

History 366:
Comparative Slavery in the Americas
Fall 2009

Professor D. Michael Bottoms
Tues., Thurs., 1:30-2:45, Robinson B202
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Course Description

For many Americans, the history of slavery is synonymous with the United States South. Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction have had both obvious and subtle influences on American race relations, and American life in general, ever since. But slavery, as an “American” institution, was neither limited to the United States, nor were the practices, rules, or experiences of slavery in the United States representative of slavery in other regions. The institution of slavery as it developed in the United States, moreover, evolved within a wider web of enslavement, trade, and race relations throughout the Atlantic world. An understanding of slavery and slave institutions from a comparative perspective, therefore, can assist us in deepening our understanding of the intricacies and legacies of slavery in the United States, and throughout the Americas.

One of the more dominant early works on comparative slavery in the Americas was Frank Tannenbaum’s, *Slave and Citizen*. His conclusions on the nature of slavery in Protestant North America and the Catholic colonies of Spain, Portugal, and France, and how the differences in slavery resulted in different modern race relations, have driven debates on the nature of slavery throughout the Americas since its original publication.

More important than Tannenbaum’s principle thesis is his invitation for students of slavery to approach the subject comparatively. Thus, the primary goal of this class will be to follow his example and approach slavery through the specific and comparative exploration of the experiences of slaves throughout the Americas in order to gain a deeper understanding of slavery as an institution and slaves as historical actors. We will trace, for example, the evolution of economies based upon slave labor. We will question whether slaves in different regions, colonies, and countries had different opportunities to form families, to create cultures, to rebel, and to labor for their own benefit. We will focus on the interactions of African cultural visions and Christianity, paying close attention to the different opportunities and restrictions that Catholicism and Protestantism placed on the articulation of Afro-American religiosity and worship. And finally, we will explore the varied methods by which slavery came to an end throughout the Americas, and how that might have affected the shape of modern race relations.

To provide such a comparative perspective we will focus on the experiences of slaves in the United States, Brazil, and the Caribbean. In some instances, we will also discuss slavery in mainland Spanish America including Mexico, Peru, and Columbia.

Course Requirements:

Specific Response Paper	10%
Gen. Response Papers	20%
Midterm	20%
Final Paper/Project	30%
Discussion	20%

Required Texts:

There are two required texts for the course:

- Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas*.
- Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy*.

Course Web Page: This course will make extensive use of a course website to communicate outside of class, post guidelines, assignments, and announcements. Many of the readings for the course will also be posted on the course website in pdf form. To enroll:

- Go to <https://gmu.blackboard.com/webct/logonDisplay.dowebct?JSESSIONIDVISTA=h31gLIxWWwd3N9bgnN80TgXCm2cvFMmMdYNDcg3t2Wzf1GgvsGTj!-1633875282!gmu.blackboard.com!80!443&insId=5116001&insName=George%20Mason%20University&glcid=URN:X-WEBCT-VISTA-V1:efed6456-7f00-0001-01b7-47060fd78625> and follow the instructions for setting up your computer, and for logging on to Blackboard. You may also access the Blackboard page by using the “Quick Links” menu on the Mason home page (www.gmu.edu).

Writing Assignments:

In this course you will write three short critical response papers directly related to one week’s reading, a take-home midterm, and a longer, final paper. Below are the basic topics that each essay will cover; more specific details about each assignment will be provided later in the semester, along with guidelines for successful essay writing. Due dates are clearly marked in the weekly schedule below. In this course, we will be going “paperless” as far as possible. All papers will be submitted electronically via email as a MS Word document. Late papers will be reduced by one-third of a grade each day (e.g. from B+ to B to B-).

Specific Response Paper (4-5 pages)

All students will write a critical response paper based upon the Freyre and Tannenbaum readings. The paper should be no more than 5 double-spaced pages. The purpose of the paper is to identify the principle arguments made by the authors as they relate to slavery and post-abolition race relations, and their success in proving those theses. The goal is not only to present a summary of the arguments, but to critically reflect upon them.

