

University Seminar 3a. SLAVERY, RELIGION, AND WOMEN
Fall 2003
Syllabus

Instructor: Bernadette J. Brooten
Meeting Time: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 1:00–2:00
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Office Hours: Monday 2:30–3:30, Thursday 2:10–3:00. Sign-up sheet on office door.

Slavery is the most extreme form of power that one human being can exercise over another. Religion aims to express humanity's highest ethical aspirations. How, then, can religion support slavery? Are enslaved women treated differently than enslaved men? Do slave-holding women exercise their power differently than slave-holding men? To answer these questions, we will examine female slave narratives, pro-slavery biblical interpretation, American slave religion, and biblical, early Christian, and early Rabbinic statutes and teachings.

Students will learn to analyze texts closely, to compare social structures cross-culturally, to employ gender as a category of analysis, to understand how religious values shape social values, and to examine phenomena from different viewpoints. Students will have the opportunity to become involved in the work of the Feminist Sexual Ethics Project, the current focus of which is: Slavery's Long Shadow over the Lives of Girls and Women. The website (www.brandeis.edu/departments/nejs/fse/) offers students a learning site that will supplement the classroom. For example, the bibliographies on U.S. slavery and on ancient slavery can help in writing the papers for the course.

My purpose in teaching this course is to help students to think seriously about a foundational social institution that raises profound moral questions, to learn to think in a complex fashion about inter-

sectionality (in this case, of gender, religion, race, and legal status), and to see how religion can function as a force for good and for evil.

Class requirements:

1. Active class participation. I will call on students to summarize and comment on the required reading for the day. Any student may tell me before class (up to twice) that she or he is not prepared and may “pass” for that class. More than three unexcused absences during the semester will result in a lower grade. (20% of your grade)
2. Two short papers (3–5 pages, 14-pitch font, 1 1/2 inch margins). For each paper, select one of the primary sources already discussed in class. (A primary source dates from the period under study, in this case, from the time of slavery. A secondary source is a scholarly critique or analysis of primary sources.) Analyze how two of the following intersect with each other in that source: religion, slavery, gender, and sexuality. (For example, analyze what difference it makes in Genesis 16 and 21:1–21 that Hagar is enslaved, while Sarai/Sarah is free, and that both are women and not a man, like Abraham or one of his enslaved male laborers.) One of these papers must deal with an ancient source, and one with a modern one. **The first paper is due on September 22d, and the second on October 23d.** You may hand these in earlier, but late work will be penalized. (40% of your grade)
3. One major paper (8–10 pages, 14-pitch font, 1 1/2 inch margins). For this paper, select two of the primary sources discussed in class. Analyze how two of the following intersect with each other in these two sources: religion, slavery, gender, and sexuality. For example, compare Mary Prince’s thinking about religion and slavery with that of Charles Hodge, or compare the early Christian slaveholding woman’s treatment of her slave-woman in the fifth canon of the Synod of Elivra with Dr. Flint’s wife’s response to Harriet Jacobs. **An outline of this paper is due no later than November 5th in class. The paper itself is due in class on December 1st. If you hand in the paper, at the latest, by November 20th, in class, I will return it to you with comments on December 1st, and you will have until December 10th at 5:00 PM to hand in your revised version** to the NEJS office in Lown. I strongly encourage you to pursue this latter option. (40% of your grade)

Students with Disabilities:

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have an accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

Policy on Sexual and Racial Harassment:

As a means of preventing sexual and racial harassment, I add to the final student evaluation forms the following question: "Has the instructor sexually or racially harassed you during the semester?" I do this to give students an anonymous means of reporting such behavior and to make public my commitment not to engage in it. Beyond this, I hope that you will feel free to tell me about any problems in the sexual or racial dynamics of the course so that I can address them—to the best of my ability.

Policy on Incompletes and Late Papers:

Planning ahead can mean that you are better able to cope with the crises that will arise during the semester. Please be aware that I do not normally grant incompletes. Only a very major emergency can result in an incomplete. Please also be aware that late papers will receive lower grades. These policies exist out of fairness to all of the students who, in the face of similar crises and overloads, nevertheless complete their work on time.

If you have any special needs or concerns with respect to this class, be sure to discuss these with me during the first two weeks of class.

