The Politics of Slavery and Human Trafficking
(POLS4046 and POLS7051)

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Course Information

Contact Details

The best way of getting in contact is through email at joel.quirk@wits.ac.za. Bookings should normally take place between 2pm and 5pm on Wednesdays (designated office hours). Please make use of email to arrange bookings, rather than simply showing up, as students who have made bookings will be seen ahead of students who do not have bookings. The relevant office is CB32E.

Time and Venue

Thursday, 2pm to 5pm, Room 32.

Course Aims & Objectives

It is commonly assumed that slavery came to an end in the nineteenth century. While slavery in the Americas officially ended in 1888, millions of slaves remained in bondage across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East well into the first half of the twentieth century. Wherever laws against slavery were introduced, governments found ways of continuing similar forms of coercion and exploitation, such as forced, bonded and indentured labour. Every country in the world has now abolished slavery, yet tens of millions of people continue to find themselves subject to various forms of human bondage.

In order to properly understand why and how slavery continues to be a problem in the world today, it is necessary to first take into account the relationship between the history of slavery and abolition and more recent practices and problems. Accordingly, this course begins with an introduction to the key features of historical slave systems, paying particular attention to slavery and abolition in Africa and the Americas from the sixteenth century onwards. Once the historical background has been introduced, the course then goes on to introduce the main themes and cases which have shaped recent debates over slavery and human trafficking, paying particular attention to competing strategies for combating slavery today, and the relationship between slavery and other structural problems such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, and institutional failure. This involves a combination of thematic analysis and targeted case studies, a review of the core texts in the field, and an analysis of political and legal strategies designed to combat slavery and related practices.

Learning Outcomes

Over the life of the course, students should be able to

- Critically assess a variety of approaches to the study of slavery and abolition, both past and present.
- Critically assess the relationship between historical slave systems and contemporary forms of slavery.
- Gain an appreciation of the key issues and events that have defined transatlantic slavery, other forms of legal slavery, the history and legacies of the legal abolition of slavery in Africa and the Americas, the contemporary problems of ‘classical slavery’, bonded labour, wartime enslavement, and recent debates over reparations and public commemoration of slavery.
- Understand and evaluate the various methods used to research modern forms of
slavery.
• Evaluate competing ethical, legal and political positions regarding the causes and consequences of slavery, and related strategies for eradication and prevention.
• Explore linkages between slavery and other human rights abuses, legal regimes, and structural issues of poverty, migration, inequality, racism and discrimination.

Teaching & Learning Methods

Course instruction takes the form of thirteen seminars of between two and three hours in length. The most common format will involve around an hour of instruction, followed by various group exercises and other forms of student participation, although some sessions may take different forms. There is no requirement for students to prepare formal presentations, but there is a strong expectation that students will be prepared to actively contribute to seminars.

Readings and Resources

Each seminar has between two and four required readings. These readings are a necessary component of the course, and students are expected to have prepared for the seminars accordingly. Each seminar outline also includes an additional list of further readings, which provide a guide for students seeking further material to work on assessments. There is no set textbook for the course.

Procedures Governing Honours and Masters

In cases where Honours and Masters students receive instruction on the same general topic, the following procedures will be employed in order to ensure that each category of student receives instruction and assessment which is in keeping with the level of the course they are enrolled in.

Accordingly, it is departmental policy that Honours and Masters students be subject to the following:

i) Different standards of assessment, with Masters students being assessed to a higher standard of analysis, argumentation, research and written expression than Honours students.

ii) Different lengths of assessment, with Masters students being allocated a longer word count for their essay submissions compared to their Honours counterparts.

iii) Different assessment questions, with Honours and Masters students each having different essay and exam questions that reflect the different standards expected of students at different levels.

In addition, course instructions may also make provisions for the following:

iv) Additional assessment, with Masters students being required to complete a higher number of assessments (e.g. additional essays or reports) than Honours students.

These criteria will apply to all relevant courses within the Department of Political Studies, and will ensure that students who are enrolled in different types of courses be subject to different standards of assessment.
Assessment

For Honours students, the course assessment takes the form of

- 1,500 word book review (15%)
- 4,000 word research essay (35%)
- Take home exam (50%)

For Masters students, the course assessment takes the form of

- 1,500 report on the legal abolition of slavery (15%)
- 5,000 word research essay (35%)
- Take home exam (50%)

Further information on assessment will be circulated by the end of July. It is important that students ensure that they undertake the assessment which is geared towards their level, as no marks will be awarded for submitted the wrong piece of assessment or essay topic.

Submission of Essays

Essays must be submitted in the relevant submission box (labeled “ESSAY BOX”) outside the Political Studies Office by 12pm on the assigned due date. All essays must include a signed departmental coversheet which affirms that the essay is the students own work, has not been plagiarized, and has been submitted on turnitin. In addition to the departmental cover sheet, all students should include a print out of their electronic turnitin submission which includes the percentage score that turnitin has assigned their essay as well as the word count for the essay.

Students who do not sign the coversheet and submit on turnitin should not expect to have their marks recorded and their essays returned until they have satisfied these basic requirements.

Rules for Extensions

No extensions will be granted unless there are strong medical grounds or serious and unexpected personal problems. Late essays will be penalised at the rate of 2 marks per working day, and no essays will be marked if they are submitted more than two weeks after the submission date. A working day is defined as any day where the University is open for business, so weekends and public holidays are excluded from this definition. A late essay is defined as an essay submitted after the due date and for which an extension has not already been given. Essays for which extensions have been granted can be submitted on a different timetable.

If you think you have a case for an extension, you must apply for an extension prior to the submission date, rather than after the deadline has past. Applications for extension which are received after the essay submission date will not normally be considered, and the relevant penalties outlined above will be applied. Students are responsible for knowing and following these rules.
Applying for Extensions

All applications for extensions must be submitted on the departmental extension form, which is available from the departmental office and the departmental website. This form can be submitted either in person or via email as an attachment. Any application which does not include the departmental form will not be considered. In order to demonstrate why an extension is required, it is strongly recommended that students also submit supporting documentation, such as medical certificates, that provides information that confirms that their reasons for seeking an extension. Not all applications for extension will be granted, so it is important to present a clear and compelling case.

