @ UFLib]

XII. Nov. 6: New Perspectives: Slavery & Disability

- Stefanie Hunt-Kennedy, *Between Fitness and Death: Disability and Slavery in the Caribbean* (University of Illinois Press, 2020).

XIII. Nov. 13: Methods for thinking and writing comparatively: from source to publication

- Fernanda Bretones Lane, "Free to Bury Their Dead: Baptism and the Meanings of Freedom in the Eighteenth-Century Caribbean," *Slavery & Abolition*, 42:3 (2021): 449-465 [Canvas]
- Vincent Brown, *The Reapers' Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* [Chapter 2 and 4, available online @UFLib]
- Selected documents from The National Archives (Kew) and the Archivo General de Indias (Seville), courtesy of Prof. Bretones

** no reaction paper this week; no student leading seminar. We will take this opportunity to talk about research methods and how to publish in academic journals*

XIV. Nov. 20: Final thoughts on method: The second slavery perspective

- Dale Tomich, "The Second Slavery and World Capitalism: A Perspective for Historical Inquiry," *International Review of Social History* 63:3 (2018): 477–501 [Canvas]
- Dale Tomich, "Small Islands and Huge Comparisons: Caribbean Plantations, Historical Unevenness, and Capitalist Modernity," *Social Science History*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1994): 339-358.
- Rafael Marquese, Tâmis Parron, and Márcia Berbel, *Slavery & Politics: Brazil and Cuba, 1790-1850*, trans. Leonardo Marques (University of New Mexico Press, 2016), selected excerpt [available online @ UFLib]

**exceptionally this week, your reaction paper will cover multiple readings; it must address the three articles listed above into one cohesive response.*

THANKSGIVING BREAK NOV. 24-28: NO CLASS

FINAL PAPERS DUE DECEMBER 3 at 9AM.

Suggested further reading

Reference collections:

The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas, Edited by Mark Smith and Robert Paquette (2010).

The Cambridge World History of Slavery, 4 volumes.

Las Siete Partidas, 5 volumes. Edited by Robert I. Burns, S.J.; translated by Samuel Parsons Scott [volume 4 contains the laws on slavery]

Monographs:

Beckles, Hilary, and Verene Shepherd, eds. *Caribbean Slave Society and Economy: A Student Reader*. New York: New Press, 1991.

Beckles, Hilary. *White Servitude, Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627–1715*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989.

Berbel, Márcia, Rafael Marquese, and Tâmis Parron. *Slavery and Politics: Brazil and Cuba, 1790–1850*. Trans. Leonardo Marques. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016.

Bergard, Laird. *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*.

Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Harvard University Press, 1998.

Bonazza, Giulia. *Abolitionism and the Persistence of Slavery in Italian States, 1750–1850*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2019.

Borucki, Alex, David Eltis, and David Wheat (Eds.). *From the Galleons to the Highlands: Slave Trade Routes in the Spanish Americas*. University of New Mexico Press, 2020.

Bryant, Sherwin, Sarah O'Toole, and Ben Vinson III (Eds.). *Africans to Spanish America: Expanding the Diaspora* (2012). Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012.

Craton, Michael. *Empire, Enslavement, and Freedom in the Caribbean*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 1997.

Davis, David Brion. *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Drescher, Seymour. *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

Dunn, Richard S. *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624–1713*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Johnson, Walter. *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*. Harvard University Press, 2000.

- Johnson, Walter. *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*. Belknap Press, 2013.
- Klein, Herbert S. and Ben Vinson III. *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Klein, Herbert and Francisco Vidal Luna. *Slavery in Brazil*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Landers, Jane. *Black Society in Spanish Florida*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Landers, Jane G., and Barry Robinson. *Slaves, Subjects, and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006.
- Mattoso, Kátia M. de Queirós. *To Be a Slave in Brazil, 1550–1888*. Rutgers University Press, 1986 [1979].
- Miller, Joseph. *The Problem of Slavery as History: A Global Approach*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.
- Morgan, Jennifer L. *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*. University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.
- Morgan, Philip D. *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Low Country*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Phillips, William. *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.
- Phillips, William. *Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.
- Restall, Matthew. *Beyond Black and Red: African-Native Relations in Colonial Latin America*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005.
- Rushforth, Brett. *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012.
- Schwartz, Stuart. *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia 1550–1835*. Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Stone, Erin Woodruff. *Captives of Conquest: Slavery in the Early Modern Spanish Caribbean*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021.
- Tomich, Dale Paul Lovejoy (Eds), *The Atlantic and Africa: The Second Slavery and Beyond*
- Turner, Sasha. *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.
- Williams, Eric. *Capitalism & Slavery*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014 [1944].

Peer-Reviewed Journals:

Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies is a well-established and main reference journal for slavery studies. The journal is “devoted in its entirety to a discussion of the demographic, socio-economic, historical and psychological aspects of human bondage from the ancient period to the present.” At the end of every calendar year, it publishes “Slavery: Annual Bibliographical Supplement.”

Journal of Global Slavery: a relatively new (est. 2016) Brill publication, JGS articles range in scope, methodology, and approaches. The journal’s board awards the Paul E. Lovejoy Prize “for excellence and originality in a major work (defined as a monograph or feature documentary) on any theme related to global slavery” on an annual basis.

Afro-Ásia: published in open-access by the Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais (Center for Afro-Oriental Studies) at the Federal University of Bahia (Brazil) with research articles and book reviews dedicated to African, Asian, and Afro-diasporic content. Though not exclusively about slavery, the majority of articles do center on slavery, abolition, and post-emancipation topics, making this journal an important reference for Portuguese-language scholarship.

Databases:

- Slave Societies Digital Archive <https://slavesocieties.org/home>
- Enslaved: Peoples of the Historical Slave Trade <https://enslaved.org/>
- Slave Biographies: The Atlantic Database Network <http://slavebiographies.org/>
- Slave Voyages – Trans-Atlantic and Intra-American Slave Trade Database <https://www.slavevoyages.org/>
- The Slavery Image Database <http://slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/page/welcome>
- Documenta Palmares <https://www.palmares.ifch.unicamp.br/>
- Yale Slavery and Abolition Portal <https://slavery.yale.edu/>
- Digital Library of the Caribbean <https://www.dloc.com/>
- Early American Sources <https://www.earlyamericansources.org/databases>
- Early Encounters in North America: Peoples, Cultures, and the Environment <https://alexanderstreet.com/products/early-encounters-north-america-peoples-cultures-and-environment>
- Digital Library on American Slavery <http://dlas.uncg.edu/>
- Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery <https://www.daacs.org/>
- Liberated Africans <https://www.liberatedafricans.org/>
- Texas Slavery Project <http://www.texasslaveryproject.org/>
- Freedom on the Move <https://freedomonthemove.org/>
- Le Marronnage dans le Monde Atlantique <http://www.marronnage.info/en/metho.php>
- Mapping Marronage <http://mapping-marronage.rll.lsa.umich.edu/>

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>