General Response Papers (2-3 pages)

Each student will write two (2) response papers to the reading assignments for a given week due via email attachment by 10am on Thursday (the major exception is that you can write on the “Origins” readings and submit your paper Tues, Sept. 8. You may select the weeks on which you wish to write, provided that one comes before the midterm and one after the midterm. Each paper should be approximately 2-3 typed double-spaced pages. The purpose of these writing

assignments is for the student to identify some of the key issues for that week's reading and grapple with those issues. They are not meant, however, to be summaries of the readings, rather they should be thoughtful responses to the issues raised in the readings. **It might be helpful to put the particular readings for which you write in conversation with Tannenbaum and Freyre.** Furthermore, students will write two (2) questions for the discussion section for that week's readings in order to facilitate discussion. Please be aware that these response papers are *in addition* to the response paper on the Tannenbaum/Freyre readings.

Midterm (6-8 pages)

The midterm will be a 6-8 typed, double-spaced page paper based upon the readings. You will not be required to do any extra outside readings for the midterm. Questions for the midterm will be handed out in class one week before the due date.

Final Paper (12 pages)

Students will be required to submit one research paper (12 page min) based upon primary **and** secondary research. Students are free to select the topic of their research provided that it falls within the broad outlines of the course. The professor must approve all research topics in advance. **Students are required to base their papers on primary research.** Specific instructions regarding deadlines for topics, bibliographies, and outlines will be provided later in the semester. The final paper is due no later than the final exam period, but you should feel free to turn it in before that should you so desire.

Grading Standards for Writing Assignments:

An "A" essay contains a clearly stated, concise, argumentative, and original thesis supported by relevant evidence. The argument is developed, and carried through, the entire essay and demonstrates the student's ability to independently evaluate the ideas presented in the course. Finally, an "A" essay is polished, i.e. it is free of grammatical or spelling errors, and awkward language.

A "B" essay ably summarizes the materials presented in the course, but typically lacks an original, argumentative, or well-conceived thesis. The essay demonstrates understanding of the course materials, but does not quite rise to the level of creative, independent analysis. A "B" essay is relatively free of grammatical errors.

A "C" essay presents information relevant to the essay topic without any clear organizing principle, or contains significant weaknesses in expression.

An essay that earns a grade lower than "C" generally fails to address the thrust of the assignment, contains numerous grammatical errors, and generally lacks coherence.

Late Policy: Late papers will be reduced by a third of a grade for each day after the due date (e.g. from B+ to B to B-) Papers received in a format I am unable to open, or as corrupted files will be considered late.

EXCEPTION: THE TAKE-HOME MIDTERM MUST BE TURNED IN ON TIME; NO LATE EXAMS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Participation

This course is designed as a seminar in which learning will be a community experience bearing community responsibilities. While attendance is, of course, mandatory, *participation* in the bi-weekly class meetings is essential to success in the course. By enrolling in this course you are promising your fellow students that you will contribute to their learning by coming to class prepared to actively engage in a vigorous conversation about the course materials. The discussions should not be seen as weekly tests to see if you've done the reading, but rather as opportunities to wrestle with the larger ideas presented in the course.

Grading Standards for Class Participation:

A student who earns an "A" for class participation attends each meeting, completes all assignments in advance of the meeting, and comes prepared with questions and issues about the readings. This student regularly participates in vigorous and relevant debate while remaining respectful of other students' positions.

A student who earns a "B" for class participation regularly attends class meetings having completed all the assignments, but does not always come with questions and issues in mind. This student is normally respectful of others' ideas, but only intermittently participates in discussions. Other students who earn a "B" will offer personal insights that are only tangentially related to the discussion or readings at hand.

A student who earns a "C" for class participation regularly attends class meetings and listens attentively, but rarely participates in class discussions.

A student who earns a grade lower than "C" is consistently unprepared, unwilling to participate in discussion, or regularly misses class.