Applications for extension via email are encouraged. Members of staff will not necessarily be in their offices outside designated consultation times, so if students cannot get hold of the relevant year coordinator in person they should email them the completed paperwork. Undergraduate students should not approach individual instructors seeking extensions.

Word Count

Markers are not obliged to read any material that exceeds the allocated word count, and students who exceed the limit run the risk of being penalized. Part of what is being assessed in any essay is the capacity to write to a pre-determined length, so students who exceed the assigned length have effectively failed to complete the task which has been set.

Feedback on Assessments

Students can expect to receive their essay marks no later than three weeks after the designated due date. In the event an essay is due towards the end of the semester, it is also departmental policy to return essays at least one week prior to the final exam in a particular course (in the event that the essay and exam are separated by less than three weeks). This policy is primarily designed to provide students with timely feedback so they can plan for future assessments. Please refrain from querying whether essays have been marked before the three week window.

This policy does not apply to students who submit their essays after the designated due date (this includes students who have received an extension). Students who submit later than everyone else should also expect to receive their marks after everyone else.

Guide to Referencing

You may use either the ‘Harvard’ system (author’s name, date and page number in the text; references listed alphabetically at the end) or footnotes/endnotes. The precise style does not matter so long as:

- The format is consistent.
- All quotations or paraphrases from other authors are clearly acknowledged.
- Where specific passages are cited the page number is given.
- References to journal articles must include date, author(s), title, journal title, volume number, and page ranges.
- References to books must give author(s) of chapters and editor(s) of the book.
References must include the publication title, date, publisher and place of publication. References to websites must give the title of the material, the name of the author (if known), the full URL and the date the site was accessed. It is not sufficient to simply include the URL.

Poor referencing often costs students easy marks, so it is important to ensure that you reference appropriately. If you have any doubts, please ask for assistance. For further information, consult http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Plagiarism

Plagiarism involves taking someone else’s work and passing it off as your own. Plagiarism comes in two main forms. The first form of plagiarism typically involves poor referencing, where students have taken material (wording, information or ideas) from another source and have not properly acknowledged where this material comes from. In such cases, the original source can still be found in footnotes and/or the bibliography, but these references do not cover all of the material which has been taken from the source and included in the essay. It is important to ensure that any passage which is copied exactly from another text is contained within ‘inverted commas’ and footnoted appropriately with the relevant page number. In cases where general information or ideas are being drawn from a particular source, quotation marks should not be used but the relevant material must still be referenced (ideally with page numbers where this is necessary to enable the reader to check the source). Failure to observe these conventions may be adjudged as poor referencing or minor plagiarism and will be penalised.

The second form of plagiarism involved taking material from another source without acknowledging where it comes from at all. This is the academic equivalent of cheating, and it is taken very seriously in this department, so students found plagiarising in this way can expect to be given a zero for the assessment. In addition, university rules require that particularly serious cases of plagiarism should be reported to the School Plagiarism Committee for further action.

Students who have been found guilty of any form of plagiarism will have their names recorded on a departmental list, and repeat offenders should expect to face additional penalties. Students who have spent significant amounts of time at university – honours and masters students – are also expected to know better as far as plagiarism is concerned, and can therefore expect to receive more significant penalties in the event that they plagiarise.

Because students must submit to turnitin, there is no excuse for being unaware that proper referencing is required in passages highlighted as identical to – or even very closely resembling – another text. As a general rule, the higher the turnitin percentage score an essay receives the more the paper is at risk of plagiarism, but this is only an imprecise indicator. Essays with relatively high percentages have not always been plagiarised, and essays which have been plagiarised can have low percentages (i.e. turnitin may not have picked up plagiarism).

Course Evaluations

It is departmental policy to ask students for feedback regarding all courses. This will primarily take the form of an anonymous survey (i.e. we will not ask you for your name or student number) that will be conducted towards the end of each individual teaching block (if the course is co-taught), or at the end of the semester (if the course is taught by one staff member). These surveys are designed to
provide information on how all the courses offered by the department worked, and where they might be improved in the future.

**Transformation: Non-Racism, Non-Sexism and Non-Discrimination**

Transformation seeks to overcome past discriminatory practices in order to create an environment where the full potential of everyone is realized and where diversity – both social and intellectual – is respected and valued. Like all other departments within the university, the Department of Political Studies is strongly committed to both defending and promoting the goals of transformation. Consequentially, both students and staff within the department are expected to contribute to an environment in all forms of racist and sexist language and behavior are not tolerated, and that everyone who is associated with the Department receives equal respect and recognition.

The University has established various policies and agencies which are designed to help advance the cause of transformation. If you encounter either staff or students engaging in sexist, racist, or discriminatory behavior, you are encouraged to report this behavior to one or more of the following:

Antje Schuhmann, Department of Political Science Transformation Representative, antje.schuhmann@wits.ac.za, Room CB28D, Phone 011 717 4370.

Disability Unit, Senate House, East Wing, Ground Floor, Phone 011 717-9152, [http://www.wits.ac.za/prospective/studentservices/disabledstudents/11544/home.html](http://www.wits.ac.za/prospective/studentservices/disabledstudents/11544/home.html)

Transformation and Employment Equity Office, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Room 9006, Senate House, Phone 011 717-1461, [http://www.wits.ac.za/aboutwits/governance/transformationoffice/15977/home.html](http://www.wits.ac.za/aboutwits/governance/transformationoffice/15977/home.html)

Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU), CCDU Building, West Campus, Phone 011 717 9140/32, [http://www.wits.ac.za/ccdu/11489/ccdu.html](http://www.wits.ac.za/ccdu/11489/ccdu.html)

Sexual Harassment Office, CCDU Building, West Campus, Phone 011 717 9140, [http://www.wits.ac.za/prospective/studentservices/ccdu/11490/sexual_harassment.html](http://www.wits.ac.za/prospective/studentservices/ccdu/11490/sexual_harassment.html)

All complaints will be kept confidential. Support, counseling and mediation services are also available through the university.
Course Outline

