NYU London

HIST-UA 9572  - 002

Dr Philip Woods

Office hours immediately before and after class, and by arrangement via e-mail

Britain and Slavery, 1562-1916

Location to be confirmed.

Upper Division class

This course examines the place that slavery played in Britain’s past and its legacy today. In the eighteenth century, Britain prided itself on the liberty enjoyed by its people, yet it was the largest participant in the Atlantic slave trade, and grew rich on the wealth created by ports such as London, Bristol and Liverpool. In the same period some 15,000 black people lived in English ports and their presence has only recently been properly acknowledged. In the nineteenth century, however, Britain perceived itself as in the forefront of the global battle to end the slave trade and slavery itself. This pioneering campaign contributed to a more positive sense of British national identity. Yet Britain continued to depend on the importation of slave-grown produce and even began to ship hundreds of thousands of Indians as virtual slaves to many parts of the world. The ambivalent legacy of Britain’s past involvement with slavery remains important to Britain’s multi-cultural identity and its global role today.

Opportunities are taken for students to engage with primary sources of Britain’s slave trade and to visit sites of importance such as the City of London, London docklands, the Africa Gallery at the British Museum, and the slave-trading ports of Bristol or Liverpool.

Classes mix short lectures, group discussion, video viewing, and field-trips.

On completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of key issues in the history of slavery in Britain and its empire.

2. Critically analyse contemporary historical documents, setting them in historical context.

3. Demonstrate the ability to analyse historical problems, research them and communicate findings succinctly and clearly, both orally and in writing, using supporting evidence, properly referenced

1. Short Document Analysis 1 By session 6 10%

2. Short Document Analysis 2 & Presentation (in class) By session 9 20%

3. Research Essay (1500-2000 words) By session 13 30%

4. Short write-up on ONE of the field-trips One week after class following trip 10%
5. Final ‘seen’ examination Final week 20%
6. Seminar participation tutor allocated 10%

Fail 1. Document Analysis (10%)

Choose ONE document from the first 4 in the set given out at the beginning of the semester, and write a critique of approximately 1000 words. Include a short bibliography of any sources used. There will be an opportunity to discuss the requirements of the assessment and to practice criticism of the documents in seminars.

The following criteria apply:

a. ability to show an understanding of the overall meaning/import of the document and its historical context, including authorship, audience, date, etc.

b. ability to analyse the meaning and significance of parts of the document, and to judge which parts of the document require further analysis. (Reference should be made to paragraph or line numbers as appropriate)

c. ability to comment on the document critically but with empathy for historical context, and to place comments in the context of prior and later events where relevant to a proper understanding.

2. Document Analysis 2 (in class presentation) (20%)

Choose ONE document from the remaining documents in the set given out early in the semester, and write a critique of approximately 1000 words. The criteria are the same for assessment one but you are required to give this assessment as a presentation of approximately 15 minutes in class, on a date agreed with the professor. After the presentation you should answer questions from the class. 50% of marks will be given for the written essay and 50% for presentation where the following criteria will apply:

1. Clarity of presentation, communicating with audience directly, with good eye contact, using visual support material where appropriate.

2. Liveliness and creativity of presentation. The presentation should not be a repeat of your written document critique but rather should use the document as an opportunity to take up an issue that arises from your interest in the document in a way that informs and interests your audience.

N.B. The presentation may be done with a partner. In this case 20 minutes will be allowed for the presentation and it is assumed that the subject matter is divided in some meaningful way between the presenters, i.e. they do not repeat each other.

The presentation part of the mark is thus marked the same for each presenter (unless the two parties inform me that their share should be in a different ratio), but the written part is marked individually.

3. Essay Questions [30%]

Essays should be approximately 1500-2000 words long and should contain a bibliography and references where appropriate. I am available for consultation on essays. Be careful to avoid plagiarism as penalties are heavy (see me if in doubt). See advice on essay writing at the end of this booklet.

N.B. Unless you have my prior agreement in writing, you must answer the question exactly as set. You must not adapt a title of your own.

The reading list is predominantly for preparation for seminar discussion and has not been set with the essay questions particularly in mind so you should be aware of the need to read beyond the reading list for your essay preparation. I will be only too happy to advise on reading if you get into difficulty.
1. Examine the importance of the transatlantic slave trade for any ONE British port. You should set your answer in the context of changes over time and also, where relevant, in relation to the competition provided by other ports.

