

Course Title: HIS 304-10: **Slavery and Capitalism in American History**
(3 credits)

Where?: Online

When?: June 2021 Term (June 7 through July 9)

3:15 to 5:15 p.m. on every Mon, Tue, Wed, Thur
From July 6 through August 7, 2020

Professor: Dr. Michael J. Douma

Office Location: Hariri 311

Office Hours: Email me and I will respond quickly. I am also available to chat.

Scope: Was American slavery efficient? Was it profitable? Was slavery capitalist or its opposite? These questions, which are now very much in debate in professional historiography and in the media, are also the leading questions the course will address. In this course, students will explore the economic history of American slavery and question its relationship with capitalism. They will learn how historians have approached the study of slavery through an economic lens, and how they have balanced this with normative concerns. This is a seminar course, so it is largely organized around readings and discussion. No prerequisite in economics is required.

Course objectives:

1. Through discussions of economic studies of slavery, this course will teach some basic knowledge of economics and the history of economic thought.
2. Through in-class exercises using primary sources, students will gain experience interpreting materials of the past, and learn to develop and stand by their own views.
3. Assigned readings provide an overview of a variety of diverse topics relating to slavery, markets, finance, and management. While some common major themes will be covered, the course goes beyond the common fare of American history survey courses by pointing to important but less commonly studied phenomenon of buying and selling slaves, the economics of runaway slaves, the capital cost and depreciating of slaveholding.
4. Through a practical research project on building a slave prices database, students will engage with and contribute to the study of the history of American slavery and capitalism.

Grading:

Attendance

This is an online seminar with a small number of students. It meets for only 20 class periods. To maintain a strong sense of class community and discussion, it is important that you

attend each session. Students may miss two class periods at the most. Each absence beyond that will result in a reduction of one-half letter grade for the final grade in the course.

Graded Assignments:

Discussion Review Paper #1	30 percent
Discussion Review Paper #2	30 percent
Slave Prices Group Project	40 percent
Total	100 percent

Required Readings:

Mostly articles available via Georgetown's library.

But also these books:

1. Robert William Fogel, and Stanley L. Engerman. 1974. *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*. Boston: Little, Brown.
2. Paul A. David et al, *Reckoning with Slavery: A Critical Study in the Quantitative History of American Negro Slavery* (Oxford University Press, 1976).
3. John Majewski, *Modernizing A Slave Economy: The Economic Vision of the Confederate Nation* (2009)
4. Brian Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of Union: Cotton, Federal Politics and The Global Origins of The Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

University Guidelines:

Exemptions will be granted for missed class periods due to the observance of any major religious holiday, emergencies, family illnesses, and other reasons as recognized by the undergraduate dean.

All possible attempts will be made to accommodate any disability.

No cheating. You should know what plagiarism is.

Should classes be canceled, the instructor will email the class to make alternative arrangements.

Writings Assignments:

Discussion Review Papers (2 papers at 5 pages each)

Each student will sign up to lead two discussion periods per semester. On the day of the discussion, the student is responsible for turning in a four-page paper which summarizes and responds to the assigned readings. Discussion leaders might consider reading more than just the assigned readings for the week and consider larger historiographical issues at play. The paper may present your opinions or original ideas about a topic, but your views should be backed by historical evidence. When two or more students have signed up to become discussion leaders for a particular class, the students should meet-up outside of class to prepare leading the discussion.

Slave Prices Project:

A classroom project for this course will be to collaborate on building a database for slave prices in the northern states: Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Delaware, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Large databases on slave prices have been produced for studying the economics of slavery in the American South, and in the Caribbean, but no similar database exists for slave prices in the North. This is unfortunately because a comparative study of slave prices might tell us a lot about why slavery flourished in some contexts and failed in others. For this project, students will scour archival sources for slave price sales. For a final paper of 5 to 8 pages, each student will describe their effort to find the data and how they interpret it. The paper will be graded based on the effort and creativity put into accumulating data, the analyses of the data, the hypotheses of what is to be tested and what the data might explain. Articles and books assigned during the semester can be cited in the final document.

Course Schedule and Readings:

July 6: Introductions

July 7: Defining the Subject

- a. Scott Reynolds Nelson, "Who Put Their Capitalism in My Slavery?" *Journal of the Civil War Era* 5:2 (June, 2015), 289-310.
(too difficult – consider replacing on syllabus)
- b. Douglas Egerton, "Markets without a Market Revolution: Southern Planters and Capitalism" *Journal of the Early Republic* 12 (July 1996), 207-221.

July 8: American Slavery in a Global Context

- a. Barbara L. Solow, "Capitalism and Slavery in the Exceedingly Long Run," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17:4 (1987): 711-37.
- b. David Eltis, "Europeans and the Rise and Fall of African Slavery in the Americas: An Interpretation," *American Historical Review* 98 (Dec. 1993): 1399-1423

July 9: Contemporary Views

George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South; or the Failure of Free Society* (1854).
<https://archive.org/details/sociologyforsout00fitz/page/n12> (332 short pages)

Week 2

July 13: The Slave Price Data Project

(No reading for this day. We will discuss the assignment to collect slave price data)

July 14: Contemporary Views of Slavery in the South

Michael J. Douma, “A Dutch Confederate: Charles Liernur Defends Slavery in America”
BMGN: Low Countries Review 132-2 (June, 2017), 27-50.

