Spring 2016

Dr. Cristin Ellis (ceellis2@olemiss.edu)

Office Hrs: T-Th 2:30-3:30 (or by appt)

Bondurant West 209A

ENGL 490 (Counter-Canons and Critical Issues)

T-Th 11-12:15 Guyton Annex 209



**American**

**Slaveries**

**The Problem of Freedom in the US 19th Century**

This course will ask what freedom and slavery meant to nineteenth-century Americans, examining how the struggle to end slavery gave rise to further struggles against the oppression of women, the laboring poor, and even animals. The first half of the course will be devoted to writings about slavery: we will read proslavery and antislavery arguments, Northern and Southern depictions of plantation life, and memoirs of slavery by former slaves Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs. How exactly do proslavery and antislavery depictions of slavery differ? What do the testimonies of former slaves add to our understanding of the experience of slavery and freedom, and how does Northern racism complicate the notion of escaping to freedom? In the second half of the course we will explore how the abolitionism movement also helped to give rise to other liberatory movements demanding an end to women’s “enslavement,” to “wage slavery,” and asserting the moral obligation to recognize “animal rights.” What does “slavery” mean in these new contexts, and what happens to our idea of slavery when it becomes a metaphor? How do these movements help us to extend our understanding of “freedom”?

**Required Texts:**

Frederick Douglass, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills*

**Grading Rubric:**

Participation: 10

Reading Journal: 20

Exercises (4): 10

Paper 1: 20

Presentations: 15

Paper 2: 25

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

**WEEK 1:**

**1.26 Introduction to the Course**

**1.28** **Legacies of Slavery and Slaveries by Other Names**

Ta-Nahesi Coates, “The Case for Reparations”

* *Reading Journal #1: Set 3 intentions for the course and describe them. At least one should have to do with the larger themes or materials of the course, and at least one should have to do with your personal development.*

**WEEK 2:**

**2.2** **What Is “Slavery”? What Is “Freedom”?**

David Brion Davis, from *Inhuman Bondage* (pp. 27-37)

 Chandran Kukathas, “Defending Negative Liberty”

 Aristotle, from *The Politics* (Book 1: II-III, V-VI)

 St. Augustine, from *The City of God* (Book 19: 14-16)

John Locke, from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (II:xxi: 2, 5, 7-14)

 U. S. Declaration of Independence

* *Reading Journal #2: In your own words, describe two different definitions of freedom that you find in two of these readings, and compare and contrast their assumptions about what it means to be free.*

**2.4** **19th c. US** **Proslavery and Antislavery Arguments**

 Selections of proslavery and antislavery arguments (handout)

Secession Proclamation of Mississippi (1861)

Henry David Thoreau, from “Civil Disobedience”

**WEEK 3:**

**2.9** **Contrasting White Views of Slavery**

 John P. Kennedy, from *Swallow Barn*

Frederick Law Olmstead, from *Travels in the Cotton Kingdom*

* *Reading Journal #3: Please write two paragraphs of close reading, analyzing and comparing the imagery and language in Swallow Barn and Travels in the Cotton Kingdom. The aim here is not to compare events but descriptions: how do these authors exploit the nuances of their language to give differing tones and textures to the experience of slavery? What assumptions about the world underlie these descriptions?*

**2.11** **A Former Slave’s View of Slavery**

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative* (to ch. 10)

**WEEK 4:**

**2.16 A Former Slave’s View of Slavery**

Douglass, *Narrative* (finish)

**2.18 A Former Slave’s View of Northern “Freedom”**

Douglass, from *My Bondage and My Freedom*

* *Reading Journal #4: Please choose a scene that occurs in both the Narrative and in My Bondage and write a paragraph that analyzes how Douglass has revised his description of this scene from the first book to the second. What difference does the revision make? How does it alter our sense of the world Douglass is describing? What does it suggest about Douglass’ more mature understanding of slavery and freedom?*

**WEEK 5:**

**2.23** **(No class)**

\*\* Paper #1 due \*\*

**2.25** **Post-Emancipation Unfreedom 1: Racial Terrorism**

Ida B. Wells, from *Southern Horrors*

Langston Hughes, “Silhouette”

* Exercise #1: Local lynching report (see handout)

**WEEK 6:**

**3.1** **Post-Emancipation Unfreedom 2: Forced Labor and Mass Incarceration**

Michelle Alexander, from *The New Jim Crow*

In class: Sam Pollard, dir., *Slavery by Another Name*

**3.3** **Abolitionism and The Birth of the Feminist Movement in the U.S.**

Sarah Grimké, *letter XII* (“on the legal disabilities of women”)

 Lydia Maria Child, “Slavery’s Pleasant Homes: A Faithful Sketch”

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (to ch. 11)

**WEEK 7:**

**3.8** **Slavery, Patriarchy, and Women’s Rights**

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (to ch. 28)

**3.10** **(No Class)**

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (finish)

 From *Out of the House of Bondage*

* *Reading Journal #5: Instructions to come*

**SPRING BREAK**

**WEEK 8:**

**3.22** **Patriarchy and Women’s Rights**

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Declaration of Sentiments” (Seneca Falls 1848)

Congregational Church General Assembly, “Pastoral Letter”