Course Overview: Seminar Titles

1. Slavery and World History
2. Transatlantic Slavery: Linking Africa and the Americas
3. Transatlantic Slavery: Slavery in the Americas
4. The Legal Abolition of Slavery in the Americas
5. The Legal Abolition of Slavery in Africa
6. Defining Slavery in All its Forms: Linking the Historical and Contemporary
7. Human Trafficking and its Critics
8. Human Trafficking and its Critics: The South African Case
9. Bonded Labour in the Indian Subcontinent
10. ‘Classical’ Slavery and Descent Based Discrimination in West Africa
12. Memories, Legacies and Representations of Slavery
13. Reparations for Slavery

Seminar One: Thursday 18th of July

Slavery and World History

Slavery and enslavement have been recurring themes throughout human history, having been practiced by most peoples at most times over the course of thousands of years. This historical pedigree raises many challenging questions. If slavery represents a straightforward crime against humanity, as current legal and moral opinion maintains, why was it sanctioned by all major civilizations and religions for such an extended period? On what grounds can we connect modern individuals and organizations to the history and legacies of various past injustices? Similar challenges also extend to anti-slavery activism, which has been widely celebrated as a major watershed in the history of human rights. In this context, organised anti-slavery has been approached as both a strategic template (which offers a tactical model for more recent campaigns), and as an historical inspiration (which effectively demonstrates the potential of modern human rights activism). It is also clear, however, that many aspects of the history of slavery offer little or no cause for celebration.

Essential Readings


Questions

- If slavery is such an ‘obvious’ crime against humanity, why can it be found in most times and places throughout human history?
- What distinguishes slavery from other forms of exploitation and human bondage?
- What do different historical slave systems share in common? In what ways can they said to be different?
- What does it mean to talk in terms of slavery and social death?
- What types of burdens and afflictions have slaves historically endured?
- What does enslavement – the process of acquiring slave status – involve both sociologically and psychologically?
- How have dynamics of Self and Other, or insider and outsider, shaped historical patterns of enslavement?
- How should we conceptualise and classify various forms of resistance to slavery?

Further Readings


Seminar Two: Thursday 25th of July

Transatlantic Slavery: Linking Africa and the Americas

Over the course of three and a half centuries, around twelve and a half million slaves are estimated to have embarked from Africa to the Americas via the infamous Middle Passage. This brutal trade supplied European settlers with the labour they desperately needed to develop conquered territories in the Caribbean, Brazil, Latin America, and north America. Commercial considerations dominated this complex network, with Europe’s insatiable demand for sugar proving to be the main catalyst for a gradual expansion of slave plantations in the New World. When indentured Europeans and enslaved ‘Indians’ proved inadequate, the planters and miners in the Americas turned to Western Africa, where elites provided European traders with slaves who had been captured, conquered or condemned in exchange for currency and commodities such as weaponry and textiles.
The history of slavery in Africa long predated European contact in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. While slave systems in Africa were organized on quite different terms to the more familiar plantation slavery of the colonial Americas, there were nonetheless sufficient similarities in the property rights associated with different systems to facilitate extensive cross-cultural slave trading. One of the main ingredients of slavery in Africa (and elsewhere) during the early modern era was natal alienation, which refers to status of slaves as ‘kinless’ outsiders, whose lack of socially recognized kinship ties placed them at the bottom of the prevailing hierarchy. Being ‘socially dead’, slaves – or at least recently acquired slaves – tended to be extremely vulnerable, and were consequentially routinely exploited and abused. While labour exploitation was ubiquitous, slaves were also forced into service as soldiers, sacrifices, functionaries, concubines and junior wives. In many cases, female slaves and children were especially prized, with the former being valued for both their productive and reproductive capacity, and the latter being valued as being more amenable to socialization and control. As this seminar will explore, European demand for slaves resulted in a series of complex transformations which linked together Africa, Europe, and the colonial Americas.

**Essential Readings**


**Questions**

- To what extent can be speak in terms of ‘African’ and ‘European’ during the era of the transatlantic slave trade? What other forms of identity and community are relevant here?
- Why were Europeans able to conquer the Americas, yet unable to make much headway in Africa prior to the second half of the nineteenth century?
- What impact did rising European demand for slaves have upon political, economic and social life in Western Africa?
- Since most slaves were traded with Europeans on the coast, but were enslaved within the interior, what role did intermediaries and hinterlands play in shaping trading relationships?
- What role did political authorities in Africa play in facilitating and regulating slave trading? To what extent were Europeans able to impose their preferred models and outcomes?
- What types of economic and political benefits accrued to rulers and other elites involved in slave trading in Europe, the Americas, and Africa?
- Since slave trading requires slave raiding in order to acquire new slaves, what impact did rising demand for slaves have upon patterns of organized violence in Africa?
- What role did gender play in shaping trading relationships both within and beyond Africa?
Transatlantic Slavery: Slavery in the Americas

It is difficult to overstate the contribution of African slaves to the colonization of the Americas. For European settlements to flourish (beyond initial gains from plundering indigenous peoples), they needed to develop market orientated goods. The main avenues were mining, agriculture, and hunting/rearing animals. Of particular importance here was the growth of sugar plantations, which served as the main catalyst for rising demand for slaves from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. Sugar has been characterised as the ‘greatest of the slave crops’. It has been calculated that ‘[b]etween 60 and 70 percent of all the Africans who survived the Atlantic voyages ended up in one or another of Europe’s sugar colonies’, where the plantation dominated economic and social life.
The most onerous feature of slave plantations in the Americas was the gang labour system, which demanded arduous exertion from dawn to dusk according to relentless production cycles, backed by the ‘discipline’ of the whip and other cruel punishments. The gang system was chiefly associated with sugar plantations, but also extended to crops such as rice, coffee, cotton and, to a lesser extent, tobacco. Sugar cultivation not only required backbreaking repetitive labour, it also required immediate processing once cut, resulting in a further series of dangerous and demanding tasks. While gangs of slaves were usually divided in terms of capability, with young adult males grouped together, heavy burdens would be placed upon all ages and sexes. Another prominent feature of the slave plantation was its distinctive social and ideological order, which saw a minority of privileged Europeans based in the ‘Big House’, surrounded by large numbers of enslaved servants.