2. Why did white indentured labour no longer suffice for the Caribbean requirements by the second half of the seventeenth century?

3. How valuable is EITHER Thomas Thistlewood’s diary OR Olaudah Equiano’s autobiography to the historian?

4. Why were birth rates so low amongst plantation slaves in the Caribbean in the period c.1650 to 1834? You should be aware of comparisons with North America in the period before 1783.

5. Has the impact of the transatlantic slave trade on Africa been exaggerated?

6. Was marronage (running away/and or forming free communities) the most effective means of slave resistance? Answer with reference to particular historical examples.

7. "Slave revolts, particularly their leadership, were seldom as blind and insensate as the master class averred." [Craton] Discuss with reference to slave revolts in general but using particular, more detailed, examples from any ONE slave revolt in the Caribbean or North America.

8. "As a leader, he was inept, addicted to moderation, compromise and delay. He deprecated extreme measures and feared popular agitation." Discuss Eric Williams’ (Capitalism and Slavery p.181) criticism of Wilberforce’s role in the anti-slavery campaign.

9. Was the use of Indian indentured labour a “new system of slavery” [Tinker]?

10. How successfully did the British West Indian planters adapt to the changed labour environment which resulted from Abolition and Emancipation? Answer with reference to the period 1807 to 1865

11. FREE CHOICE. You may write on a topic of your choice but you must have my prior written agreement (on a hand-in-form) to the question.

4. Field-trip write-up (10%)

This is a short response paper (1000 words approx.) to any ONE of the trips: Greenwich, Museum of Docklands, British Museum and Bristol (these vary each semester). You may do an essay on National Maritime Museum Greenwich (Atlantic Gallery) but that would be done independently.

Generally, you should hand this in on the next Wednesday following a week after the field-trip has taken place. Your write-up should focus on what you learnt from the visit. You should also comment critically on the way in which the displays presented slavery to the public- were they informative, involving, biased, etc.? This is not a research essay as such, but it will certainly strengthen your essay if you show awareness of supporting material (e.g. handouts, illustrations, internet sites etc.) You will be given suggestions of issues to consider for each fieldtrip but they are only suggestions (also on NYUclasses). You may focus on a single aspect of the trip, e.g. a particular painting or object that caught your attention, provided you research it well and show awareness of the context in which it is shown.

You may write up as many of these visits as you like, but only the best ONE will count.

4. Seen examination. (20%) At the end of the semester there will be a two hour examination in which you are required to answer two of the following questions which will be designated at random on the day of the exam. These questions have been set to encourage you to think about wider and more comparative issues throughout the course. You are not allowed to bring any notes or other materials into the examination. There will be an opportunity to revise and practice for this examination.
1. "The 'middle passage' acted as a bridge and not a divide between Africa and the New World". Discuss this view of the survival of African culture in the New World.

2. Did racism lead to slavery or did slavery lead to racism?

3. ‘Despite all the revisionism that has taken place, Eric Williams’ fundamental argument about the linkages between capitalism and slavery has stood the test of time.’ Discuss with particular emphasis on the end of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery within the British colonies.

4. How important is it to study slavery in a comparative way rather than focusing on individual national histories?

5. What contribution can the historian of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade make to the current debate about the payment of reparations for damage done to Africa and Africans?

6. How successfully has slavery and abolition/emancipation movements been represented on film? Answer with reference to specific films as examples.

5. Seminar Participation (10%)  This mark will be allocated by me on the basis of the value of your contribution to seminars and field-trips. This rewards quality of contributions not just quantity.

Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component results in failure of the class.

Assessment Expectations

**Grade A:** Excellent work. Shows a full mastery of the topic. Is well researched, well organised and well referenced. It shows the stamp of an individual or original approach to the problem set.

**Grade B:** Good work. Has done the necessary research and made a clear answer to the problem set, using reasonable referencing. Shows some insights.

**Grade C:** Satisfactory work. Has done necessary research but no more. Makes attempt to answer the problem but perhaps not always very clearly. Rather mechanical and lacking individual insights.

