History 498: The Age of Emancipation

Spring 2010
Tuesdays, 2-4:50
Professor Diana Williams
diana.williams@usc.edu
Office: SOS 277
Office hours: Wednesdays 9am-11am

To look at slavery and emancipation as phenomena that extended well beyond the geographical borders of the United States is to discover a whole range of new events and actors in one of human history’s most compelling dramas. This seminar seeks to resituate the traditional US-based narrative of Civil War and Reconstruction in a broader temporal and geographical context. It asks when the Age of Emancipation was, why it came about, and who it principally affected. Covering issues ranging from the start of gradual emancipation in New England to the legal abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888, we will examine the origins and ideological underpinnings of antislavery and abolitionist movements across the Atlantic World. We will pay special attention to the different methods by which those defined as “chattel” slaves in the Atlantic World both attained and redefined the meaning of liberty. Active participation in weekly discussions and the development of a substantial research paper will constitute the main basis for the grade.

Because of the enrollment size and subject matter, I intend to run this course as a research seminar, by which I intend for it to be much heavier on readings, discussion, research, and writing than other history courses. The course will culminate in the development of a substantial research paper.

Some examples of paper topics that would engage the course’s subject matter could include coverage of a particular emancipationist event or abolitionist figure’s travels abroad, outside the U.S. It could also include coverage abroad of slavery and/or abolitionist related events here. Papers may focus on how certain aspects of emancipation were specific to (even exceptional within) a local community, so long as they engage somehow with the idea of and interest in slavery and emancipation as existing in places other than the U.S. South.

Requirements:

- Attendance & Class Participation (20%)
- Office Hours Meetings (5%)
- Paper Proposal & Bibliography (5 pages, due Friday, February 12) (10%)
- Rough Draft (10 pages, due Friday, March 5) (15%)
- One in-class essay exam on the readings (Tuesday, March 23) (25%)
- Final Paper (18-25 pages, due Friday, April 30) (25%)

Books to Purchase

Schedule of Classes

January 12—Introduction. Film (Amistad)

January 19-- Atlantic Slave System(s)
Davis, Prologue & Chapters 1 & 5 from *Inhuman Bondage* (blackboard—please order the book ASAP)


Nathan Huggins, “The Deforming Mirror of Truth” (Blackboard)

January 26—Colonial and Revolutionary North American Slavery

Davis, chapters 6 (“Slavery in Colonial North America,” p. 124-140) and 7 (“The Problem of Slavery in the American Revolution,” p. 141-156)

February 2— Slavery and Emancipation in the Caribbean
Sue Peabody, "Negresse, Mulâtresse, Citoyenne: Gender and Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1650-1848,” p. 56-78 in *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World*. (blackboard)


February 9— Free Black Life in New England

Paper Proposals with Preliminary Secondary Bibliography, Primary Source Base Due Friday, February 12


February 16—Southern Slavery

Davis, chp. 9-10 (pps. 175-204)

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative*
February 23 — Abolitionist Feminism I
Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Part I. Available from the website, Uncle Tom’s Cabin in American Culture.

March 2 — Abolitionist Feminism, II
*Rough Draft of Papers Due by Friday, March 5*
Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Part II
Selections from Sklar TBA

March 9 — Abolitionism

March 23 — *Midterm Exam* plus Library Research Session with Sue Tyson

March 30 — Runaways, Maroons, and Slave Conspiracies
Davis, chapter 11
Nat Turner’s *Confessions*
Martin Delaney, *Blake: or, the Huts of America* (available from Uncle Tom’s Cabin website)

April 6 — Emancipation and Beyond, I
Davis, Chapter 15 & Epilogue (p. 297-331)

April 13 — Emancipation and Beyond, II
*Slaves No More*, Chp. 3 (p. 187-233)

April 20 — Emancipation and Beyond, III

April 27 — Final Papers Due; Student Reflections