Slaves in the Americas should not be regarded as passive victims, but as active agents who have consistently sought to challenge their predicament using many different strategies. These strategies can be dissected in a number of ways. On the one hand, we have overt acts of resistance, such as rebellion, flight and even suicide, which revolve around slaves seeking to escape their slave status entirely. These challenges have often been a double-edged sword, with slaves not only bravely seeking a greater measure of freedom, but also seeking to inflict serious injuries upon their masters. On the other hand, we also have more subtle forms of ‘day-to-day resistance’, which revolve around slaves seeking to advance their fortunes while still enslaved. In this context, slaves can be seen as active – albeit severely disadvantaged – participants in a constant process of negotiation and contestation over their terms of service, personal relationships, and social and economic role.

Essential Readings


Questions

- What types of factors shaped relationships between masters and slaves in the Americas?
- Why types of economic calculations were central to the creation and subsequent evolution of plantation life in the Americas?
- How significant were ideologies of racial difference in shaping the historical evolution of slavery in the Americas?
- What features did different slave systems in the Americas share in common? In what ways where they different, say between the United States and Brazil?
- In what ways and to what extent did slave resistance, either overt or ‘day-to-day’, complicate life for slave owners and colonial society?
- What types of family structures and cultural practices emerged under the shadow of slavery?
- What does it mean to talk in terms of ‘becoming African in the Americas’? What types of experiences and orientations distinguish Africans in the Americas from Africans in Africa?
Further Reading


Seminar Four: Thursday 8th of August

The Legal Abolition of Slavery in the Americas

The legal abolition of slavery constitutes a profound break with thousands of years of historical precedent, with a ‘natural’, venerable and often highly profitable institution being formally abolished throughout the globe over the course of two and a half centuries. Throughout the history of slavery, there have been consistent objections to the enslavement of the ‘wrong’ types of people (i.e. untarnished social insiders), but there appear to have been few – if any – politically significant challenges to slavery as a general institution until the eighteenth century. The emergence of organized anti-slavery not only required a determination that the end of slavery was morally desirable. All historical societies have recognized that slavery was frequently an exceptionally loathsome institution. It also required a political determination that ending slavery was actually feasible, and not simply a utopian proposition which could be left to moral philosophers and theologians. Until this critical juncture was reached, reformers primarily concentrated their energies upon regulation, mitigation, salvation and/or manumission, rather than general abolition.

The pioneers of organized anti-slavery faced daunting political obstacles, and undoubtedly deserve tremendous respect. It is important, however, not to exclusively concentrate upon political activism in Britain and the United States. These cases are the exception, not the rule. On this essential point, it is possible to identify three main paths to legal abolition. The first path revolves around popular mobilization, with anti-slavery activists building a broad based coalition using petitions, publications, public meetings and other forms of agitation. In this model, which is epitomized by Britain but also imperfectly applies to the northern United States, France and Brazil, a popular commitment to anti-slavery crystallized prior to anti-slavery legislation. The second path revolves around violent conflict.
In this model, which is epitomized by the southern United States and Haiti but also imperfectly applies to Cuba and parts of Latin America, abolition was bound up in major wars and slave resistance. The third – and most common – path revolves around collective honour, ‘civilized’ status and external pressures. In this model, which applies to Portugal, Spain, and many other states, the passage of anti-slavery laws was not driven by popular agitation, but can instead be chiefly traced to strategic responses and reluctant concessions by political elites to cumulative external influences.

**Essential Readings**


**Questions**

- What is the difference between narrowly opposing the enslavement of specific types of people, and broadly opposing slavery as a general category or institution?
- To what extent can the legal abolition of slavery in the Americas be explained in terms of economic and political interests? Is it naïve to talk in terms of morality or ethics?
- What types of factors account for the popular appeal of anti-slavery ideas in places such as Britain and the United States? Why did similar sentiments not emerge in many other countries?
- What is the relationship between revolution and anti-slavery? How important were violent upheavals in places such as the United States, Haiti, France, and Latin America?
- To what extent was the legal abolition of slavery an extension of British hegemony?
- What was the relationship between the legal abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and the subsequent abolition of slavery in the Americas?
- By what terms should we judge the success or failure of legal abolition? For the slaves? For the masters? For economic growth?

**Further Readings**


**Seminar Five: Thursday 15th of August**

**The Legal Abolition of Slavery in Africa**

Four major trends have defined the history of slavery and abolition in sub-Saharan Africa over the last two centuries. The first trend is concerned with the impact of organized anti-slavery, which placed increasing pressure upon established slave systems and related trading networks in sub-Saharan Africa over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This trend initially impacted upon maritime slave trading, starting in Western Africa in the first half of the nineteenth century, and then later extending to maritime trading in East Africa and the Middle East. Following the colonial “Scramble” for Africa in the final third of the nineteenth century, anti-slavery pressures increasingly impinged upon the interior of the continent, with European conquerors taking action against overt slave trading and raiding, and then later and more reluctantly taking hesitant action in relation to established slave populations. The main focus throughout this period was legal slavery – notwithstanding periodic colonial labour scandals – so many forms of bondage regularly persisted in the aftermath of abolition.

The second trend is concerned with the consequences of an expansion of longstanding slave systems in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa in the nineteenth century. Many slave systems in Africa reached their greatest dimensions after the emergence of organized anti-slavery. This trend was in turn bound up in sustained patterns of violent conflict, most notably in the interior of much of West Africa and Central Africa, which resulted in millions of Africans being violently enslaved in the century that preceded colonization. This trend overlaps with a third parallel trend concerned with the staggered transition from slavery to forced labour for the state. Under colonial rule, European administrators throughout Africa took qualified action against the former while expanding the later, resulting in widespread death, dispossession, exploitation, and systematic abuse. While slavery in Africa peaked in the second half of the nineteenth century, the overall prevalence of bondage in Africa peaked in the first half of the twentieth century. Limiting the conversation to slavery conveys a false image of ‘progress’ under ‘colonial rule which does not withstand scrutiny once other forms of bondage are taken into account.