Academic Integrity

This class will follow the rules laid down by the George Mason University Honor Code (<http://honorcode.gmu.edu/>). Students who violate that code through academic dishonesty will face a most unforgiving Honor Committee.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Add/Drop Deadlines

Last Day to Add (Full-Semester Course) September 15, 2009

Last Day to Drop (Full-Semester Course) October 2, 2009

Selective Withdrawal Period (Full-Semester Course) October 5 – October 30, 2009

IN CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER:

Upon occasion, the university is forced to either open late or cancel classes altogether. There are several ways to learn about the status of the university during such times. You may:

- Check your Mason email account for Mason Alerts
- Check the University Web Page at www.gmu.edu for updates
- Call the university’s main switchboard at 703-993-2474
- Check the course Blackboard page for messages from me

In rare instances, I may be forced to cancel class for weather related reasons even if the university is open for classes. In such instances, I will post a message on the course Blackboard page.

*****NOTE:** This syllabus is a working document and is subject to change. Any changes will, of course, be widely and repeatedly advertised.

Weekly Schedule:

Week I: Origins

Tues. 9/1: Introduction

Thurs. 9/3: “Origins: Perspectives from Europe and the Americas”
Readings:
Anthony Parent, Jr., “The Labor Switch,” from *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660-1740* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2003): 55-79.

Stuart Schwartz, “Indian Labor and New World Plantations: European Demands and Indian Responses in Northeastern Brazil,” *The American Historical Review* 83:1 (1978): 43-79.

Week II: Origins (cont.) and Theoretical Beginnings

Tues. 9/8: “Origins: Perspective from the Americas”
Readings:
David Eltis, “Europeans and the Rise and Fall of African Slavery in the Americas: An Interpretation,” *The American Historical Review* 98:5 (1993): 1399-1423.

Thurs. 9/10: “Theoretical Foundations”
Readings:
Gilberto Freyre, “Preface to Second English Language Edition,” from *The Masters and the Slaves*, xvii-lxx.

Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen*, **entire**
SPECIFIC RESPONSE PAPER DUE

Week III: Labor and the Slaves' Economy

- Tues 9/15: "Slave Labor"
Readings:
Philip Morgan, "Work and Culture: The Task System and the World of Lowcountry Blacks, 1700-1880," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 39:4 (1982):563-599.
- Thurs. 9/17: "The Slaves' Economy"
Readings:
Bert Barickman, "'A Bit of Land, Which They Call *Roça*': Slave Provision Grounds in the Bahian Recôcavo, 1780-1860." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 74:4 (1994): 45-74.
- John Campbell, "As 'A Kind of Freedman?': Slaves' Market-Related Activities in the South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860," *Slavery and Abolition* 12:1 (1991): 131-70.

Week IV: Demography and the Slave Family

- Tues. 9/22: "Demography"
Readings:
Michael Tadman, "The Demographic Cost of Sugar: Debates on Slave Societies and Natural Increase in the Americas," *American Historical Review* 105:5 (2000): 1534-71.
- Thurs. 9/24: "The Slave Family in the United States"
Readings:
Herbert Gutman, Ch. 2-3 from *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 44-145.

Week V: Slave Family and Slave Women

- Tues. 9/29: "The Slave Family"
Readings:
Mary Karasch, "Marriage and Family Groups," from *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro*, 287-98.
- Stuart Schwartz, "Opening the Family Circle: Godparentage in Brazilian Slavery," from *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery*, 137-60.
- Brenda Stevenson, Ch 7 from *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South*, 206-25.
- Thurs. 10/1: "Women and Slavery"
Readings:

Thelma Jennings, “‘Us Colored Women Had to Go Through A Plenty’: Sexual Exploitation and African American Women,” *Journal of Women’s History* (1990): 45-74.

Catherine Clinton, “Caught in the Web of the Big House: Women and Slavery,” in *The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and Education* (Athens: U of Georgia Press, 1985): 19-34.

Week VI: Manumission and Free People of Color

Tues. 10/6:

“Access to Freedom”

Readings:

Orlando Paterson, “Manumission” from *Slavery and Social Death*, 262-71.

Stephan Whitman, “Diverse Good Causes: Manumission and the Transformation of Urban Slavery,” *Social Science History*, 19:3 (1995): p. 333-70.

Frank Proctor, “Gender and the Manumission of Slaves in New Spain,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* May 2006, 83: 309-336.

