HIST 608 – winter 2019
Prof. Carlos Aguirre
333 McKenzie Hall, caguirre@uoregon.edu
Office Phone: 346-5905
Office hours: Thursdays, 10-12 and by appointment

HIST 608: Slavery in the Americas

Course description
The main goal of this colloquium is to expose students to a variety of methodological and historiographical approaches to the history of slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean. In order to place this history and the assigned reading materials in the context of the broader history of slave regimes, we will include content that deals with slavery in the United States. We will examine central topics to the history of slavery such as the slave trade, plantation regimes, gender and family patterns, forms of resistance and adaptation, the abolition process, and the making of post-abolition societies.

Slavery is an almost universal phenomenon, but it cannot be reduced to a single model or template. It entailed, at different times and in different spaces, quite diverse configurations of legal, economic, social, and racial patterns. These differences do not exist only across countries or continents but also within them: local and regional patterns ought to be given central attention.

The historiography of slavery has changed dramatically over time and especially during the last three or four decades. The use of different theoretical paradigms and methodological strategies has enriched our understanding of its multiple dimensions. The assigned readings attempt to offer examples of those different approaches.

The main outcome of this colloquium will be a 20-page historiographical essay dealing with a specific topic, period, and space within the Americas. Students will discuss with the instructor ideas for their essays during week 3. Once a topic has been chosen the instructor will assist students with the selection of materials (monographs, edited volumes, articles, review essays) to be covered. An annotated bibliography will be due on week 6.

In addition, each student will be in charge of introducing one of our weekly topics and readings. This will be a 20-minute presentation.

Beginning in week 2, each student will submit, by the end of the day on the Sunday before class, a 2-3 page reaction paper about the assigned readings, highlighting the main contributions made by the authors, their theoretical and methodological foundations, and their possible flaws or limitations. In addition, students should pose a few questions to be addressed during our class discussion. These weekly assignments will be circulated via Canvas so that everyone could read them ahead of our class meeting.
Grade breakdown
Attendance, participation, and oral presentation: 20%
Weekly reaction papers: 20%
Bibliographical exercise: 20%
Historiographical essay: 40%

What you can expect to learn in this course

- A broader knowledge of the history of slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean between the late 15th century and the late 19th century
- A clear understanding of the relationship between slavery and processes of racial, gender, and class formation in the region
- The role of slaves and slave communities and families in the shaping of slave societies
- A solid grasp of the international historiography on slavery and the changes over time in theoretical and methodological approaches
- A deeper understanding of what writing comparative history entails—its promises, advantages, and limitations.

Schedule of meetings and assignments

Week 1 (Jan. 7): Introduction to the colloquium. The origins and nature of slavery

Readings:


Week 2 (Jan. 14): Slave trade


Week 3 (Jan. 21): MLK holiday. No class. The instructor will schedule individual meetings with students during this week.

Readings:


Week 5 (Feb. 4): Slavery, Family, and the Law. Guest: Prof. Michelle McKinley

Readings:


Week 6 (Feb. 11): The Plantation Complex

Readings:


Week 7 (Feb. 18): Slavery and Revolution in the French Caribbean

Readings:


Week 8 (Feb. 25): The Impact of the Haitian Revolution

Readings


Week 9 (March 4): Abolition


Week 10 (March 11): Post-Abolition Societies

Reading:


Final papers due: March 22, 2019

*Electronic submission only*