Course Outline:

Introduction

August 28 The Perils and Promises of a Comparative Approach, and Background to the Topic of Slavery

I. Legacies of Slavery

September 3 Catherine Clinton. "With a Whip in His Hand: Rape, Memory, and African-American Women." In *History and Memory in African-American Culture*. Ed. Geneviève Fabre and Robert O'Meally. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, 205–218.

September 4 Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, and Steven F. Miller, eds. *Remembering Slavery. African Americans Talk about their Personal Experiences of Slavery*. New York: New, 1998, 56–57, 146–149, 190–207, 296–300 (all as marked)

Recommended: View the video "Unchained Memories" at the library. Visit the website on "Unchained Memories":

www.hbo.com/docs/programs/unchained_memories/
Learn more about the production of "Unchained Memories":

discover.npr.org/features/feature.jhtml?wfId=977159

II. Slave Narrative

September 8 *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave: Related by Herself*. London: Westley and Davis, 1831, in *Six Women's Slave Narratives*. Introduction by William L. Andrews. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, 1–20

September 10 *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave*, pp. 21–40

III. Slave Religion in America

September 11 Albert J. Raboteau. *African-American Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, chapters 1–3

Recommended: View
www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/about/the_series.html,
especially the first two programs: 1776–1865, and
1776–1865

IV. Sarah and Hagar: A Mistress and Her Slave-Woman

- September 15 Genesis 16; 21:1–21. Read two translations of these passages: Jewish Publication Society and New Revised Standard Version
Delores S. Williams. *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993, 1–8, 15–20
- September 17 Genesis 16; 21:1–21
Delores S. Williams. *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993, 20–33

V. Biblical Statutes on Slavery

- September 18 Exodus 21:1–11; Deuteronomy 15:1–18. Read two translations of this: Jewish Publication Society and New Revised Standard Version

VI. Enslaved Women in Ancient Judaism

- September 22 Tal Ilan. *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine*. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1995, 205–211
First Paper Due in Class
- September 24 Mishnah, Tractate *Qiddushin* 1:2–3; Tractate *Gittin* 7:4
These are in the third order of the Mishnah, which is called *Nashim* (“Women”). The edition by Philip Blackman is useful (BM 506.G53 B6)

VII. New Testament Teachings on Slavery

- September 25 Paul's Letter to the Galatians. Read the New Revised Standard Version
- September 29 Paul's Letter to Philemon. Read the New Revised Standard Version
- October 1 Epistle to the Colossians 3:18–4:1; Epistle to the Ephesians 5:21–6:9; First Epistle of Peter 2:11–3:7. Read the New Revised Standard Version
- Recommended: Dale B. Martin. *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity*. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1990, 1–30

VIII. Early Christian Mistresses and Their Slave-Women

- October 2 *Acts of Andrew*, in *New Testament Apocrypha*. Ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. Robert McL[achlan] Wilson, vol. 2. (rev. ed. of the collection initiated by Edgar Hennecke; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1989; Cambridge: Clark, 1992, 138–142. This book is in the Judaica Reference section on the mezzanine of Goldfarb Library (BS 2832. S3 1991 v. 1 and v. 2)
- October 6 Yom Kippur: No Class
- October 7 “Brandeis Monday”
In-class discussion of the first paper and preparing for the second paper
Bring your questions about the professor's comments on your first paper
- October 8 Synod of Elvira (Christian bishops' meeting in southern Spain, ca. 306 CE), canons 1–81, in *Power and Sexuality*. Samuel Laeuchli. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1972, 126–135

October 9 Gregory of Nyssa. *The Life of Saint Macrina*. Trans., with introduction and notes, by Kevin Corrigan. Toronto: Peregrina, 1987

IX. Christian Use of the Bible in the Slavery Debates

October 13 E. N. Elliott. *Cotton is King and Pro-Slavery Arguments: Comprising the Writings of Hammond, Harper, Christy, Stringfellow, Hodge, Bledsoe, and Cartwright* Augusta, GA: Pritchard, Abbott & Loomis, 1860, 841–861

October 15 E. N. Elliott. *Cotton is King and Pro-Slavery Arguments: Comprising the Writings of Hammond, Harper, Christy, Stringfellow, Hodge, Bledsoe, and Cartwright* Augusta, GA: Pritchard, Abbott & Loomis, 1860, 861–877

