

Slavery and Salvation: The Problem of God and Slavery in the Americas

GESM 120G: SEMINAR IN HUMANISTIC INQUIRY

*Prof. Kelsey Moss, University of Southern California
GESM 120g, Fall 2019
4 units*

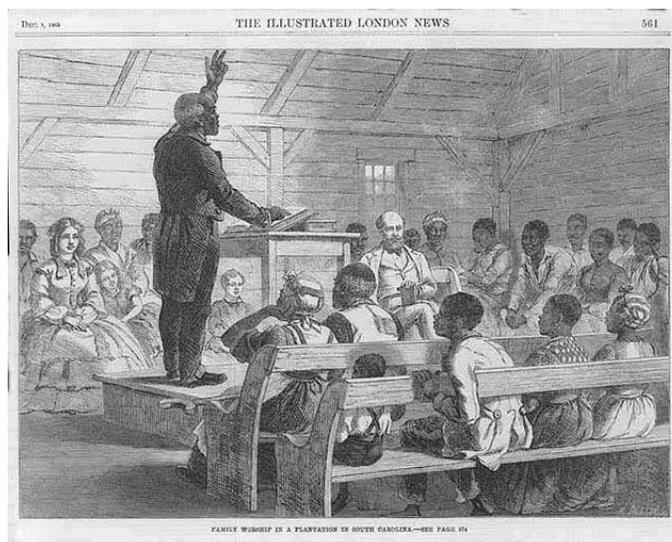
Meets: Tues, Thurs, 2 pm – 3:30 pm

Room: LVL 3Y

Office Hours: Tues 10 am – 12 pm and by appt. (ACB 225)

Course Description

How was Christianity—a religion seemingly premised on brotherly love and equality—deeply intertwined with the practice of racial slavery? This course explores this complicated relationship between religion, racialization, and slavery in the early Americas from a variety of perspectives. Utilizing extensive primary sources, it examines how missionaries, colonizers, and slave holders understood the role of Christianity in their encounters with enslaved Africans and the development of slavery as an institution. It simultaneously considers the faith systems and religious practices of African descended peoples and the wide-ranging responses they had to enslavement and their exposure to Christianity. We will also analyze the religiously rooted debates between pro-slavery advocates and anti-slavery abolitionists in order to demonstrate that there were profound religious, political, social, and economic consequences to particular interpretations of biblical and religious truth. One of the primary themes of the course will be to explore the variety of ways that different historical actors conceptualized “freedom” and “salvation” and conceived of an interdependent relationship between religious belief and true liberation.



Slave preaching on a cotton plantation near Port Royal, South Carolina, engraving in *The Illustrated London News*, 5 Dec. 1863

Learning Objectives

Through participation in this course, students will be able to:

- Understand how the religious worldviews of historical subjects influenced values, ideas, and practices that were foundational to developing systems of colonization and slavery in the Americas.
- Examine critical themes and ideals such as freedom, equality, and citizenship.
- Explore how ethical interpretations can vary according to the context and perspective of different subjects.
- Gain an appreciation for key moments, developments, and historical experiences in the history of the Americas from a variety of perspectives.
- Learn to challenge assumptions and expand frames of reference in order to engage present-day ethical questions with nuance and critical engagement.
- Develop analytical skills through critical reading and clear writing.
- Cultivate speaking and listening skills through in-class discussion.

Course Assignments

- Discussion Facilitation: Over the course of the semester, each student will be responsible for leading one class discussion on the week's assigned reading. Discussion facilitation should include a brief presentation that provides an overview of the text, historical contextualization of the author or primary themes (if necessary), offer analysis of the reading, and connect it to key ideas of our course and previous readings. Finally, facilitators should offer a few discussion topics and questions to guide the class discussion and offer a close reading of a particular section or passage (if appropriate)
- Short Papers: There will be two short papers (~5 pages) due over the course of the semester related to our course themes and texts. More details about the short paper assignments will be provided in class.
- Mid-term essay: A mid-term essay will be due on November 1st by 5 pm. The essay will respond to a specific exam essay prompt. The paper should present a clear thesis and a well-organized critical reading of select primary sources from our course to substantiate your argument.
- Final Project: In lieu of a final exam, students will complete a final project, culminating in a 7-8 page paper. More details about the final project will be provided in class.

