

Fall 2020
History BC 3599
Remembering Slavery:
Critiquing Modern Representations of the Peculiar Institution
Class Day/Time: Wednesdays, 4:10-6:00 PM
Venue: TBD

Instructor: Professor Celia E. Naylor
Office: 817 Milstein Center
Office Hours: TBD
Office Tele: 854-4876
E-mail: cnaylor@barnard.edu

COURSE OVERVIEW:

Although the United States abolished slavery with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1865, slavery continues to be invoked within the American sociocultural landscape. From dramatic visual representations in *Gone With the Wind*, *Roots*, *Beloved*, *12 Years a Slave*, and *Harriet*, to the ongoing demand by some African-Americans for reparations (included within the agendas of some Democratic presidential candidates in 2020), slavery has captured the American imagination in myriad ways. Indeed, the enslavement of people of African descent signifies a crucial historical and cultural marker not only for African-Americans but also for Americans in general. In this class we will interrogate how and why images and ideas of slavery continue to appear in the present day. We will examine twentieth- and twenty-first-century depictions of slavery, as well as future repercussions resulting from such representations. For this course, students will write 2 (5-7-page) essays and 1 (15-18-page) research paper. In addition to the written assignments and class participation, groups of students will co-lead selected class discussions.

BARNARD HONOR CODE:

“We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources. We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.”

You are expected to observe all aspects of the Barnard Honor Code. All work submitted for this course must be your own. Although you may discuss the assignments with your classmates, your short essays and research papers must reflect your own ideas and arguments. If you include information from books, articles, and websites, such sources must be clearly identified in your footnotes/end notes and bibliography. Please let me know if you have any questions about the honor code as it relates to this course.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations, you must visit the Office of Disability Services (ODS) for assistance. Students requesting eligible accommodations in their courses will need to meet with an ODS staff member for an intake meeting. Once registered, students are required to visit ODS each semester to set up new accommodations and learn how to notify faculty. Accommodations are not retroactive, so it is best to register with ODS early each semester to access your accommodations. If you are registered with ODS, please schedule a meeting with me to discuss your accommodations for this course; remember to bring your faculty notification letter. Barnard College's ODS is located in 8 Milbank Hall, and Columbia's Disability Services is on the 7th Floor of Alfred Lerner Hall.

WELLNESS

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We, as a community, urge you to make yourself—your own health, sanity, and wellness—your priority throughout this semester, your career here, and beyond Barnard. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you in several sectors of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please visit these sites:

- <http://barnard.edu/primarycare>
- <http://barnard.edu/counseling>
- <http://barnard.edu/wellwoman/about>
- [Stressbusters Support Network <pdf>](#)

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

* Critically examine a range of visual and written material (primary sources) and scholarly interpretations (secondary sources) on key elements concerning the enslavement of people of African descent in the United States and contemporary representations of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade

* Explore different methods and theories of historical and literary analysis regarding reconstructions of slavery in twentieth- and twenty-first-century texts

* Analyze the impact of ideologies of race, gender, sexuality, status and domination on contemporary portrayals of slavery in U.S. popular culture

* Examine the nuances and complexities of history and memory in relation to contemporary U.S. historical and cultural sites focused on the legacy of slavery

* Hone and demonstrate critical analytical and writing skills in the successful completion of two short essays and one final research paper

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class Participation (20% of final grade): Attendance and **active** class participation are crucial to the seminar experience. In order to facilitate a fruitful and generative dialogue during class discussions, every student should come to class prepared with thoughtful questions and comments regarding aspects of the weekly assignments. This kind of preparation will not only encourage your consistent, meaningful engagement in the class discussions, but also contribute positively to the breadth and depth of class discussions overall. Every student will also be responsible for co-leading one class session of selected assigned readings.