The final trend is concerned with a gradual – but by no means uniform – decline in the overall prevalence of human bondage in sub-Saharan Africa from the mid-twentieth century onwards.
Despite numerous reports on the rapid ‘growth’ of human trafficking, human bondage in sub-Saharan Africa is probably less prevalent now than it was in either the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, owing in large part to a general decrease in the prevalence of forced labour for the state. Some of the other developments which have contributed to this trend are rapid population growth, changing land/labour ratios, the cumulative influence of anti-slavery ideas and expectations (i.e. antislavery as modernity), and a related shift to other exploitative and insecure forms of ‘free labour’.

Essential Readings


Questions

- What should we make of the close relationship between anti-slavery and European imperialism and colonialism?
- What types of social and ideological projects where associated with the transmission of ‘Commerce, Christianity, and Civilization’ in Africa? To what extent were these projects successful during both the pre-colonial and colonial eras?
- What were the primary motivations behind the legal abolition of slavery in Africa?
- Under what circumstances was anti-slavery rhetoric and/or policy an asset for European conquerors? Under what circumstances did it create complications and problems?
- What does it mean to talk in terms of a ‘Slow Death’ for slavery? In what ways did the legal abolition of slavery in Africa differ from earlier developments in the Americas?
- What should we make of the evolving relationship between slavery, marriage, concubinage, and pawnship?
- What types of justifications were offered for the expansion of forced labour under colonial rule in Africa? Can these justifications be even minimally reconciled with anti-slavery?
- What types of political and economic calculations impacted upon anti-slavery policies?
- How significant was the contribution of slaves and ex-slaves to the practical outcomes of colonial anti-slavery policies?

Further Reading


**Seminar Six: Thursday 22th of August**

**Defining Slavery in All its Forms: Linking the Historical and Contemporary**

Two main challenges need to be overcome in order to successfully define slavery. These are (i) formulating a general definition that reflects crucial differences in how slavery has been—and continues to be—practiced at different times and places; and (ii) developing a general definition that clearly distinguishes slavery from related forms of human bondage, such as serfdom or pawnship. Most efforts to address these challenges have revolved around the decisive contribution of individual ownership, violent dominion, property rights, and extreme exploitation. These themes have not only been reflected in key legal instruments, such as the 1926 Slavery Convention, they have also long dominated popular understandings of slavery, serving as a series of benchmarks against which various examples of bondage have tended to be conceptualized and classified. The most recent example of this dynamic concerns ongoing debate over the defining features of ‘contemporary forms of slavery’, such as human trafficking, bonded labour, wartime enslavement, and the severe abuse of migrant workers.

In order to decide where slavery begins and ends, modern human rights activists and other actors have returned to these key themes of ownership and exploitation in order to help to determine
which types of cases and circumstances are sufficiently similar to historical slave systems that they
deserve to be legitimately classified as instances of slavery. With slavery now ostensibly abolished
across the globe, this has proved to be both an analytically difficult and politically contentious
exercise. At an analytical level, the main problem has been determining what constitutes slavery in
many illicit and irregular settings. In the absence of a formal legal signifier, it has proved difficult to
formulate a series of criteria that can distinguish slave from non-slave in situations involving complex
and often idiosyncratic variations in levels of consent, coercion, compensation, and working
conditions. At a political level, the main problem has been a tendency to invoke slavery as a
rhetorical device in order to prioritize many different causes, such as rape as ‘slavery’, or economic
injustice as ‘slavery’. Taken to a logic conclusion, this rhetorical inflation reduces slavery to little
more than a hollowed out placeholder that covers virtually any form of exploitation or abuse.

**Essential Readings**

The *Bellagio-Harvard Guidelines on the Legal Parameters of Slavery*,
http://www.law.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofLaw/Research/HumanRightsCentre/Resources/Bellagio-
HarvardGuidelinesontheLegalParametersofSlavery/#d.en.286505

Jean Allain, ‘The Definition of Slavery in International Law’, *Howard Law Journal*, 52, 2009, pp. 239-
275.

Kevin Bales, *Ending Slavery: How We Free Today’s Slaves*, (Berkeley: University of California
Press, 2007), pp. 5-20.

Richard Burchill, ‘Stories of Oppression and Empowerment: The Tangled Role of International Law,
Africa and the Eradication of Slavery’ in Joel Quirk and Darshan Vigneswaran (eds.), *Slavery,

**Questions**

- What do historical and contemporary definitions of slavery share in common? In what ways
  are they different?
- On what terms can we connect historical slave systems with contemporary forms of slavery?
  Is what is happening today ‘new’, or simply a modification of the ‘old’?
- What policies and strategies are currently available to combat modern slavery? In what way
do these strategies differ from those employed in the past?
- If slavery has been legally abolished, but the abuses associated with slavery persist under
  other designations, what does this say about the efficacy of legal abolition?
- Once slavery comes in a number of forms, it is not easy to say where slavery begins and
  ends. When it comes to ambiguous cases, how can we tell what is not slavery?

**Further Readings**


Kevin Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*, (Berkeley: University of


**Recent Court Cases Concerned with Slavery and Trafficking**


Special Court for Sierra Leone, *Prosecutor vs. Charles Ghankay Taylor*, (2012), available at http://www.sc-sl.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=k%2b03KREEPCQ%3d&tabid=107,


**Seminar Seven, Thursday 28th of August**

**Human Trafficking and its Critics**

Human trafficking is a new way of (re)classifying a longstanding series of problems and practices. Until fairly recently, the concept of trafficking rarely featured in either policy circles or popular discussions. While the various problems now described as forms of trafficking are historically ubiquitous, they were previously classified in terms of different categories, such as slavery, sexual slavery, prostitution, or child labour. Human trafficking first emerged as prominent framework during the mid-1990, building upon earlier campaigns focusing upon prostitution under banner of
‘white slavery’, or, less commonly, traffic in persons. This initial breakthrough can be chiefly attributed to a combination of intensifying campaigning around questions of sexual violence and abuse together with increasing anxieties regarding movements from developing to developed countries. Following this breakthrough, trafficking was rapidly embraced by governments, human rights activists, and international organizations, culminating in a situation today where trafficking is now firmly established as the pre-eminent way of conceptualizing and combating human bondage.