**Grade D:** Passable work. Meets minimum requirements but may not be very coherent or well argued. Perhaps not very well focused on the problem set. Probably based on very limited reading

**Grade F:** Fails to meet the requirements

Required Text(s)

J. Walvin  *Black Ivory: Slavery in the British Empire* (Blackwells: 2001) 0631229604

Supplemental Texts(s) (not required to purchase as copies are in NYU-L Library)

Hochschild, A. * Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery. (Macmillan: 2005.) 0333904915
M. Parker *The Sugar Barons: Family, Corruption, Empire and War* (Windmill Books: 2012) 978009958453
J. Walvin  *Questioning Slavery,* (Routledge: 1996) 0415153573[ a thematic approach]
The careful and critical use of internet resources is encouraged and a list of recommended websites will be given.

None

**Introduction.** Discovering a past that was preferred hidden? Slavery and its legacies in British national identity—historians and curators. Historical significance of the transatlantic slave trade—engine of capitalism, globalization and industrialization?

Britain's late start in the slave trade. Comparison with rival European powers and their use of slave labour in the Americas.

**Required Reading**

Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past and the Institute of Historical Research, 2007 '1807 Commemorated - The abolition of the slave trade’

Topic one: ‘Memory matters - Britain and the abolition of the slave trade 1807-2007’

http://www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/discussion/memory.html

R. Blackburn *The Making of New World Slavery, 1492-1800*, introduction; ‘slavery and modernity’

Columbus letter (handout)- document critique practice

**Session 2**

Britain’s slave-trading with Africa. The Development of Plantation society in Barbados, Jamaica, Virginia and the Carolinas. Planters, their social life and attitudes. Slavery and the origins of racism in England, the Caribbean and North America

**Required reading:**

J. Walvin Questioning Slavery, ch.5 "Colour, Race and Subjugation"

E. Williams Capitalism and Slavery, ch. 1 ‘Origin of Negro Slavery’

Ira Berlin Interview for PBS programme ‘Race- the Power of an Illusion’

http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-02-08.htm (accessed 3.02.2010)

**Visit to the City of London & Museum of Docklands. Meet at 2pm at the island outside the Bank/Royal Exchange- exit 4 at Bank underground station**

**Session 4**

The Planters and their World

**Required Reading**

J. Walvin *Black Ivory*, ch. 14 ‘Sex in the Slave Quarters; ch. 15 ‘Violence’


Document handout 1 Thomas Thistlewood

**Fieldtrip essay on Museum of Docklands due**

**Session 5**

Slave Demography: The role of Women slaves: contrast between North American patterns and that of the British Caribbean

**Required Reading**

J. Walvin *Black Ivory*, ch. 9 ‘Women”; ch. 10 ‘Disease and Death’


Document handout 4 ‘Barbadians describe their plantation system to Parliament’

**Session 6**

**Document 1 essay due**

Slave & Slave Culture in the West Indies
Resistance
Required Reading
J. Walvin  *Black Ivory*, ch. 16 ‘Rebellions’; ch. 17 ‘Runaways’
James Sidbury  ‘Resistance to Slavery’ in G.Heuman & T. Burnard, (eds.)
*The Routledge History of Slavery*, pp.204-219
Gad Heuman  ‘Slave Rebellions’ in G.Heuman & T. Burnard, (eds.)
*The Routledge History of Slavery*, pp.220-234

Slave Culture: African continuities- creole culture.
Required Reading
J. Walvin  *Black Ivory*, ch. 11 ‘Slaves at Ease’; 12. ‘Religion’; 13 ‘Families and Communities’
Matt D. Childs  ‘Slave Culture’ in G.Heuman & T. Burnard, (eds.)
*The Routledge History of Slavery*, pp.170-186

Session 7

Required Reading
Trevor Burnard  ‘The Atlantic Slave Trade’ in G.Heuman & T. Burnard, (eds.)
*The Routledge History of Slavery*, pp.80-97
Paul Lovejoy  ‘Slavery in Africa’ in G.Heuman & T. Burnard, (eds.)
*The Routledge History of Slavery*, pp.35-51

OR J. Walvin  *Black Ivory*, ch. 3 ‘Slaves, Traders and Africa’; ch. 4 ‘Crossing the Atlantic’; ch. 19 ‘The Plight of Africa’
Kenneth Morgan  *Atlantic Trade and the British Economy, 1660-1800*, ch. 7 ‘Atlantic Trade and British Ports’

Fieldtrip to Bristol

Session 8
The Slave Trade and Africa: Discussion and Visit to the British Museum Africa Gallery:

