

Sociology 190.4, Fall 2018

SOCIOLOGY OF SLAVERY SEMINAR

Instructor Kristin George
Monday 4pm-5:59pm
Wheeler 106

Office hours: Wednesdays 2pm-4pm
Barrows Hall

What is slavery from a sociological perspective, and how has American slavery shaped the nation's culture and institutions? This seminar is designed give students a sociological understanding of slavery both in general and as an aspect of the American experience. We will begin by considering slavery comparatively and theoretically, then turn to the American context to understand its particular history of slavery. After exploring the sociological dimensions of the institution in America's past, we will go on to consider how slavery has shaped the American present, including its consequences for our constructions of race, gender, and (in)justice.

Course Requirements

Attendance and participation: Your engagement in this seminar is crucial to its success. It is important that you stay abreast of the readings and attend regularly. Please inform me in advance if you expect to be absent.

Reflections: Each week, you will write a 1-2 page reading response. Use each week's topic, as shown in the syllabus, to guide your thinking about the texts. Bring them to class with you every time we meet; on weeks we do not meet you will turn them in electronically. Responses will be evaluated on a credit/partial credit/no credit basis. The lowest two reflection scores will be dropped at the end of the term.

Final paper: A final paper will be due on Dec. 10th. This paper should explore a question about slavery that interests you through the lens of the sociological theories we have covered. It can be a historical investigation or deal with contemporary topics. You will submit a 3-page topic proposal and mini-literature review on Oct. 15th and be expected to come discuss it in office hours during the following week.

The following books will be required for the course and can be purchased online.

1. Patterson, Orlando. 1982. *Slavery and Social Death*. Harvard University Press.
2. Berlin, Ira. 2009. *Generations of captivity: A history of African-American slaves*. Harvard University Press.
3. Du Bois, W.E.B. 2017. *Black Reconstruction in America: Toward a history of the part which black folk played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America, 1860-1880*. Routledge.

4. Thavolia Glymph. 2008. *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*. Cambridge University Press.

Additional readings will be available on b-Courses.

Grading

Don't crunch numbers to figure out how to get the grade you need. Instead, do a few things and it'll all work out:

- ◆ Do the readings
- ◆ Come to class
- ◆ Write your readings reflections--even if it's a bad week and you might not be at your best
- ◆ Come to my office hours
- ◆ Meet writing deadlines

Note that a four-unit class like this one is supposed to require 8 hours of work outside of class each week. Realistically, you may need only half that much in most weeks. But keep that number in mind and remember that however long it takes you, you have to do the readings. That's the only way to get something out of this experience, and it's also going to determine your grade.

If you must know, however, I'll break down the grade as follows: 25% final paper, 45% reflections, 10% participation, 10% paper proposal, 5% showing up in office hours, 5% attendance.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

WEEK 1 – 8/27 Introduction: Unlearning what we think we know about slavery

Much of what we know about slavery comes from America's specific history. During this introduction, we'll begin exploring how American slavery differed from other world-historical models of slavery, and how American slavery shapes our implicit conceptions of slavery as a social institution.

*****No Class 9/3 in observance of Labor Day*****

*****Reading Response 1 Due 9/4***: Historical and Cultural Variations**

How does African slavery differ from colonial slavery? How are notions of property and kinship tied to the definition and moral connotations of slavery?
Chapter 1 in Miers, S. and Kopytoff, I. eds., 1979. *Slavery in Africa: historical and anthropological perspectives*. Univ of Wisconsin Press.

PART ONE: Slavery Throughout History

WEEK 2- 9/10: Defining Slavery

What is slavery? How do we know it when we see it, and what are its essential features? How does a sociological definition of slavery differ from other kinds of definitions?

Introduction + Chapters 1-3 in Patterson, Orlando. 1982. *Slavery and Social Death*. Harvard University Press.

Ehud Toledano, 2016. Ottoman Elite Enslavement and “Social Death” in *On Human Bondage: After Slavery and Social Death*.

WEEK 3- 9/17: New World Slavery I.

How did slavery in America change over the generations? What were its particular features?