The remarkable rise of human trafficking as a political issue has not gone unchallenged. Over the last decade, a growing number of critics – both academics and activists – have questioned both the conceptual foundations and practical ramifications of recent efforts to combat trafficking. While many topics could be potentially discussed here, in this we will chiefly focus upon five overlapping themes. These themes are i) human trafficking as a form of “moral panic”, ii) the methodological limitations of recent attempts at quantification, iii) the contentious relationship between trafficking and prostitution, iv) the relationship between trafficking, border protection, and criminality, and v) the role of the United States (US) government in shaping global anti-trafficking policies. Most of these critiques have chiefly focused on the nexus between trafficking and (forced) prostitution, which has attracted the lion’s share of popular, scholarly, and political interest.

**Essential Readings**


**Questions**

- What is the relationship between human trafficking and slavery? Are they different things or different ways of describing the same thing?
- What should we make of the high priority attached to forced prostitution, or sexual servitude, within recent treatments of human trafficking? In what ways is sexual servitude distinctive? In what ways is it much the same as other forms of human bondage?
- To what extent can various forms of prostitution be legitimated and validated through the language of ‘choice’, ‘consent’, and ‘sex-work’?
- What types of attributes are associated with narratives of ‘innocent victims’? Do these narratives help to promote the cause? Or do they end up being counterproductive?
- What role has the United States government played in establishing human trafficking as a global issue? To what extent has US involvement been positive or negative?
- Since human trafficking frequently takes between within states, to what extent is the current focus on ‘border protection’ simply a mask for other political agendas?
- What should we make of the historical roots of human trafficking within ‘white slavery’ discourse? Is this simply an embarrassing footnote or does it have real consequences?
- When all is said and done, does human trafficking hurt or help the cause of ending slavery and human bondage?
Further Readings


MID SEMESTER BREAK

Seminar Eight, Thursday 12th of September

Human Trafficking and its Critics: the South African Case

In early 2010, journalists from all over the world descended upon South Africa to report on preparations for the FIFA World Cup. Since this was the first time that an African nation had hosted the World Cup, much of the media commentary focused on potential complications, such as concerns about public safety and the challenges of stadium construction. While most of these topics were the types of things one might expect to encounter as part of preparations for such a major international event, there was one issue that stood out as somewhat unusual: high levels of interest in the relationship between the World Cup and human trafficking, which was widely depicted as a
form of slavery. According to journalists, government officials, international organizations, and human rights activists, human traffickers were busy making their own nefarious plans for the event.

One prominent intervention came from Stop 2010 Human Trafficking, which released a short online video featuring well known South African celebrities testifying to the dangers associated with human trafficking and legalized prostitution. This video included the startling claim that as ‘many as one hundred thousand victims’ were expected to be trafficked into slavery as part of the lead up to the World Cup. Writing for Time Magazine, E. Benjamin Skinner similarly reported on the existence of ‘[m]ore than 500 mostly small-scale trafficking syndicates — Nigerian, Chinese, Indian and Russian, among others — [which] collude with South African partners, including recruiters and corrupt police officials, to enslave local victims’. In response to this apparent problem, the South African government introduced new anti-trafficking legislation. Yet when the World Cup came to its successful end in July 2011, it subsequently emerged that most of these reports were inaccurate and unfounded, with researchers determining that ‘the sex worker population stayed relatively stable during the World Cup period and that, contrary to popular fears, there was no influx of children into the sex work industry’. These findings in turn echoed a similar study on prostitution in Cape Town in 2008, which concluded that local estimates of human trafficking had been grossly exaggerated.

Once the World Cup was over, the South African government no longer felt the same urgency, and the anti-trafficking legislation that was tabled in 2010 has still not yet been approved by parliament.

Essential Readings


Questions

- Is the case of human trafficking in South Africa exceptional or unique, or is it much the same as or parallel developments in many other parts of the globe?
- Why have questions of sexual servitude and prostitution featured so prominently in recent debates? Is this prominence justified? What other agendas are at work here?
- Does the scale of human trafficking in South Africa justify the levels of energy and attention which it has generated both within South Africa and internationally?
- Given all the other serious problems which South Africa faces, what priority should be given to human trafficking?
- If labour exploitation came to feature more prominently in public discussion of human trafficking, how would the current status quo change?
- What would an effective and appropriate response to human trafficking in South Africa look like? To what extent can current policy be described as effective and/or appropriate?
Further Readings


Richter, Marlise, Matthew Chersich, Dudu Ndlovu, Gerrit Maritz, and Marleen Temmerman, ‘Maybe it will be better once this World Cup has passed’ Sex Work and the 2010 Soccer World Cup – Violation of sex worker human rights persists, 2010. Available from http://www.migration.org.za/sites/default/files/publications/2010/Sex_Work_and_the_2010_Soccer_World_Cup_-_Media_Brief.pdf


Seminar Nine, Thursday 19th of September

Bonded Labour in the Indian Subcontinent

Bonded labour, or debt bondage, has long been identified as a form of human bondage which shares many features in common with “classical” slavery. The main focus of discussion in this seminar will be the Indian subcontinent, which is widely regarded as having the greatest concentration of modern slavery in the world today. While individual estimates vary, this is the one location where both regional and country specific estimates have been consistently expressed in millions, rather than in multiples of thousands. In its most basic form, debt-bondage involves a “worker who renders service under conditions of bondage arising from economic considerations, notably indebtedness though a loan or advance”. This usually involves an extended period of service, where “the worker (or dependants or heirs) is tied to a particular creditor for a specified or unspecified period until the loan is repaid” (ILO, 2004).