2 (5-7-page) essays (each essay is worth 20% of final grade): Essays should analyze specific issues regarding the required readings (with a focus on **primary sources**). Essays should demonstrate critical thought about reading assignments and class discussions. Use these essays as a tool for exploring your own questions and interpretations that have emerged as a result of the readings and class discussions. **Essays are due IN CLASS on October 14th and November 11th.**

15-18-page research paper (40% of final grade): Research papers should be informed by both primary and secondary sources. Although possible topics will be introduced during our class discussions, students are encouraged to examine other topics or themes related to the topic of this course. Students are required to submit a **research paper proposal (1-2 pages) by November 18th**; the proposal should include the topic of your research paper, as well as a preliminary bibliography. Research papers should include footnotes/end notes and a bibliography. **Research papers are due by 4 p.m. on Monday, December 14th (LAST DAY OF FALL CLASSES).**

REQUIRED TEXTS:

NOTE: ALL REQUIRED BOOKS ARE ON RESERVE AT BARNARD LIBRARY

- * Ana Lucia Araujo, *Reparations for Slavery and the Slave Trade: A Transnational and Comparative History* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2017).
- * Octavia E. Butler, *Kindred* (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1988).
- * Harriet A. Jacobs. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company (Norton Critical Editions, 2000, c1861).
- * Edward P. Jones, *The Known World* (New York: Amistad, 2003).
- * Melton A. McLaurin, *Celia, A Slave* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 1999).
- * Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Plume, 1988).
- * Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony & Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013).

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED FILMS:

- * *12 Years a Slave* (Regency Enterprises, 2013)
- * *Africans in America* (4-part series, PBS, 1998)
- * *Amistad* (DreamWorks, 1997)
- * *Beloved* (Touchstone Pictures/Harpo Films, 1998)
- * *Gone With the Wind* (Selznick International, c1939)

- * *Harriet* (Martin Chase Productions, 2019)
- * *Middle Passage* (HBO, 2000)
- * *Roots* (Warner Home Video, 2007—originally aired in 1977 and new adaptation of *Roots*, History Channel, 2016)
- * *Sankofa* (Negod-Gwad Productions, 1993)
- * *Unchained Memories* (HBO, 2003)
- * *Unearthing Secret America* (PBS Home Video, 2002)
- * *The Voyage of La Amistad* (MPI Home Video, 1998)

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week 1: Introduction

September 9

Introduction

Week 2: The Middle Passage in the Archives and on the Screen

September 16

* Class discussion of the film *Middle Passage* (78 minutes, view before class session).
(ON RESERVE AT BARNARD LIBRARY)

* Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), Introduction and Chapters 1-2.
(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)

* Selections from Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 4 volumes (Washington, D. C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1930-1935). **(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)**

* Maria Diedrich, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Carl Pedersen, eds., *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), Prologue—"The Middle Passage Blues," Chapter 1—"The Middle Passage Between History and Fiction: Introductory Remarks" and Chapter 3—"The Slave Ship Dance," pp. 3-20 and 33-46.
(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)

Week 3: Unearthing Narratives, (Re)Centering Enslaved Girls and Women

September 23

* Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), Introduction, pp. 1-12.
(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)

* Harriet A. Jacobs. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company (Norton Critical Editions), 2000, c1861.

* Melton A. McLaurin, *Celia, A Slave* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 1999).

* Annette Gordon-Reed, ed., *Race on Trial: Law and Justice in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), Chapter 3—"Celia's Case (1857)," 48-60. **(AVAILABLE ONLINE VIA CLIO AS AN E-BOOK)**

* Saidiya Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), Introduction and Chapter 3—"Seduction and the Ruses of Power," pp. 3-16 and 79-114. **(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)**

* Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America* (New York: Random House, 1998), Chapter 3 "Survival and Other Forms of Resistance." **(RECOMMENDED)**

* Wilma King, "'Suffer with them till death': Slave Women and Their Children in Nineteenth-Century America," in *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*, eds. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996), 147-168. **(RECOMMENDED)**

* *Africans in America*~Part 4: Judgment, 1831-1865. **(RECOMMENDED)**

Week 4: "Out of the Mouths of Ex-Slaves"

September 30

* Class discussion of *Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives*. (75 minutes, view before class session).