Prologue, ch1-2 in Berlin, Ira. 2009. *Generations of captivity: A history of African-American slaves*. Harvard University Press. Chapters TBD

WEEK 4- 9/25: New World Slavery II.

How did slavery in America change over the generations? What were its particular features?

Ch 3-4, epilogue in Berlin, Ira. 2009. *Generations of captivity: A history of African-American slaves*. Harvard University Press. Chapters

PART TWO: Slavery as a Sociological Phenomenon

WEEK 5- 10/1: Slavery as a Form of Social Power

How is slavery different from other kinds of social power? How is it different from other kinds of social hierarchy? How is power constructed, maintained, and challenged in slavery?

Chapter 16 in Weber, Max., 1993. *Basic concepts in sociology*. Citadel Press.

Hegel, G.W.F., 1807. Lordship and bondage. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p.111.

Intro, Ch 1-3 in Hartman, Saidiya. 1997. *Scenes of Subjection*.

WEEK 6- 10/8: Slavery and Social Groups

What do rules about who can and cannot be enslaved tell us about a society? By what processes are slavery and enslavement made socially acceptable?

Chapter 4-6 in Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*

Chapter 2 in *White Over Black*

WEEK 7- 10/15: Gender and Slavery

Is marriage a form of slavery? What features do these two institutions share in common, and in what ways are they different?

Ch. 1-2 in John Stuart Mill. 1869. *The Subjection of Women*. Transaction Publishers

Carol Patement 1988. “Contract, the Individual, and Slavery,” Ch. 3 in *The Sexual Contract*.

*****Three-page paper topic proposal + mini lit review due 10/15*****

*****Reminder: Mandatory office hours visit to discuss paper proposal between 10/15 and 10/22*****

WEEK 8- 10/22: Gendered Slavery

How did gender structure experiences of slavery? How enslavement shape what it meant to be a woman?

Thavolia Glymph. 2008. *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*. Cambridge University Press.

WEEK 9- 10/29: Slavery as a Relation of Production

What kind of “relation of production” is slavery, and what are the implications of viewing slavery this way? How do views of slaves as workers differ from views of slaves as property? Are these two views compatible or not? Are all slaves workers?

Karl Marx, “Primitive Accumulation” ch. 26-33, in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* Vol. 1, book 1, part VIII (1867)

Intro, Ch 1-4 in Du Bois, W.E.B. ed., 2017. *Black Reconstruction in America: Toward a history of the part which black folk played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America, 1860-1880*. Routledge.

PART THREE: Slavery and The Making of America

WEEK 10 – 11/5: Slavery and the Origins of Modern Race Ideology

What is the relationship between slavery and the idea of race? Between slavery and white supremacy? How did the basis for enslavement change over time, and what does this mean for American society?

Introduction, Chapters 1-2 in Fredrickson, George M.. *White supremacy: a comparative study in American and South African history*. New York : Oxford University Press, 1981.

Ch. 7 in Smedley and Smedley 2018. *Race in North America : Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*.

*****No class 11/12 in observance of Veteran’s Day*****

*****Reading Response 12 Due 11/13***: Reconstruction**

What happened after abolition? How did changing the relations of production change the lives of Black Americans and the relations between Black and white Americans?

Ch 5-9, 11, 16. Du Bois, W.E.B. 2017. *Black Reconstruction in America: Toward a history of the part which black folk played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America, 1860-1880*. Routledge.

WEEK 11 –11/19: Slavery and Contemporary Incarceration

What is the relationship between slavery and incarceration? What are the similarities and differences, and do they ultimately share the same purpose or function?

Loic Wacquant. 2002. From slavery to mass incarceration. *New left review*, 13.

Introduction, Michelle Alexander. *New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The New Press, 2010.

Davis, Angela. “Racialized Punishment and Prison Abolition”. *A Companion to African-American Philosophy*.

WEEK 12 – 11/26: Slavery and American Capitalism

Is slavery “pre-capitalist” or “anti-capitalist”? What are its lasting economic legacies?

Introduction, 1, 12; Edward Baptist. 2016. *The Half Has Never Been Told*. Hachette UK.

*****Reading/Review/Recitation Week Monday, December 3–Friday, December 7, 2018*****

*****Final Paper Due Dec. 10th*****