Sarah Grimké, from letters on the Equality of the Sexes (III, XI, XIII)

Excerpt from the *Lowell Courier* (1848)

Coventry Patmore, from *The Angel in the House*

**3.24 Patriarchy and Women’s Rights**

 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”

* *In Class Journal Writing Exercise (Close Reading)*

**WEEK 9:**

**3.29** **Wage Slavery and Working Class Rights**

 James Henry Hammond, from the “Mudsill Speech”

 George Fitzhugh, from *Cannibals All!*

William West, “Wages Slavery”

 Marx, sections 1 and 2 of *The Communist Manifesto*

* *Reading Journal #7: Please identify two aspects of Marx’s argument that you agree with and write a paragraph or two discussing how you see his observation reflected in our world today. You may also comment on ways you think his account could be refined or updated.*

**3.31** **Working Class Rights**

Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills*

Harriet Robinson, from *Loom and Spindle*

Catherine Beecher, from *The Evils Suffered by American Woman and Children*

**WEEK 10:**

**4.5 Working Class Rights**

Hamlin Garland, “The Lion’s Paw”

*In Class Journal Writing Exercise (Close Reading)*

**4.7 Animal Rights**

Ana Recarte, from “The Animal Rights Movement in the United States”

 Excerpts from Tom Regan and Peter Singer

 Donna Haraway, from *When Species Meet*

**WEEK 11:**

**4.12** **Animal Rights**

* Exercise #2: You will be assigned a text we have read. Please identify passages with animals in them, or animal imagery or adjectives (“she was meek as a lamb” eg.) and write an entry analyzing how animals are understood or portrayed in this work. Be prepared to present your findings to the class (if you would like to close read a particular passage, please bring copies of this passage to distribute).
* Small group presentation topics due (report to me orally in class)

**4.14** **Research and Writing Workshop**

Introduction to library research and writing tips (no homework)

**WEEK 12:**

**4.19** **(No Class)**

Research Day

**4.21** **Small Group Presentations: Slaveries Today**

**WEEK 13:**

**4.26** **Slaveries of the Future, Slaveries of the Past**

Alex Garland dir., *Ex Machina*

* *Reading Journal #9: Please write a description of the topic you plan to pursue in your final paper and the central questions that you will seek to answer in it. Your description should identify the primary text or texts from this course you will be reading.*

**4.28** **(No Class)**

 Research Day

* *Exercise #3: Please submit summaries of at least three secondary articles or chapters you will use in your final paper.*

**WEEK 14:**

**5.3** **Paper Presentations and Workshop**

* *Exercise #4:* *Thesis paragraph, first body paragraphs, and outline due*

**5.5 Conclusions**

* *Journal #10: Please write a reflection on what you feel you’ve learned in the course— as a student of literature and history, a reader, a writer, a class member, and a critical thinker about your world. Please feel free to discuss your frustrations with the course, (the material, my teaching, or the class in general), and suggestions for how you would improve the class. Please be sure to reflect on your efforts in the course—what did you work hard at? Where do you feel you could have put more effort in, or tried harder to improve? If you didn’t do your best, what was stopping you? Finally, please name the grade you feel you deserve in this course, and explain why you are giving yourself that grade (be specific! Point to your portfolio of work in making your case).*

**EXAM WEEK:**

**5.10 Final Paper Due at 2pm**

**THE FINE PRINT:**

***Attendance Policy****:*

* **Attendance is required**. The policy is simple: because life sometimes gets complicated, you may miss up to two classes without an attendance penalty; beyond two absences I will decide the grade penalty on a case by case basis. Although I appreciate a heads up email if you will be absent, I do not need notes or excuses for your absences. PLEASE NOTE: once you have exceeded two absences I will not accept doctor’s notes or other excuses, so SAVE your absences for days when you have no alternative. If you miss five classes or more, I reserve the right to remove you from the class roster.

***Participation Policy:***

* **To earn a passing participation grade, it’s not enough to show up for class; you have to SHOW UP for class**. Since this is a seminar with a significant emphasis on discussion, I expect you to attend every class fully caffeinated, with that day’s reading in hand (and read) and with questions and comments to share. Each member of this class is crucial to making this course as intellectually rich as it can be. The plan is to learn from each other.

***Late Submission Policy:***

* **Assignments are due when they’re due.** It’s your responsibility to submit your assignments on time even if you’re absent that day, or else to arrange for an extension at least 36 hours ahead of the due date. Late assignments will be docked 3 points for every day (or partial day) they are late. IF YOUR PAPER IS LATE it is your responsibility to BE IN TOUCH WITH ME to let me know when I can expect it; assignments more than one week late will not be graded unless you get special permission from me.

***Academic Honesty:***

Plagiarism is unethical and worse—it makes you stupid. I expect all your work in this class to be the original product of your own miraculous brain. This does not mean you are forbidden to consult secondary materials, but I would encourage you to consult them only when explicitly directed to do so by the assignment, but at all times, YOU MUST CITE YOUR SOURCE WHENEVER YOU DRAW FROM SECONDARY MATERIALS. I don’t expect to encounter plagiarism in anyone’s work, but if I do, it will result in anything from a lowered grade or failure on the assignment to failure in the course, depending on the severity.