* Selections from Charles L. Perdue, Jr., Thomas E. Barden and Robert K. Phillips, eds., *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980). **(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)**

* Norman R. Yetman, "Ex-Slave Interviews and the Historiography of Slavery," *American Quarterly* 36: 2 (summer 1984): 181-210. **(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)**

* *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk about their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation* (New York: New Press in conjunction with The Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Institution, 1998). **(RECOMMENDED: BRIEF SELECTIONS WILL BE PLAYED IN CLASS)**

Week 5: Universities and the History (and Afterlives) of Slavery

October 7

* Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony & Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013).

Week 6: Filming Slavery

October 14

* Class discussion of the film *Sankofa*. (120 minutes, view before class session).
(ON RESERVE AT BARNARD LIBRARY)

* Pamela Woolford, "Filming Slavery: A Conversation with Haile Gerima," *Transition*, No. 64 (1994), 90-104.
(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)

*******NOTE: FIRST ESSAYS DUE IN CLASS ON OCTOBER 14th*******

Week 7: Conjuring Slavery (Part 1)

October 21

* Octavia E. Butler, *Kindred* (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1988).

* Angelyn Mitchell, *The Freedom to Remember: Narrative, Slavery and Gender in Contemporary Black Women's Fiction* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), Chapter 2~"Not Enough of the Past: Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred*," pp. 42-63.
(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)

* David LaCroix, "To Touch Solid Evidence The Implicity of Past and Present in Octavia E. Butler's 'Kindred,'" *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 40, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 109-119.
(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)

Week 8 Conjuring Slavery (Part 2)

October 28

* Edward P. Jones, *The Known World* (New York: Amistad, 2003).

Week 9: Rememories of Slavery

November 4

* Class discussion of Morrison, *Beloved* and the film *Beloved* (112 minutes, view the film before class).

* William L. Andrews and Nellie Y. McKay, eds., *Toni Morrison's Beloved: A Casebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), Introduction, Samuel J. May—"Margaret Garner and seven others" and Mae G. Henderson—"Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Re-Membering the Body as Historical Text." **(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)**

* In-class screening of selected sections of televised interview with Toni Morrison on *Beloved*.

Week 10: Excavating and Renovating Sites of Slavery

November 11

* In-class screening of sections of the film *Unearthing Secret America*.

* Discussion of African Burial tour.

(NOTE: During the semester, a tour of the African Burial Ground in New York City will be arranged for the entire class)

*******NOTE: SECOND ESSAYS AND RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSALS DUE IN CLASS ON NOVEMBER 11th *******

Week 11: Sites of Slavery as Tourist and Wedding Venues

November 18

* Koa Beck, "Disturbing Wedding Trend: Getting Married at a Plantation," *Salon*, January 5, 2014.

(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)

* Patricia J. Williams, "Stop Getting Married on Plantations," *The Nation*, September 26, 2019.

(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)

* Heather Murphy, "Pinterest and The Knot Pledge to Stop Promoting Plantation Weddings," *New York Times*, December 5, 2019.

(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)

* Elizabeth Macgonagle, "From Dungeons to Dance Parties: Contested Histories of Ghana's Slave Forts," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 24: 2 (May 2006): 249-260.

(AVAILABLE ON CANVAS WEBSITE)

* View website of Thomas Jefferson's plantation Monticello, weddings section,

<http://www.monticello.org/site/visit/weddings-monticello>

Week 12: November 25: NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY BREAK

Week 13: Repair, Redress, Reparations

December 2

* Ana Lucia Araujo, *Reparations for Slavery and the Slave Trade: A Transnational and Comparative History* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2017).

* Katherine Franke, *Repair: Redeeming the Promise of Abolition* (New York: Haymarket Books, 2019).(RECOMMENDED)

Week 14 "SHOW AND TELL" FINAL SESSION OF CLASS
December 9

* Students will bring to class one document (poem, cartoon, photograph, song, excerpt from a film, article, etc.) and briefly discuss (5 minutes maximum) how the item reflects slavery's enduring presence in the twenty-first-century.

NOTE: RESEARCH PAPERS DUE BY 4 P.M. ON MONDAY, DEC. 14th