

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Department of History and African American Studies Program
AAS 514/HI 584

Labor, Sexuality, and Resistance in the Afro-Atlantic World

Prof John K. Thornton

Friday, 11:15-2:00 (please note, this is the class time, we will finish at 2)

Meets at AA 101

Office: African American Studies Center, 138 Mountfort, Director's Office

Office Hours MWF 9-10, and by appointment

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This course explores how Africans brought to the Americas lived during the period before the Abolition of Slavery. Themes will include African origins, the history of labor relations in the Atlantic world, social relations especially focusing on gender and sexuality, and understanding the nature of resistance by Africans and their descendants to the social relations in which they were enmeshed.

This course will be largely discussion-based, anchored on weekly key readings. These readings represent the leading literature in the field, and explore the most important controversies and themes that have interested historians of the African Diaspora in the past 40 years.

Each class will be structured around an interrelated group of readings, mostly either as excerpts from books or as articles. It is absolutely essential that each student read all readings and attend each class. Please advise me in advance if you will be missing a class if this is possible. The excerpts will be available on-line on the course website, see the listing under AA514 on Blackboard. In addition you will be required to purchase the following books:

James Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese world, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). ISBN 0807854824

Hilary Beckles, *Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Society* (Ian Randle 1999) ISBN 0852557728

Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny & Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (U of North Carolina Press, 2004) ISBN 0807855251 pbk

C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. (Vintage, 1989). ISBN 9780679724674

Also available online as a free download at:

http://www.ouleft.org/wp-content/uploads/CLR_James_The_Black_Jacobins.pdf

Written course work will consist of **four papers** of approximately 5 pages in length in which summarize and then evaluate the reading for that week, followed by a **final paper** (see below for fuller details). All written work will be submitted as e-mail attachments to jkthorn@bu.edu (my email address). The choice of weeks to write on will be determined on the first day of class.

Those **students who are writing essays will be expected to take the lead in the discussion** that week. To do this, read the texts carefully and think about questions you might highlight, for example, what is the author's primary intent in this piece, and did he or she achieve it? If there are multiple texts, how do they fit together, can we understand why there are differences in positions? Other students in the class should also think of their own questions, either factual or conceptual that are raised by the reading. The quality of the discussion will depend very heavily on not just doing the reading, but thinking about it and having questions or comments to make.

The **short papers** should first outline the principal arguments in each of the readings dealt with on that day, and then proceed to produce an evaluation of the readings on their own and in the context of the others. As a rule of thumb, of the five pages, about three should be descriptive and the remaining two evaluative. In order to increase the quality of the paper, students should do some outside reading, for example reviews of books, or if relevant commentary on articles found by searching on GoogleScholar or other scholarly websites. Students leading the class should use these reviews also to guide their discussion.

In addition to the short papers, each student should write a **research paper**. This paper can focus on any theme that the class has dealt with, and should include an overview of how other historians have addressed the question, as well as insights from your own research, which should include **primary sources** that are available to you. Please consult with the instructor before embarking on the research. Each student will make a short oral progress report on the last day the class meets. This paper will be due on the day the class would have its examination if there were an examination (not yet posted).

Ten per cent of your grade will be based on my assessment of your participation in class, then each short essay will be worth 15% to a total of 60% of the grade, and the final paper will be worth 30% of the grade.

Papers are due on the day the class meets by 1:00 pm (as determined by the date given your message by my email account). If you have reasons to believe you cannot make this date and time, inform me and discuss options. Late papers will be assessed a grade reduction of one third of a grade (ie an A becomes an A-) for each class session that the paper is late, but no paper will fail simply because of lateness. I expect each student to produce independent papers though I encourage students to discuss their ideas with each

other and read and comment on each other's papers. Plagiarized papers will be dealt with according to the CAS Academic Conduct Code.

Schedule of Reading/Classes

Class 1, 20 January. Introduction and Assignments

Class 2, 27 January. Slavery and Labor.

David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1-84.

Linda Heywood and John Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1665* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 294-332.

