

Introductory Research Seminar: The Transatlantic Slave Trade HIS 709.02 (spring 2018)

Thursdays 6:30-9:20 (MHRA 1206)

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Office hours: Thursdays 1-3 pm and by appointment (MHRA 2105)

SYNOPSIS

The transatlantic slave trade lasted for over four hundred years, and was responsible for the largest migration of people in the early modern world. Its duration, scope, and impact resulted in a wide range of primary sources, including travel accounts, merchant logbooks, abolitionist pamphlets, autobiographies, and, more recently, online databases. Yet none of these tells a complete story; all are plagued by serious silences. Throughout this course we will analyze the strengths and limitations of the different types of material available, and their relationship to the development of the historiography. Students will identify a suitable corpus of material from the available sources on which to base their original research papers.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Throughout this course students will develop significant skills in:

- critically reading and interpreting primary documents
- understanding major historiographic debates related to the trans-Atlantic slave trade
- writing sophisticated academic prose that is clear, pointed, and analytically rigorous
- engaging in persuasive, thoughtful, and courteous academic discussion with their academic peers

REQUIRED BOOKS

Cugoano, Ottobah. *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery and other Writings*. Vincent Carretta, ed. Penguin Classics, 1999.

Klein, Herbert. *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. Second Edition. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Rediker, Markus. *The Slave Ship: A Human History*. Penguin Books, 2008.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. 20th anniversary edition. Beacon Press, 2015.

Unsworth, Barry. *Sacred Hunger*. Doubleday, 1992.

Recommended (various editions)

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. Bedford/ St. Martin's.

Kate L. Turabian. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. University of Chicago.

Joseph M. Williams, *Style. Toward Clarity and Grace*. University of Chicago.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

The major requirement for this course is to research and write a 20-25-page paper, based on close analysis of a corpus of primary sources, contextualized in the appropriate historical narrative, and engaging with one or more relevant historiographic debates. You will build the paper over the course of the semester, in a series of carefully scaffolded assignments. We will discuss these in more depth and you will receive detailed specifications for each assignment throughout the semester.

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

Short writing assignments: 20%

Class participation and presentations: 20%

Draft paper: 30%

Final paper: 30%

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to modification)

Unit 1: Getting Started (January 9-February 6)

The tasks for this unit are as follows:

- Master the basic narrative of the transatlantic slave trade
- Develop proficiency in critically interrogating primary documents
- Identify appropriate primary source(s) on which to base a research paper

Throughout this unit we will have weekly class meetings and common readings. There will be weekly short writing assignments, which will help you break down the process into manageable steps and develop the necessary research and writing skills. Aim for approximately 4-5 pages for each assignment, more or less as needed. Be sure to follow all conventions of historical writing, including providing full footnotes or endnotes.

Thursday, January 11

Readings: Philip D. Curtin, "The Slave Trade and the Numbers Game: A Review of the Literature," and "Major Trends," Chapters One and Nine, respectively, in the *Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (University of Wisconsin, 1969), pp. 3-13 and 265-273.

Barbara L. Solow, "The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A New Census," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58:1, New Perspectives on the Transatlantic Slave Trade (January 2001), pp. 9-16.

Primary documents: "A Portuguese Expedition Meets Resistance in Gambia, 1455;" John Hawkins, "An Alliance to Raid for Slaves, 1568"

Assignment due next week: Consider 2-4 possible paper topics you would be interested in pursuing. For each possible topic write a brief, one paragraph description; another paragraph meditating on the types of sources that would be necessary to complete the project; and a brief reflection on possible difficulties.

Thursday, January 18

Reading: Herbert Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. Second Edition (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Assignment due next week: Write a thoughtful comparison and analysis of several primary documents from Donnan, all related to a research project you might pursue. Provide appropriate contextualization from Klein.

Thursday, January 25

Readings: Articles posted in Files section of Canvas.

Tutorial with UNCG libraries: online sources and material in UNCG archives. Class will meet promptly at 6:30 pm at the circulation desk of Jackson Library.