October 16 William E[llery] Channing. *Slavery*. 2d rev. ed. Boston: Munroe, 1836, 1–12, 31–55, 119–127

X. American Slaveholding Women and Their Religion

October 20 Mary Boykin Chestnut. *A Diary from Dixie*. Ed. Ben Ames Williams. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980, 21–22, 121–123, 138, 139, 141, 151–152, 163–164, 265, 485–486, 148–149, 166–167, 171–172 (all as marked)

October 22 *Fanny Kemble's Journals*. Ed., with an introduction, Catherine Clinton. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000, 67–70, 85, 90–92, 108–110, 115–117, 136–138, 147, 151–152, 154–155, 156, 158–159, 161 (all as marked)

October 23 *The Civil War Diary of Clara Solomon: Growing Up in New Orleans 1861–1862*. Ed., with an introduction, Elliott Ashkenazi. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995, 82, 93, 101,

112–113, 122, 127, 144, 161, 231, 295, 326, 355,
384–385, 395, 417 (all as marked)

Second Paper Due in Class

October 27 Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. “Religion in the Lives of Slaveholding Women of the Antebellum South.” In *That Gentle Strength: Historical Perspectives on Women in Christianity*. Ed. Lynda Coon, et al. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990, 207–229

Recommended: Drew Gilpin Faust. *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*. New York: Vintage, 1996, 53–79

XI. Slave Narrative

October 29 Harriet Jacobs. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Ed. Nellie Y. McKay and Frances Smith Foster. New York: Norton, 2001, 9–46

October 30 Harriet Jacobs. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Ed. Nellie Y. McKay and Frances Smith Foster. New York: Norton, 2001, 47–85

November 3 Harriet Jacobs. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Ed. Nellie Y. McKay and Frances Smith Foster. New York: Norton, 2001, 85–123

November 5 Harriet Jacobs. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Ed. Nellie Y. McKay and Frances Smith Foster. New York: Norton, 2001, 123–156

Outline of Major Paper Due in Class

November 6 Ann Taves. “Spiritual Purity and Sexual Shame: Religious Themes in the Writings of Harriet Jacobs.” In Harriet Jacobs. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Ed. Nellie Y. McKay and Frances Smith Foster. New York: Norton, 2001, 209–222

XII. Sexual Exploitation of Slave Women

- November 10 Thelma Jennings. “Us Colored Women Had to Go Through a Plenty’: Sexual Exploitation of African-American Slave Women.” *Journal of Women’s History* 1 (1990) 45–58 (plus notes for those pages)
- November 12 Thelma Jennings. “Us Colored Women Had to Go Through a Plenty’: Sexual Exploitation of African-American Slave Women.” *Journal of Women’s History* 1 (1990) 58–74

XIII. Genuine Interracial Intimacy during Slavery?

- November 13 Randall Kennedy. *Interracial Intimacies: Sex, Marriage, Identity, and Adoption*. New York: Pantheon, 2003, 41–69

XIV. Slave Women’s Labor

- November 17 Jacqueline Jones. *A Social History of the Laboring Classes: From Colonial Times to the Present*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999, 5–60
- November 19 Jacqueline Jones. *A Social History of the Laboring Classes: From Colonial Times to the Present*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999, 61–88

XVI. A Novel by a Formerly Enslaved Woman?

- November 20 Hannah Crafts. *The Bondwoman’s Narrative*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates. New York: Warner, 2002, 31–84

Draft of Major Paper Due in Class for Those Opting for a Rewrite

Recommended: To learn more about scholarship on *The Bondwoman’s Narrative*, visit:

www.bondwomansnarrative.com/learn/

XVII. Documentaries on Slavery and the Jim Crow Period of American History

- November 24 View the video “Unchained Memories” in class.
To prepare for class: Read background materials on the website on “Unchained Memories”:
www.hbo.com/docs/programs/unchained_memories/
Learn more about the production of “Unchained Memories”:
discover.npr.org/features/feature.jhtml?wfId=977159
- November 26 View a portion of “This Far by Faith” on 1866–1945 in class.
To prepare, read
www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/journey_3.

Conclusion and Summary

- December 1 What Have We Learned?
Major Paper Due in Class
Students Opting to Revise Major Paper Will Receive Back their Paper with my Comments
- December 10 **Revised Major Paper Due in NEJS Office (Lown Building) by 5:00 PM**