Grades for this course will be determined as follows:

- 15% - Engaged Class Participation
- 15% - Facilitation Presentations
- 20% - Short Paper Assignments
- 20% - Midterm Essay
- 30% - Final Project

Participation

This is a first-year *seminar*. As such, your attendance, participation, and adequate preparation are fundamental to the success of each class, the course as a whole, and your own learning and performance in the course. It is essential that you come to class prepared and ready to *actively* participate. Active participation includes verbal contributions to discussions, engagement both with what I am saying and your classmates' comments, focused work in small group and partner activities, and thoughtful completion of in-class writing. We will often be discussing sensitive topics, so please be respectful when voicing your opinions. If you are ever uncomfortable about a class discussion, come and talk to me immediately.

Late Assignments

Assignments are expected to be completed by the due date. Late assignments will lose 10% of the determined grade for each 24-hour period the assignment is late. Extensions will only be granted in extreme circumstances. An extension must be approved **in advance** of the due date with a revised deadline when the completed assignment will be submitted.

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Discussion Posts

For each class period, you will be expected to post on the Blackboard discussion board with a substantive response to the reading for that class period. A discussion post must be posted to the discussion forum by 11 am prior to each class session to be counted toward your participation grade. Late posts will not be accepted, as these posts will be used to help prepare and frame our in-class discussion. Posts should be at least 1 paragraph in length (~350 words) and will be graded based on both quality of content and inclusion of required content. You may choose how to engage with the readings in your discussion post. You may offer interesting points of analysis, make connections with other readings or class discussions, evaluate the effectiveness of the text, interpret a notable passage, or raise questions for further discussion. Occasionally, I may provide a prompt that you may use to guide your discussion post. Posts that are vague, do not demonstrate reading or engagement with the text, or merely summarize the text will not receive credit.

Attendance

You are expected to be on time and present in every class. However, if necessary, you can miss two class meetings over the course of the semester without penalty. After two missed classes, percentage points will be deducted from your final grade. As per university policy, you will not be penalized for absences for religious holidays and university sponsored events with proper documentation. If you need to miss a class, please e-mail me in

advance. It is also good practice to come to office hours and discussed what you missed. You should plan to check in with a classmate and check Blackboard for any missed handouts or materials.

You are still responsible for completing the reading, Blackboard discussion posts, and assignments *on time* even if you are unable to attend class.

Lateness, regardless of how late, is distracting and disruptive to the entire class. Please do not be late.

Laptop / Cell Phone Policy

Please keep phones off/silent and away at all times during class. Your engagement during our classes necessitates that you refrain from texting and/or looking at your phone during class.

Given that the majority of our course readings will be online / in digital format, I will permit laptops to be used in class *exclusively* for accessing our readings.

Nevertheless, it is necessary that we are cognizant that laptop use in classroom settings is often distracting for both the person with the screen and for people around them. In a seminar course, having screens in front of you creates a barrier, both physical and mental, that can impede discussion. Studies have also found that you learn and retain more when you take notes by hand rather than by typing; I strongly encourage you to take notes by hand during our class.

If laptop usage becomes an impediment to the engagement and success of our discussion-based course, the laptop policy may be revised on an individual or classroom basis over the course of the semester.

Students with disabilities:

Students needing special accommodations (e.g., longer exam time) due to a physical or learning disability should contact the instructor as early in the semester as possible, and should also contact Disability Services and Programs (DSP) to obtain a letter of verification for approved accommodations. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776 and the webpage is http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html.

Course website

The material for this course may be found online through the Blackboard system. You will find a copy of the syllabus, access to the discussion forum, as well as all the reading and paper assignments. You should always refer to the website for the most recent course assignments, and requirements. To access the course web site, log on using your USC account at www.blackboard.usc.edu.

Schedule of Course Readings

All course readings will be available online or will be distributed as PDFs through Blackboard.

This schedule is liable to change to suit class needs. The online syllabus will always offer the most recent version of the syllabus.