Assignment due next week: Continue to explore the online databases and identify several primary sources that are related to your research interests. Write a short overview of each, briefly compare them, and discuss how you might build a research paper around them.

Thursday, February 1

Reading: Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*

Assignment due by Monday, February 5: Peruse the online catalogue of the Rubenstein Library, identify several documents that interest you, and write a brief description of what you hope to find in the material. Attach a separate list of these documents, in the order they interest you, including full reference numbers.

Thursday, February 8

Readings: Articles posted in Files section of Canvas

Visit to David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University in Durham.

Group meeting with archivists 4-5 pm. Library is open until 8 pm.

Assignment due next week: Depending on your experience at the collection you may: a) write a detailed analysis of a single document you perused; b) compare several documents you examined; c) reflect on the difficulties of conducting archival research and what you learned, with specific examples.

Unit 2: Getting it Down (February 15- March 22)

The tasks for this unit are:

- Develop an appropriate research topic
- Closely analyze the primary source(s) selected
- Develop a suitable research question related to the material
- Identify and analyze an appropriate corpus of secondary literature related to the paper topic, including both narrative and historiographic debate
- Produce a 15-20-page draft research paper, contextualizing the selected primary source(s) in a wider narrative and exploring larger historiographic questions

There will be a combination of regular class sessions; individual and small group meetings with the professor; and independent research time. Readings will include both common material and books and articles that are specific to each person's project. Assignments include an annotated bibliography, paper abstract, outline, and the draft research paper. During two class sessions, selected students will present an overview of a major historiographic debate that is relevant to their research papers.

Thursday, February 15

Readings: Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery and other Writings*.

Assignment due next week: Prepare a one-page abstract of your proposed research paper and an annotated bibliography of the primary sources and appropriate secondary sources. Each entry in the bibliography should include 1-3 sentences describing the relevance of the work for the proposed research.

Week of February 19

No class; research and meetings with Dr. Rupert.

Assignment due next week: Revised paper abstracts and annotated bibliographies; detailed paper outlines.

Thursday, March 1

Reading: Rediker, *The Slave Ship*

Discussion and workshopping of developing research papers.

Student presentations of historiographic debates (first of three opportunities).

Assignment due next class (after spring break): Introduction and one substantial section from your developing research paper.

****** No class on Thursday, March 8 (spring break) ******

Thursday, March 15

Readings: TBD

Discussion and workshopping of developing research papers.

Student presentations of historiographic debates (second of three opportunities).

Assignment due next week: Draft research paper.

Thursday, March 22

Draft research papers due in class.

Discussion, workshopping, and presentations.

Assignment due next week: Peer reviews of research papers. Write a one- to two-page critique, highlighting the major strengths and weaknesses of the paper. You will receive detailed specifications for what you should focus on in the peer review.

Unit 3: Fixing it Up (March 29-April 19)

Tasks:

Produce a polished 20-25-page final paper based on the following:

- original analysis of an appropriate corpus of primary sources
- appropriate contextualization of these sources in the wider historical narrative
- critical engagement with relevant historiography
- substantial rewrite of previous paper, incorporating suggested changes, with demonstrably tighter writing, deeper analysis, and fuller engagement with the historiography

There will be a combination of regular class sessions, individual and small group meetings with the professor, and individualized research time.

Students who have not yet done so will present an overview of a major historiographic debate that is relevant to their research papers.

Thursday, March 29

Reading: Unsworth, *Sacred Hunger*

Final student presentations of major historiographic debates.

****Tuesday, March 27:** Lecture by Dr. Loni Bunch, Director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture (6:30 pm, Recital Hall, UNCG Music School).

Attendance required unless you have a scheduling conflict.

Week of April 1-6

No class; individual and group meetings with Dr. Rupert.

Thursday, April 12

Brief research paper presentations.

****Tuesday, April 17:** Research presentations by HIS 511C students (3:30 pm, MHRA 2105)

Attendance required unless you have a scheduling conflict. Come support our undergraduate history majors!

Thursday, April 19: Final papers due.