Recommended Reading
A. Coombes  *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture & Popular Imperialism* (Yale University Press 1994) ch. 1 Benin Bronzes (NYU Classes)

Session 9
Slavery in the Age of Enlightenment and Revolution: the Haitian Revolution and its impact: Olaudah Equiano’s autobiography and the problem of slave narratives

Required Reading
Laurent Dubois  ‘Slavery in the age of revolution’ in G.Heuman & T. Burnard, (eds.)
*The Routledge History of Slavery*, pp.267-280
Olaudah Equiano Document Extract 2 from *Interesting Narrative*
Brycchan Carey’s website entry on Equiano http://www.brycchancarey.com/equiano/

Session 10
Abolition of the Slave Trade- Capitalism and the anti-slavery movement: the Williams thesis

Required Reading
Christopher L. Brown  ‘Abolition of the Atlantic slave trade’ in G.Heuman & T. Burnard, (eds.)
*The Routledge History of Slavery*, pp. 281-297
E. Williams  *Capitalism and Slavery*, chs. 7-11 and conclusion (available online)

**Bristol fieldtrip essay due**

Visit to Africa Gallery, British Museum (in second half of class)

**Session 11**

Emancipation: Religion, slave resistance, popular protest and Parliamentary intervention

J. Walvin  *Questioning Slavery*, ch. 10
E. Williams  *Capitalism and Slavery*, ch. 12

**Africa Gallery Fieldtrip Essay Due**

The impact and legacy of Emancipation (1834) in the Caribbean in the 19th century and early 20th centuries. The Use of Indian Indentured Labour in the Empire - a New Form of Slavery?

J. Walvin  *Black Ivory*, ch. 20 The Problems of Freedom

**Session 12**

Representations of slavery: public history: Films of Slavery

http://www.brh.org.uk/articles/eng_abolition.html - accessed 7.4.14

E.K. Wallace  *The British Slave Trade & Public Memory* (Columbia University Press, 2006) ch. 3
‘Seeing Slavery and the Slave Trade’

**Research Essay due**

**Session 13**

Legacy of Slavery: The Reparations Debate and Revision

**Required Reading**


**Additional Reading**


**Session 14**
Final Seen Examination. Two hours 2.00-4.00pm

Classroom Etiquette
Toilet breaks should be taken before or after class or during class breaks.
Food & drink, including gum, are not to be consumed in class.
Mobile phones should be set on silent and should not be used in class except for emergencies.
Laptops are only to be used with the express permission of the teacher.
Please kindly dispose of rubbish in the bins provided

Required Co-curricular Activities
1. 20 Sept. Visit to the City of London & Museum of Docklands.
2. 21 Oct (Saturday) Visit to Bristol
3. 10 Nov Visit to Africa Gallery, British Museum

Estimated Travel Costs
£4.40 Oyster card cost for visits 1 & 2. Rail fare to Bristol is paid for. Total £8.80

Suggested Co-curricular Activities
To be advised

Your Instructor
Dr Philip Woods lectured at Kingston University, London until recently. He studied History at the London School of Economics and at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. His doctorate, which was published, was on British-Indian politics after the First World War. His current research is on the British use of film propaganda in India and his book on War Correspondents in Burma during World War Two was published by Harst & Co. in March 2017. He has published in a number of academic journals including *Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television, South Asia* and *Indian Horizons.*

NYU GLOBAL ACADEMIC POLICIES

Policies and procedures for Global Academic Centres, including policies on academic integrity and the Study Away Standard, can be found here:

https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/student-services.html

Absences: Key information on NYU London’s absence policy, how to report absences, and what kinds of absences can be excused can be found here: http://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/attendance-policy.html

NYU London work submission policies can be found here: http://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/academic-policies.html

Classroom conduct: Academic communities exist to facilitate the process of acquiring and exchanging knowledge and understanding, to enhance the personal and intellectual development of its members, and to advance the interests of society. Essential to this mission is that all members of the University Community are safe and free to engage in a civil process of teaching and learning through their experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Accordingly, no student should engage in any form of behaviour that interferes with the academic or educational process, compromises the personal safety or well-being of another, or disrupts the administration of University programs or services.

Please refer to the NYU London Disruptive Student Behaviour Policy at https://goo.gl/Nvt5Vu for examples of disruptive behaviour and guidelines for response and enforcement.