Thurs. 10/8:

“Free People of Color”

Readings:

Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, “Strategies for Survival: Free Negro Families and the Problem of Slavery,” from *Joy and Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South, 1830-1900*. ed. Carol Bleser, 88-102.

B.J. Barickman and Martha Few, “Ana Paulinha de Queiros, Joaquina da Costa, and Their Neighbors: Free Women of Color as Household Heads in Rural Bahia (Brazil), 1835,” from *Beyond Bondage: Free Women of Color in the Americas*, eds. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, 145-168.

MIDTERM HANDED OUT IN CLASS

Week VII: Midterm and Meetings

Tues. 10/13:

No Class

Thurs. 10/15:

Meetings with Professor to Discuss Paper Topics

MIDTERM DUE

Week VIII: Slaveholder Culture

Tues. 10/20:

“Slaveholder Culture in the United States”

Readings:

Jeffrey R. Young, "Ideology and Death on a Savannah River Plantation, 1833-1867: Paternalism Amidst 'A Good Supply of Disease and Pain,'" *The Journal of Southern History* 59:4 (1993): 673-706.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "'Our Family, White and Black': Family and Household in the Southern Slaveholders' World View," from *In Joy and In Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South, 1830-1900*. ed. Carol Bleser, 69-87.

Thurs. 10/22:

"Slaveholder Culture in Brazil and the Caribbean"

Readings:

Stuart Schwartz, "The Planters: Masters of Men and Cane," from *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550-1835*, 264-294.

Week IX: Theories on Slave Culture

Tues. 10/27:

"Africa in America"

Readings:

Philip Morgan, "The Cultural Implications of the Atlantic Slave Trade: African Regional Origins, American Destinations and New World Developments," *Slavery and Abolition* 18:1 (1997): 122-45.

John Thornton, "African Cultural Groups in the Atlantic World," from *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 183-205*.

Thurs. 10/29:

"African Religious Survivals and More"

Readings:

James Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the Afro-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 2003): TBA.

Week X: Slave Religion

Tues. 11/3:

"Slave Religion in the United States"

Readings:

Albert J. Raboteau, "African-Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel," in *African American Christianity: Essays in History*, Paul Johnson, ed., (Berkeley: U of California Press): 1-17.

Charles Joyner, "'Believer I Know': The Emergence of African-American Christianity," in *African American Christianity*, 18-46.

Thurs. 11/5:

Meeting with Professor to discuss papers

Week XI: Slave Religion (cont.)

Tues. 11/10: **Meeting with Professor to discuss papers**

Thurs. 11/12: “Slave Religion in Brazil”
Film: Africa in the Americas and Voices of the Orishas

Robert Voeks, *Sacred Leaves of Candomblé: African magic, Medicine, and Religion in Brazil*, 51-68 & 147-60.

Week XII: Resistance

Tues. 11/17: “What is ‘Resistance’”
Readings:
Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, 597-660.

Javier Villa-Flores, “‘To lose one’s soul’: blasphemy and slavery in New Spain, 1596-1669” *HAHR* 82:3 (2002): 435-468.

Thurs. 11/19: “Slave Resistance and Flight”
Readings:
Stuart Schwartz, “Resistance and Accommodation in Eighteenth-Century Brazil: The Slaves’ View of Slavery,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 57:1 (1977): 69-81.

Week XIII: Rebellion

Tues. 11/24: “Slave Rebellion”
Readings:
João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Bahia*, 73-233. (Focus on 73-188).

Thurs. 11/26: Thanksgiving Break

Week XIV: Emancipation

Tues. 12/1: “Emancipation in Brazil”
Readings:
Rebecca Scott, “Defining the Boundaries of Freedom in the World of Cane: Cuba, Brazil, and Louisiana After Emancipation.” *The American Historical Review* 99:1 (1994), 70-102.

Thurs. 12/3: “Comparative Emancipation”
Readings:
Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom* **entire**

Week XV:

Tues. 12/8: Reading Day (an extra one)

Thurs. 12/10:

Reading Day

FINAL PAPER DUE VIA EMAIL BY 4:15PM THURSDAY DEC. 17