

HIS-511C-01 – Seminar in Historical Research and Writing  
CENTRAL AFRICA AND THE ATLANTIC WORLD  
Fall Semester 2003

Wednesday Evenings 6:00 - 8:50, McIver 222

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 11 AM - 12 noon, and by appointment

Course objectives:

How much and in what ways have Africans transformed cultures in the Americas? In this course we will begin to examine this and other questions by investigating the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the forced migration of Africans to the Americas. We will focus on central Africa in particular, and study the original homelands of most of the captives who unwillingly took part in the Middle Passage. We will also engage with an historical debate about the role of Africans and their cultural backgrounds in the forming of New World societies. Were peoples from west central Africa culturally similar, or were they distinctly different from each other? How does one begin to try and answer this question? And what difference does the answer to it make when we try to assess Americans' African heritage? In our explorations we will also be learning about the writing of history -- what historiography is, how to test historical argument, and the value of debate and disagreement in advancing historical knowledge.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

At the completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the cultural geography of west central Africa;
- Summarize the major points at issue in the Frazier-Herskovits debate and explain the significance of the debate for American history;
- Assess some of the specific evidence of African contributions to Gullah culture.

Undergraduate course requirements:

7 short writing assignments, to be handed in and also for use in class discussions (together, worth 30% of final grade); attendance, attentiveness, participation in class discussions, and written summaries of group presentations (together, worth 20% of final grade); and an original research paper based on primary sources documenting Gullah culture, including an appendix listing and assessing that evidence (maximum 10 pp. plus appendix, together worth 50% of final grade).

Graduate course requirements:

7 short writing assignments, to be handed in and also for use in class discussions, and a book review and seminar presentation (together, worth 30% of final grade); attendance, attentiveness, participation in class discussions, and written summaries of group presentations (together, worth 20% of final grade); and an original research paper based on primary sources documenting Gullah culture, including an appendix listing and assessing that evidence (maximum 20 pp. plus appendix, together worth 50% of final grade).