In this seminar, we explore both the historical relationship between slavery and bonded labour in Indian subcontinent, and the defining features of bonded labour today. The overall scale of bonded labour in the subcontinent cannot be explained by reference to poverty alone. There are other parts of the globe, such as Africa, which also endure extreme poverty, but they do not necessarily have the same levels of modern slavery. In order to understand why bonded labour remains such a substantial issue in the subcontinent, we also need to take into account two additional factors: i) the continuing consequences of the historical limitations of the legal abolition of slavery, and ii) the continuing consequences of enduring patterns of social hierarchy and caste discrimination.
Essential Readings


Questions

- What factors account for the prevalence of bonded labour in the Indian subcontinent?
- Why has debt proved to be such a particularly effective instrument of control?
- How can we distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate debts?
- To what extent can governments in the region be held responsible for the continued persistence of bonded labour?
- In the absence of viable alternatives, is bonded labour little more than a survival strategy?
- Is what is happening in India today ‘new’, or simply a modification of the ‘old’?
- Given the laws which are already on the books, shouldn’t combating bonded labour simply be a question of effective enforcement?

Further Readings


Seminar Ten, Thursday 26th of September

‘Classical’ Slavery and Descent Based Discrimination in West Africa

This seminar focuses upon a small number of cases where the historical categories of master and slave have continued to have a profound influence upon contemporary life. The main focal point here is West Africa. Within the last decade, the governments of both Mauritania (2007) and Niger (2003) have felt obliged to pass legislation (re)abolishing slavery in response to both domestic
pressure and international exposure. For citizens in both countries, slavery has been a fact of life for
generations, with slaves enduring arduous work routines, cruel punishments, sexual abuse, and
family separations. The continued viability of these residual slave systems chiefly depends on
children born into slavery. The contemporary legacies of historical slave systems also find expression
in larger patterns of descent-based discrimination. In many parts of West Africa, there are hundreds
of thousands of former slaves and the descendants of slaves who no longer owe extensive
obligations to a specific master, yet nonetheless continue to experience forms of discrimination and
subordination because of their slave heritage. This discrimination and subordination routinely
shapes employment practices, marriage prospects, and social relationships, and can also have a
major influence upon ongoing failures by government officials to protect human rights. In this
environment, the language of classical slavery has proved to be an effective way of attracting
attention, but it also remains hamstrung by a number of analytical and political shortcomings.

Essential Readings

Martin Klein, ‘Slave Descent and Social Status in Sahara and Sudan’, in Benedetta Rossi (ed.),

Zekeria Ould Ahmed Salem, ‘Bare-foot Activists: Transformations in the Haratine movement in
Mauritania’, Stephen Ellis and Ineke van Kessel (eds.), Movers and Shakers: Social Movements in

Helen Duffy, ‘Hadijatou Mani Koraou v Niger: Slavery Unveiled by the ECOWAS Court’, Human Rights

Questions

- Should ‘classical’ slavery be regarded as a singular, exceptional category, or simply one
  amongst many forms of modern slavery?
- Does the English term ‘slavery’ provide an accurate definition for the multiple forms of
  dependency and attachment found in West African society?
- On what terms can we connect slavery as an inherited status to more recent examples of
  labour exploitation and social marginalization?
- How significant is the continuing influence of discrimination on the basis of slave descent?
  Since discrimination tends to be social, rather than legal, what types of policy responses are
  available in order to bring about improvements in the current status quo?
- What does the case of Hadijatou Mani Koraou reveal about the persistence of slavery in
  Niger? What does it obscure?
- What factors explain the strong resonance of slavery in this region, but not in others?
- To what extent can the problem of ‘slavery’ in places such as Mauritania and Niger be
  primarily explained in terms of poverty and underdevelopment?

Further Readings

Martin Klein, Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa (Cambridge: Cambridge University


**Seminar Eleven, Thursday 3rd of October**

**Wartime Enslavement in Africa: Sexual Slavery, ‘Forced Marriage’ and Slave Redemption**

Most accounts of the historical origins of slavery begin with the enslavement of prisoners taken in violent conflict. This has traditionally been expressed in the language of a bargain, with prisoners ‘consenting’ to enslavement in order to avoid immediate execution. This enduring link between war and slavery has been has not yet entirely come to an end. The main issue from a modern slavery perspective has been the wartime practice of kidnapping women and children as part of organized raiding parties. This practice is most prominently associated with recent conflicts in Sudan, Sierra Leone and Uganda, but has also been reported in other conflict situations in Africa and elsewhere.

In this seminar we explore the recent history of sexual slavery and forced marriage in conflict situations. In April 2012, the Special Court of Sierra Leone found Charles Taylor, former President of Liberia, guilty on 11 counts of aiding and abetting war crimes and crimes against humanity during his involvement in the civil war in Sierra Leone (1991-2002). One of the crimes for which Taylor was found guilty was ‘conjugal slavery’, which the court defined for the first time as a ‘claim by the perpetrator to a particular victim as his “wife” and the exercise of exclusive sexual control over her, barring others from sexual access to the victim, as well as the compulsion of the victim to perform domestic work such as cooking and cleaning’. As part of its lengthy judgement, the Special Court formally defined conjugal slavery as a subcategory of the more established crime of sexual slavery. While scholars and activists are only beginning to debate the merits of this new approach, the previous history of deliberations in this general area makes it unlikely that the Taylor judgement – which is currently being appealed – will definitely settle the underlying issues at stake here. In an
earlier case in 2008, the Special Court favored a quite different approach when it ruled (on appeal) that cases of what was alternatively described as ‘forced marriage’ should be regarded as a separate crime against humanity, which was legally distinct to sexual slavery. This older formula was based upon the still contentious claim that forced marriage ‘is not predominantly a sexual crime’, but instead involved ‘forced conjugal association or partnership’ and ‘long-term social stigmatization’.

In addition, this seminar will also explore the ethics and economics of slave redemption in Sudan. Between 1983 and 2005, persistent raids by government backed militias resulted in tens thousands of people from southern Sudan being forced into service as cattle-herders, domestic servants, sex slaves and ‘wives’. In order to secure the return of those taken in these raids, some local community leaders and—from 1995 onwards—international organizations developed an extensive redemption program, raising funds though high-profile public campaigns based around the idea of buying the freedom of enslaved captives. These programs proved to be extremely controversial, with critics charging that redemption encouraged further raids, that they unduly rewarded slave-holders, and that they were subject to fraud. In this environment, it remains an open question whether ‘buying freedom’ should be regarded as viable ethical and practical strategy.