July 15: Classic Scholarship (review paper: Anushka Desai)

A.H. Conrad and J.R. Mayer, The economics of slavery in the antebellum South. *Journal of Political Economy*, 66 (2) (1958), 95-130.

Edward, Saraydar (1964). A note on the profitability of ante bellum slavery. *Southern Economic Journal* 30:4 (1964) pages 325–332.

July 16: Classic Scholarship

Robert William Fogel, and Stanley L. Engerman. *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974).

Week 3

July 20: Quantitative Study

Paul A. David et al, *Reckoning with Slavery: A Critical Study in the Quantitative History of American Negro Slavery* (Oxford University Press, 1976).

July 21: Domestic Slave Trade (review paper: Gabe)

Eugene Choo and Jean Eid, “Interregional Price Difference in the New Orleans Auctions Market for Slaves” *Journal of Business and Economic Statistics* 26 (2008), 486–509.

Bruce C. Greenwald, and Robert R. Glasspiegel “Adverse Selection in the Market for Slaves: New Orleans, 1830–1860” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 98 (1983), 479– 99.

July 22: Slave Prices (review paper: Anushka Desai)

Laurence Kotlikoff, “The Structure of Slave Prices in New Orleans, 1804-1862” *Economic Inquiry* 17:496-518.

Mancall, P. C., Rosenbloom, J. L., and Weiss, T. “Slave prices and the South Carolina Economy, 1722–1809” *The Journal of Economic History*, 61(3):616–639.

July 23: Maximizing Work (Review paper: Noah Moss)

Giorgio Canarella and John A. Tomaske, “The Optimal Utilization of Slaves” *The Journal of Economic History* 35:3 (Sep. 1975), 621-629.

~~R.K. Vedder “The slave exploitation (expropriation) rate” *Explorations in Economic History*, 12(4) (1975), 453.~~

Lee A. Craig, Robert G. Hammond, “Nutrition and signaling in slave markets: a new look at a puzzle within the antebellum puzzle” *Cliometrica* (2013), 189-206.

Week 4

July 27: The Efficiency Debate

Gavin Wright “The efficiency of slavery: another interpretation” *The American Economic Review*, 69:1 (1979), 219–226.

James Oakes, “The Peculiar Fate of the Bourgeois Critique of Slavery,” in Winthrop D. Jordan, ed., *Slavery and the American South* (Oxford, Mississippi: Univ. Of Mississippi Press, 2002), 29-48. (e-book available through Georgetown library)

~~Yoram Barzel, “An economic analysis of slavery.” *The Journal of Law and Economics*, 20(1) (1977), :87–110 (no good)~~

July 28: Slave Labor and Free Labor (Review Paper: Noah Moss)

Christopher Hanes “Turnover cost and the distribution of slave labor in Anglo-America” *The Journal of Economic History* 56(2) (1996), 307–329.

Gonzalez... article

July 29: Government and Slavery (review paper: Gabe)

Mark A. Yanochik, Mark Thornton, Bradley T. Ewing, “Railroad Construction and Antebellum Slave Prices” *Social Science Quarterly* 84:3 (Sept., 2003), 723-737.

Peter A. Coclanis and Stanley L. Engerman, "Would Slavery Have Survived Without the Civil War?: Economic Factors in the American South During the Antebellum and Postbellum Eras" *Southern Cultures* 19:2 (2013), 66-90.

July 30: Runaway Slaves

Conor Lennon, "Slave Escape, Prices, and the Fugitive Slave act of 1850" *Journal of Law and Economics* 59 (August 2016), 669- 695.

Jeffrey Rogers Hummel, *Deadweight Loss and the American Civil War: The Political Economy of Slavery, Secession, and Emancipation*. (chapter 6)

Week 5

August 3: The Southern Economy

John Majewski, *Modernizing A Slave Economy: The Economic Vision of the Confederate Nation* (2009)

August 4: The Southern Economy

Brian Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of Union: Cotton, Federal Politics and The Global Origins of The Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

August 5: New History of Capitalism

Seth Rockman, "What Makes the History of Capitalism Newsworthy?", *Journal of the Early Republic* 34, no. 3 (2014), pp. 439–466

Seth Rockman, "The Unfree Origins of American Capitalism," in Cathy Matson, ed., *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives and New Directions* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 335-361

August 6: Responses to the NHC

Alan L. Olmstead and Paul W. Rhode, "Cotton, slavery, and the new history of capitalism" in *Explorations in Economic History* 67 (January 2018), 1-17.

~~E. Hilt, "Economic history, historical analysis, and the "New History of Capitalism""
Journal of Economic History 77 (2) (2017), pp. 511-574~~
Maybe too long

H. Reuben Neptune, "Throwin' Scholarly Shade: Eric Williams in the New Histories of Capitalism and Slavery" *Journal of the Early Republic* 39:2 (Summer 2019), 299-326.