It is your responsibility to come to class having already read and prepared to discuss the assigned reading for that day; in other words, readings are due the date listed. **Bring your readings to class.**

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| T 8/27 | Course Introductions |
| Th 8/29 | European Spiritual Worldviews & The Conquest of the Americas <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Papal Bull, Romanus Pontifex (Nicholas V), January 8, 1455 in <i>Colonial Latin America a Documentary History</i>, pp. 34 – 42▪ Francisco de Vitoria, "On the Evangelization of Unbelievers," Salamanca Spain (1534 – 35) in <i>Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History</i>, pp. 65 – 77▪ Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepulveda, Valladolid Debate Excerpts▪ Select writings of Bartolomé de las Casas in <i>Witness</i> |
| T 9/3 | African Spiritual Worldviews & The Transatlantic Slave Trade I <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Al Rabouteau, <i>Slave Religion</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Preface; Ch 1, pp. 1 – 16; "African Religious Traditions"▪ James Sweet, <i>Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Introduction○ Chapter 1 |
| Th 9/5 | African Spiritual Worldviews & The Transatlantic Slave Trade II <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Gomes Eannes de Azurara, "Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea, ca. 1450." (selections)▪ Olaudah Equiano, <i>The Life of Olaudah Equiano: The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, (1794)</i> |

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| <p>T 9/10</p> | <p>Christian Slavery in Latin America I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alonso de Sandoval, <i>Treatise on Slavery</i> (selections) |
| <p>Th 9/12</p> | <p>Christian Slavery in Latin America II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ José de Acosta, "On the Salvation of the Indians" (1588), in <i>Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History</i>, pp. 134 – 143 ▪ "A Black Irmandade in <i>Bahia, Brazil</i>" (1699), in <i>Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History</i>, pp. 280 – 296 ▪ Antonio Vieira, Sermons ▪ Selections from <i>Children of God's Fire</i>, pp. 117 – 129 |
| <p>T 9/17</p> | <p>Christian Slavery in the British Colonies I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Morgan Godwyn, <i>The Negro's and Indian's Advocate</i> (selections) ▪ <i>The Carolina Chronicle of Francis Le Jau, 1706-1711</i> (selections) |
| <p>Th 9/19</p> | <p>Christian Slavery in the British Colonies II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cotton Mather, <i>The Negro Christianized: An Essay to Excite and Assist that Good Work, the Instruction of Negro Servants in Christianity</i>, (1706) |
| <p>T 9/24</p> | <p>African Conversion I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Al Raboteau, <i>Slave Religion</i> (selections) ▪ Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood, <i>Come Shouting to Zion</i> (selections) |
| <p>Th 9/26</p> | <p>African Conversion II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ John Jea, <i>The Life, History, and Unparalleled Sufferings of John Jea, the African Preacher. Compiled and Written by Himself</i> (selections) ▪ Phyllis Wheatley, <i>Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral</i> (1733) <p style="text-align: center;">*** Short Paper # 1 Due FRIDAY 9/27 by 5 p.m. ***</p> |

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| <p>Tu 10/1</p> | <p>A South Carolina Case Study: The Stono Rebellion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stono Rebellion Primary Sources ▪ John K. Thornton, "African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion" ▪ Mark Smith, "Remembering Mary, Shaping Revolt: Reconsidering the Stono Rebellion" |
| <p>Th 10/3</p> | <p>A South Carolina Case Study: Hugh Bryan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ George Whitefield, "A Letter from the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield, to the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina, (1739) ▪ Leigh Eric Schmidt, "'The Grand Prophet,' Hugh Bryan: Early Evangelicalism's Challenge to the Establishment and Slavery in the Colonial South" ▪ Hugh Bryan, <i>Living Christianity Delineated, in the Diaries and Letters of Two Eminently Pious Persons Lately Deceased</i> (selections) |
| <p>T 10/8</p> | <p>Christian Paternalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "A Letter to the Negroes lately converted to Christ in America. And particularly to those, lately called out of darkness, into God's marvellous light, at Mr. Jonathan Bryan's in South Carolina. Or A welcome to the believing Negroes, into the household of God" ▪ Katharine Gerbner, <i>Christian Slavery</i>, Introduction & Epilogue ▪ Rev. Charles Colcock Jones' Catechism (selections) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/slavery/experience/religion/docs3.html |
| <p>Th 10/10</p> | <p>Early Christian Abolitionist Sentiment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elihu Colman, <i>A Testimony against that Antichristian practice of Making Slaves of Men</i>, (1733) ▪ "A Serious Address to the Rulers of America, On the Inconsistency of their Conduct Respecting Slavery" in <i>Early American Abolitionists</i>, pp. 53 – 85 ▪ Joseph Sansom, "A Poetical Epistle to the Enslaved Africans, in the Character of an Ancient Negro," (1790) in <i>Early American Abolitionists</i>, pp. 105 – 133 |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jonathan Edwards, "The Injustice and Impolicy of the Slave Trade and of the Slavery of the Africans... A Sermon" (1791), in <i>Early American Abolitionists</i>, pp. 135 – 171 ▪ "Injured humanity; being a representation of what the unhappy children of Africa endure from those who call themselves Christians," (ca. 1805-1808) |
| T 10/15 | Bondage and Freedom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Declaration of Independence (1776) ▪ Frederick Douglass, "The Meaning of July 4th for the Negro," ▪ David Charles Mills, <i>Unholy: The Slaves' Bible</i> ▪ "Shall We Give Bibles to Three Millions of American Slaves?" (1847) ▪ Georgetown Slavery Project |
| Th 10/17 | *** No Class – Fall Recess *** |
| T 10/22 | African American Christianity I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TBD |
| Th 10/24 | African American Christianity II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Richard Allen, <i>The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen</i> (selections) |
| T 10/29 | Roots of Black Liberation Theology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ David Walker's Appeal (1830) ▪ Slave Spirituals |
| Th 10/31 | The Great Debate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SCREENING: "AMAZING GRACE" <p style="text-align: center;">*** Mid-term Essay due FRIDAY Nov. 1st by 5 pm PST ***</p> |