Essential Readings


Questions

- On what terms can we meaningfully distinguish between sexual slavery and forced marriage, either legally or historically?
- How significant are recent criminal prosecutions for wartime enslavement? Given the small numbers of people involved (and the much larger number who got away), should we regard these cases as a major breakthrough, or a minor skirmish?
- On what terms can we connect wartime abuses with peacetime examples of arranged or forced marriage?
- If ‘buying freedom’ proved to be politically effective, would there still be a moral case against giving money to slave-owners, no matter how positive the overall result might be?
- If slave redemption is undesirable or immoral, what other potential strategies are available to combat wartime enslavement?
- Since war creates an environment where it is very difficult to take effective remedial action, shouldn’t our main focus be bringing about an end to hostilities?

Further Readings


Seminar Twelve, Thursday 10th of October

Memories, Legacies and Representations of Slavery

The last two decades have seen a remarkable surge of public, political and intellectual interest in the history of slavery and its legacies. This began in earnest in the mid-1990s, and while not all countries or regions have been affected to the same degree, it is nonetheless possible to speak in terms of a genuinely transnational phenomenon, which has seen renewed interest in – and significant political activism connected with – the history of slavery and abolition in many settings across Western Europe, the Caribbean, the Americas, Africa and parts of the Middle East. Much of this activity has been articulated in terms of the idea of ‘breaking the silence’ surrounding slavery. As the reference to ‘silence’ makes clear, there is a widespread sentiment – most notably amongst peoples of African descent – that slavery has tended to be reduced to a historical phenomenon, rather than a major issue of enduring consequence. This ‘silence’ has never been total, but slavery has nonetheless rarely been accorded the types of public recognition that might have been expected of a key institution practised by most peoples at most times for nearly all of recorded human history.

While numerous shortcomings and silences surrounding the history and legacies of slavery undoubtedly persist, recent and ongoing efforts at ‘breaking the silence’ have nonetheless had a major impact and, as a consequence, the history of slavery and its legacies have received much greater global attention and recognition than had previously been the case. Ground-breaking initiatives such as the 1994 UNESCO Slave Route Project; commemorative occasions like the tercentenary of the famous Maroon leader Zumbi in Brazil in 1995 and the 1998 anniversary of the abolition of slavery in France; and the opening of new museums as far apart as Europe and South Africa, have led the way towards a commemorative model of engagement with slavery involving memorial practices, sculptures, monuments, museums and associations.

Essential Readings


Questions

• What types of political agendas and social groupings are responsible for the recent surge of interest in remembering and commemorating slavery?
• To what extent can recent commemoration activities be primarily explained in terms of contemporary concerns with race, citizenship, and social cohesion, rather than a genuine recognition of historical injustices which took place in the past?
• How and why have commemorative activities varied between cases and countries?
• What types of factors need to be taken into account when it comes to creating monuments and memorials to slavery?
• What can we realistically expect of museums and monuments when it comes to commemorating and remembering slavery and its legacies?
• By what standards should we judge recent commemorative activities? Are they too little too late, or do they constitute a meaningful step towards truly breaking the silence? Do some countries have better records than others in this area?

Further Reading


Seminar Twelve, Thursday 17th of October

Reparations for Slavery

The last two decades have been marked by an upsurge of interest in questions of historical injustice. Four overlapping themes can be identified here. First, we have calls for financial compensation for systemic abuses of human rights which occurred in the past. This is most prominently associated with campaigns for reparations for the history and legacies of transatlantic slavery, which draw much of their inspiration from earlier claims brought against governments for World-War II era abuses. Second, we have growing calls for governments and other actors to formally apologize for prior acts of historical injustice, such as lynching in the United States, the failings of the Catholic Church, and various abuses associated with colonial rule and wartime massacres. Third, we have the emergence of ideas and institutions associated with transitional justice, which are most prominently connected to various models of truth and reconciliation following the fall of authoritarian regimes and/or the cessation of armed conflict. Finally, we have the growing prominence of questions of
national commemoration and public education, reflecting competing efforts to shape how a given sequence of historical events comes to be represented and remembered.

These various efforts to repair historical wrongs pose a number of challenges to established models of legal responsibility and corrective justice. In many cases, claims for historical restitution involve intergenerational and/or collective claims against governments, corporations and communities, rather than more familiar relationships between individuals. These claims for restitution can also be difficult to reconcile with established models of legal culpability and individual responsibility because it is not always easy to demonstrate the type of clear connection between victim and perpetrator, which is conventionally regarded as a precondition for legal restitution. The overall scale and/or extended duration of the abuses involved can also create complications, since it can be difficult to know how to navigate the large numbers of individuals and institutions implicated in a particular series of events.

In the specific case of slavery, recent claims for reparations have primarily focused upon the Transatlantic Slave Trade. These claims have primarily come from the USA for the descendants of slaves, and from Africans seeking redress for African underdevelopment through the Transatlantic Slave Trade, Colonialism and neo-colonialist economic relationships. These reparations claims have proved highly controversial from a historical, legal and analytical standpoint. Reparations in the form of financial compensation and national apologies have drawn inspiration from similar claims stemming from the Holocaust and historical abuses against Native Peoples. The suitability of these examples as models to follow has been questioned and there has been significant opposition to these comparisons. For some critics, calls for reparations are ultimately backward looking, and it would be preferable for contemporary inequality and injustice to take precedent over addressing events from previous centuries. What then, should be our response to the history and legacies of slavery?

Essential Readings


Questions

- What is meant by the word reparations? What do reparations seek to achieve?
- Why have calls for reparations for historic slave systems emerged? Why have they emerged in relation to some historical slave systems but not for others?
- What can be judged as success in terms of securing reparations? Does this alter if we use the word repair instead of reparations?
- Is it possible to apologise for wrongs committed by previous generations?
- Is the call for reparations for historical slave systems a sign that human rights have not been fully delivered?
- Should we be looking to the present and the future rather than to the past?
Further Reading


http://staff.gsacrd.ab.ca/~ameunier@gsacrd.ab.ca/FOV2-0003FA15/FOV2-000400DC/FOV2-00066A97/LocalFiles/010321/01032103/Historical%20Injustice.pdf