

HIST 292H: Race and Slavery in North Africa

Spring 2010

Instructor: Professor Ahmed El Shamsy (elshamsy@email.unc.edu; Hamilton 414; 962-3970)

Office hours: Mondays, 1:00-2:00 pm; Tuesdays, 1:00-2:00 pm; and by appointment

Class meetings: Mondays, 2:00-4:50 pm, in Davie 101

Final examination: Monday, May 3, 4:00 pm

Course description:

This course explores the historical record of slavery in North Africa, and analyzes its relationship to changing conceptions of race in North African societies. Between the Muslim conquest of North Africa in the seventh century and the official abolition of slavery in the region in the nineteenth century, millions of men, women, and children lived in or passed through North Africa as slaves. Many served as laborers, servants, concubines, and soldiers; others became artists, scholars, saints, and sultans, even founding dynasties based on slave rule. Today, in spite of official decrees, forms of slavery persist in North Africa, and perceptions of racial and ethnic differences play a role in present-day conflicts from Niger to Darfur. The course investigates the key factors that have shaped the varied institution of slavery in North Africa; these include the principles of Islamic law and prophetic ethics, the values and prejudices of particular cultures, the Roman system of slavery that predated Islam in the region, environmental change and economic stress, and the changing relations between minorities, majorities, and states. An examination of the phenomenon of slavery thus offers a window into the cultural and economic history of North African societies. In addition, it provides a contrast to the very different form of slavery – predicated on distinctive notions of race and racial superiority – that characterized the transatlantic world and that continues to dominate our vision of this major historical phenomenon.

The course is divided into three main parts. The first part explores the ethical, legal, and philosophical debates on race and slavery in premodern North Africa. It begins with an overview of slavery in the region before the advent of Islam, and then turns to an examination of the often ambiguous and contradictory currents on the subject within Islamic ethics and law. We will also analyze the racial prejudices of the dominant Arab culture and the role of race in the justification and practice of slavery. The second part of the course focuses on the reality of slavery in North Africa by investigating the economics of the North African slave trade, the varied occupations of slaves, the experience of slavery, and the position of slaves and slave communities in society. In the third part, we will consider the history and impact of the abolition movement in North Africa, and examine the racial underpinnings of some present-day conflicts in the region. In conclusion, we will seek to situate the North African form of slavery within a global context.

Readings:

The required textbooks for this course, available at Student Stores, are the following:

- William Gervase Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)
- John O. Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell, *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Marcus Wiener, 2002)
- Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, *Shaihu Umar: A Novel*, trans. Mervin Hiskett (New York: Marcus Wiener, 1989)

All other readings are available in electronic form on Blackboard. For each week, reading questions are provided on Blackboard.

Assessment:

Class participation: 10%

Oral presentation: 10%

Four 2-page response papers (including one on *Shaihu Umar*): 10% each

Final examination essay (5-6 pages): 40%

Course outline with weekly readings:

Jan 11. Introduction

Jan 18. Holiday - NO CLASS

Part I. Discourses on race and slavery

Jan 25. Race and slavery in the ancient Mediterranean world

David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): Ch. 2, "The Ancient Foundations of Modern Slavery"

A. H. M. Jones, "Slavery in the Ancient World," *The Economic History Review* 9/2 (1956): 185-199

Sections on slavery and manumission in "The Institutes" (535 C.E.)

Feb 1. The ethical universe of early Islam and its contradictions

Hunwick and Powell, *The African Diaspora*: Ch. 1, "Basic Texts on Slavery"

Additional passages from early Islamic texts

Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*: Chs. 2, "A Fragile Sunni Consensus," and 3, "Dissenting Traditions"

Feb 8. The rights and duties of slaves

Shaun E. Marmon, "Domestic Slavery in the Mamluk Empire: A Preliminary Sketch," in *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East*, ed. Shaun E. Marmon (Princeton, N.J.: Marcus Wiener, 1999)