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| T 11/5 | The Religious Roots of Rebellion I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Edward A. Pearson, <i>Designs Against Charleston</i> |
| Th 11/7 | The Religious Roots of Rebellion II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “The Trial Record of Denmark Vesey” in <i>Designs Against Charleston</i> |
| T 11/12 | Christian Slavery Elaborated I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Richard Furman, “Exposition of the Views of the Baptists Relative to the Coloured Population in the United States” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ http://history.furman.edu/~benson/docs/rcd-fmn1.htm ▪ Frederick Dalcho, Practical Considerations Founded on the Scriptures Relative to the Slave Population of South-Carolina <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ https://archive.org/details/practicalconsideoosout/page/38 |
| Th 11/14 | Christian Slavery Elaborated II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Benjamin Morgan Palmer, “Thanksgiving Sermon,” (1860) ▪ Joseph R. Wilson, “Mutual Relation of Masters and Slaves as Taught in the Bible” ▪ Charles Thompson, “Biography of a Slave” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/slavery/experience/religion/docs10.html |
| T 11/19 | The Biblical Case for and Against Abolition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ George Bourne, “A Condensed Anti-slavery Bible Argument, by a Citizen of Virginia” ▪ “A Treatise on Slavery” by an Unknown Author from Virginia” ▪ Alexander McGill, “The Hand of God with the Black Race” ▪ John Richter Jones, <i>Slavery Sanctioned by the Bible</i>, (1861) ▪ “The Appeal of the Religious Society of Friends” (1858) |

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| Th 11/21 | Paths to Freedom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frederick Douglass, <i>My Bondage and My Freedom</i> (selections) ▪ The Sojourner Truth Project / "Ain't I a Woman?" ▪ Maria Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality" <p style="text-align: center;">*** Short Paper #2 Due FRIDAY 11/22 by 5 p.m. ***</p> |
| T 11/26 | Abolition & Aftermath <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Emancipation Proclamation & Gettysburg Address ▪ R.Q. Mallard, <i>Plantation Life Before Emancipation</i>, (1892) |
| Th 11/28 | *** No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday *** |
| T 12/3 | Course Conclusions: Freedom? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zora Neale Hurston, <i>Barracoon</i> (selections) |
| Th 12/5 | Course Conclusions: Freedom? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thirteenth Amendment ▪ 1619 Project ▪ SCREENING: Thirteenth |

Final papers due: Final papers will be due during the scheduled final exam period for the course.

"I want there to be a place in the world where people can engage in one another's differences in a way that is redemptive, full of hope and possibility.

Not this "In order to love you, I must make you something else". That's what domination is all about, that in order to be close to you, I must possess you, remake and recast you." – Bell Hooks

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class.

equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations.

dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu