

Visual and Material Cultures of Slavery

AMH 3931, Sect. 10459
Fall 2018, MWF Per. 6 (12:50 – 1:40 p.m.)
Keene-Flint 105

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Office Hours: Wed. 9-10 am, 2 – 4 pm and by appt.



This course explores pictorial representations of Atlantic slavery from the early modern period through the present. It seeks to open the study of slavery through a rich visual archive of plantation landscapes, portraiture, depictions of African-American and Afro- Caribbean material culture, religion, music, resistance, and emancipation, as well as abolitionist painting, modern art, film, and museum interpretation. These media will provide a gateway to the portrayal, racial construction and historical memory of slavery in American culture.

Though predominantly a history course, methodologies from art history, literature and material culture studies will combine to make the course largely interdisciplinary. The themes can be broken down into four general areas:

1. Visual representations and constructions of slavery and racial ideology
2. Landscapes of slavery
3. Revolution, slave rebellion, and abolition
4. Slavery and modern memory

After devoting the first half of the semester to analyzing visual images for their historical, artistic, ideological and emotional content, we will shift our attention in the second half to developing individual projects, which will count 50% of your grade. **Note:** Please be aware that, because the study of slavery and its aftermath is rooted in one of the most violent and traumatic aspects of American history, some of the images we will consider reflect graphic scenes of brutality and suffering, sometimes in the extreme, endured by Africans and their descendants. They may evoke a range of sharp emotional responses in viewers, as was often their intent. We will seek to consider these images with sensitivity and understanding.

In addition to several assigned articles and other readings, there are two required books (available at the campus bookstore or online):

Angela D. Mack and Stephen G. Hoffius, eds., *Landscape of Slavery: The Plantation in American Art* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008).

Maurie D. McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale: Abolitionist Art and the American Slave Trade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

However, students may find it necessary to purchase additional books for individual projects.

Requirements:

The course will emphasize **engagement with visual works**, literary sources, research, and writing rather than test-taking. Consequently, there will be no midterm or final exam. In addition to several short papers, the main assignment will be a semester-long project leading to a paper of 12-15 pages accompanying a visual presentation of some kind, whether powerpoint, poster, photographic essay, video, or other format.

Students will be expected to attend class regularly and to keep up with reading assignments. There is an **attendance policy**: everyone is allowed three absences regardless of the reason; no excuse or physician's note is needed (except for a missed deadline). Each subsequent absence, however, will result in a drop of half a letter grade in the final average for the term (students who are forced to miss more classes because of serious or chronic medical problems or family emergencies should consult with the instructor).

Attribution of written work. In writing papers, be certain to give proper credit whenever you use words, phrases, ideas, arguments, and conclusions drawn from someone else's work. Failure to give credit by quoting and/or footnoting is plagiarism and is unacceptable. Please review the University's honesty policy at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm>.

Your final evaluation will be based on this scale:

Final project	50%
4-page book analysis (Oct. 19)	20%
3-page image analysis (Sept. 28)	15%
Class participation	15%

Technology in the classroom. While the use of iPads or other devices is permitted to study images or follow slide shows, texting, email, facebook, surfing, shopping, stock-trading, poker-playing, e-harmonizing and all other purposes unrelated to class are prohibited.

Disability accommodation. Students with disabilities requesting accommodation should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor as early as possible in the semester.

Schedule:

Week 1. Aug. 22 – 24. Introduction: The Image of Slavery in American History

Week 2. Aug. 27-31. Remembering Slavery

Reading: Renée Ater, “Slavery and Its Memory in Public Monuments,” *American Art* 24 (Spring 2010), 20-23.

Renée Ater, “The Power of Remembrance” - <https://www.reneeeper.com/on-monuments-blog/2018/4/26/the-power-of-remembrance-1>

Week 3. (Labor Day Sept. 3) Sept. 5 – 7. Origin Stories: Africans in Medieval and Renaissance Art

Reading: Marcia Pointon, “Slavery and the Possibilities of Portraiture,” and David Bindman, “Subjectivity and Slavery in Portraiture,” in Agnes Ludo-Ortiz and Angela Rosenthal, eds., *Slave Portraiture in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, 2013), 41-69 and 70-87. (pdf)

Week 4. Sept. 10- 14. Africans in America, Part 1: Slavery and the Consumer Revolution

Reading: Jennifer Morgan, “‘Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulders’: Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (Jan. 1997), 167-92.

Catherine Molineaux, “Pleasures of the Smoke: ‘Black Virginians’ in Georgian London’s Tobacco Shops,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 64 (April 2007), 327-76.

Week 5. Sept 17 – 21. Africans in America, Part 2: Cultures of Slavery

Reading: Barbara E. Lacey, “Visual Images of Blacks in Early American Imprints,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (Jan. 1997), 19-44.

Week 6. Sept 24 - 28. Abolition and Rebellion

3-page image analysis due Fri., Sept. 28

Week 7. Oct. 1 - 5. Slavery on the Landscape: Representation and Resistance

Reading: Mack and Hoffius, eds., *Landscape of Slavery: The Plantation in American Art*

Week 8. Oct. 8-10 (no class Friday, 10/12). Individual meetings with instructor to discuss term projects

Week 9. Oct. 15 - 19. African-American Material Culture

Week 10. Oct. 22 – 26. Art and the Slave Trade

Reading: McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale*

4-p book analysis due Fri., Oct. 19

Week 11. Oct. 29 – 31 (Homecoming Nov. 2). Civil War and the age of emancipation

Week 12. Nov. 5 - 9. Slavery and race in American popular culture

Week 13. (Veterans' Day holiday Nov. 12) Nov. 14 – 16. Slavery and Hollywood

Reading: David Blight, "The Birth of a Genre: Slavery on Film" <http://common-place.org/book/the-birth-of-a-genre-slavery-on-film/>

Kara Brown, "I'm So Damn Tired of Slave Movies," <https://jezebel.com/im-so-damn-tired-of-slave-movies-1755250873>

Week 14. Thanksgiving week – no class

Week 15. Nov. 26 – 30. Individual work on projects – meet with instructor

Week 16. Dec. 3 – 5. Work on projects.

Projects due Friday, Dec. 7