Hunwick and Powell, *The African Diaspora*: Ch. 3, "Slavery and the Law"

Feb 15. Perceptions of black Africans

Al-Jahiz, "In Defence of the Blacks against the Whites"

Hunwick and Powell, *The African Diaspora*: Ch. 4, "Perceptions of Africans in Some Arabic and Turkish Writings"

Paul Hardy, "Islam and the Race Question," available online at www.masud.co.uk/islam/misc/race.htm

Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): Chs. 4, "Prejudice and Piety, Literature and Law," 12, "Equality and marriage," and 13, "Image and Stereotype"

Feb 22. The role of race in slavery

Chouki El Hamel, "'Race,' Slavery and Islam in Maghribi Mediterranean Thought: The Question of the *Haratin* in Morocco," *The Journal of North African Studies* 7/3 (2002): 29-52 [23]

David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): Ch. 3, "The Origins of Antiracist Racism in the New World"

Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): Ch. 8, "In Black and White"

Part II. The reality of slavery

Mar 1. The slave trade in North Africa: Sources, markets, and numbers

Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): Ch. 1, "Slavery"

Michel Le Gall, "Translation of Louis Frank's *Mémoire sur le commerce des nègres au Kaire*," in *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East*, ed. Shaun E. Marmon (Princeton, N.J.: Marcus Wiener, 1999), pp. 69-88

Hunwick and Powell, *The African Diaspora*: Chs. 5, "Slave Capture," 6, "The Middle Passage," and 7, "Slave Markets"

Mar 8. Spring Break - NO CLASS

Mar 15. The varied occupations of slaves and ex-slaves

Hunwick and Powell, *The African Diaspora*: Ch. 9, "Domestic Service"

Humphrey J. Fisher, *Slavery in the History of Muslim Black Africa* (London: Hurst & Co., 2001): Chs. 6, "Slaves in the Family," and 7, "Slaves at Work"

Robert W. Lebling, Jr., "Flight of the Blackbird," *Saudi Aramco World* 55/7, Compilation Issue on Al-Andalus (2004): 2-11

Mar 22. Slave soldiers and slave rulers

Hunwick and Powell, *The African Diaspora*: Ch. 11, "Military Service"

P. M. Holt, "The Mamluk Institution," in *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, ed. Youssef M. Choueiri (Oxford and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2005)

Linda Northrup, "The Bahri Mamluk Sultanate, 1250-1390," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, Vol. 1, *Islamic Egypt, 640-1571*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 242-265

The biography of Kafur al-Ikhshidi in *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary*, trans. William MacGuckin, vol. II (Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1843), pp. 524-528

Mar 29. The experience of slavery

DUE IN CLASS: Response paper on *Shaihu Umar*

Hunwick and Powell, *The African Diaspora*: Ch. 15, "A Slave Narrative"

Apr 5. Barbary piracy and white slavery

Thomas Pellow, *The Adventures of Thomas Pellow, of Penryn, Mariner: Three and Twenty Years in Captivity among the Moors*, ed. Robert Brown (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1890), pp. 47-88

Excerpt from Paul Baepler's introduction to *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*, ed. Paul Baepler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999)

Part III. Race and slavery in the modern period**Apr 12. The abolition movement and after**

Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*: Chs. 6, "Imperialism and Secularism," and 7, "The Ulema and Quasi-Abolition"

Amnesty International, "Mauritania: A Future Free from Slavery" (2002): pp. 1-21, 39-49

Apr 19. Race and conflict in present-day North Africa: The case of Darfur

Makau Mutua, "Racism at Root of Sudan's Darfur Crisis," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 14, 2004

Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009): Ch. 3, "Writing Race into History"

Apr 26. North African slavery in comparative perspective

Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): Ch. 14, "Myth and Reality"

Hunwick and Powell, *The African Diaspora*: Introduction, "The Same But Different"

David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): Ch. 6, "Slavery in Colonial North America"

May 3, 4:00 pm. FINAL EXAMINATION