

## **HIS 715**

### **The Atlantic Slave Trade**

Fall 2006  
W 6:30-9:20  
Classroom: HHRA 2210

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**Office hours: W 3:30-5:30 pm and by appointment (HHRA 2106)**

#### **Course Synopsis**

The transatlantic slave trade lasted for over four hundred years and was responsible for the largest migration of people in the early modern Atlantic world. This course introduces students to the range of significant historical themes and issues that played out in this process, the major trends in the historiography, and the variety of historical sources that are available. We will analyze the transatlantic slave trade as part of a sophisticated economic system and as a powerful shaper of societies and cultures across the Atlantic world, as well as a brutal racialized form of human exploitation. We will also explore the pedagogical challenges of teaching this complex and highly-charged topic.

#### **Readings**

The following books can be purchased at the university book store:

Equiano, Olaudah, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*. Various editions.

Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*. Second Edition. (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Sidney Mintz and Richard Price. *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Beacon Press, 1992).

David Northrup, ed., *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. Second Edition. (Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

Barbara L. Solow, ed., *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995).

Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*.

Barry Unsworth, *Sacred Hunger* (Doubleday, 1992).

If you obtain your books elsewhere be sure to get the right edition.

There will also be some material on e-reserves, accessible via the course Blackboard site, and on reserve in the library.

**Requirements**

As in any graduate course, regular attendance and enthusiastic engagement with the course materials and with your fellow classmates is expected.

***Class Presentations***

Beginning with Unit 2, two students will lead the class discussion each week, informed by additional readings related to the topic. See the sign-up sheet.

***Book Reviews***

In addition to the class readings, each student will read two additional books about the transatlantic slave trade and write a 2-4 page review of each book, to be distributed and presented in class. See the sign-up sheet.

***Blackboard Responses***

Students will submit responses to the class readings via the class Blackboard site for at least ten weeks of the course. You must post at least twice for each unit, but otherwise it is entirely your choice which weeks you post. Postings are due by 10 pm every Monday.

Blackboard posting should reflect a thoughtful and critical reading of the week's assignment. Feel free to pose questions you have about the reading or the topic, and raise issues we might continue to discuss in class. You are also encouraged to respond to and disagree with your fellow students' ideas (courteously, of course).

Make sure you read and think about the week's postings, and come to class prepared to continue and expand upon the discussions that begin on Blackboard.

***Historiographic Essay***

The final project for this course will be to prepare an annotated bibliography around one clearly-defined theme related to the slave trade, with an accompanying historiographic essay. Choose a topic that is related to one of the fields you are preparing for your exams, or to a research paper you are writing, a teaching field that interests you, an exhibit you might develop, or some other aspect of your interests as a budding historian. The bibliography should include a variety of monographs, anthologies, journal articles, archival collections, Internet sites, and primary sources.

Some examples of suitable topics for the final paper include: the changing role of one European power in the transatlantic slave trade; the impact of slavery and the slave trade on a specific part of the Atlantic world (defined geographically, geopolitically or temporally); a debate in the historiography; comparisons of two areas; or a sub-theme (for example, development of laws related to the slave trade).

You should have identified a topic and begun to get a sense of the resources available by the end of Unit 1.

**Unit 1: The Transatlantic Slave Trade as an Historical Topic**

***Wednesday, August 16: Course Introduction***

***Wednesday, August 23: Thematic Overview***

Herbert Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*

***Wednesday, August 30: Linchpin of the Atlantic System***

Barbara Solow, ed., *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System*

**Unit 2: Major Historiographic Debates**

***Wednesday, September 6: The Williams Thesis***

Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*

***Wednesday, September 13: Which Came First: Enslavement or Racism?***

Articles on e-reserves

***Wednesday, September 20: African Agency and the Impact on Africa***

Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*

***Wednesday, September 27: Impact of the Middle Passage***

Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture*

**Unit 3: Evaluating Primary Sources**

***Wednesday, October 4: Silences in the Historical Record***

Michel-Rolf Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*

***Wednesday, October 11: Autobiography***

Olaudah Equiano, *The Life of Olaudah Equiano*

***Wednesday, October 18: Shipping Records***

*Logbook of the Slave Ship Christopher* (on reserve)

***Wednesday, October 25: Databases***

*The Atlantic Slave Trade: A CD Rom Database* (on reserve)

**Unit 4: Teaching the Atlantic Slave Trade**

***Wednesday, November 2: Breadth vs. Depth***

David Northrup, ed., *The Atlantic Slave Trade*

***Wednesday, November 9: Visual Evidence***

<http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/>><http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery>

and articles on e-reserves

***Wednesday, November 16: Films***

Films on reserve

***Wednesday, November 29: Fiction***

Barry Unsworth, *Sacred Hunger*