Class 3, 3 February. Slavery, the Slave Trade and its Impact in Africa

Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery. A History of Slavery in Africa* (2nd edition, Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 45-139

Linda Heywood, "Slavery and its Transformation in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1491-1800," *Journal of African History* 50 (2009): 1-22.

Class 4. 10 February. Muslim and Christian Africa and the Americas

Manuel Barcia, "West African Islam in Colonial Cuba," *Slavery and Abolition* 35 (2014): 292-305.

James Searing, "Islam, Slavery and Jihad in West Africa," in *The History Compass* 4/5 (2006): 761-779.

John Thornton, "The Kingdom of Kongo and Palo Mayombe: Reflections on an African American Religion," *Slavery and Abolition* (2015): 1-22.

Class 5. 17 February. Spanish America Status and Labor

Norma Angélica Castillo Palma and Susan Kellogg, "Conflict and Cohabitation between Afro-Mexicans and Nahuas in Central Mexico," in Matthew Restall, ed. *Beyond Black and Red: African-Native Relations in Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque, 2005) pp. 115-36.

Charles Beatty Medina, "Caught Between Rivals: The Spanish-African Maroon Competition for Captive Indian Labor in the Region of Esmeraldas during the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *The Americas* 63/1 (2006): 113-136.

Class 6. 24 February. African Culture and Brazil

James Sweet, *Recreating Africa* (whole book).

Class 7, 3 March. Status and Control

Burnard, whole book.

Sections of the Diary of Thomas Thistlewood, to be assigned to each student

Spring Break 4-12 March

Class 8, 17 March. The Internal Market, Bargaining, and the “Peasant Breach”.

Ciro Flammarion Cardoso, “The Peasant Breach in the Slave System: New Developments in Brazil,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 25 (1988): 49-57.

Sydney Mintz and Douglas Hall, “The Origins of the Jamaican Internal Market System,” in Beckles and Shepherd, *Caribbean Slave Society*, pp. 319-34.

Richard Sheridan, “Strategies of Slave Subsistence: The Jamaican Case Reconsidered,” in Mary Turner, ed. *From Chattel Slaves to Wage Slaves. The Dynamics of Labour Bargaining in the Americas* (Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 48-67.

Class 9, 24 March Freedom in Slave Societies

Jerome Handler, *The Unappropriated People: Freedmen in the Slave Society of Barbados* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 7-28; 190-218.

Patrick Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity and Regional Development*, pp. 112-29.

Paul Heinegg, “Free African Americans of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland and Delaware,” on internet at <http://www.freeafricanamericans.com>. Read the forward by Ira Berlin and Heinegg’s introduction’s to the sections on both Virginia/the Carolinas and Maryland/Delaware.

Class 10, 31 March. Women in Slavery

Hilary Beckles, *Centering Woman* (whole book) Note: Hilary Beckles is a man.

Class 11, 7 April. Resistance and Maronage

Mavis Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica, 1655-1796* (Africa World Press, 1990), pp. 126-208.

John Thornton, “War, the State, and Religious Norms in Coromantee Thought,” in Robert Blair St. George, ed., *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in America* (Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 181-200

Class 12, 14 April. The Haitian Revolution

C. L. R. James, *Black Jacobins* (whole book)

John Thornton, “‘I am the Subject of the King of Congo’: African Ideology in the Haitian Revolution,” *Journal of World History* 4 (1993): 181-214.

Class 13, 21 April. The Williams Thesis: Slavery and the Industrial Revolution

Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, pp. 126-68. This whole book is also available as a free download at <https://archive.org/details/capitalismandsla033027mbp>

Ronald Bailey, “The Slave(ry) Trade and the Development of Capitalism in the United States: The Textile Industry of New England,” in Inikori and Engerman, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp. 205-246.

Seymour Drescher, “Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade,” *Parliamentary History* 26 (2007): 42-65.

Class 14, 28 April. Wrap up, provisional presentations

Each student will give a brief overview of their research project and their progress to date. This does not have to be the finished paper, which is not due until later.