

This summer I faced the very difficult challenge of reconfiguring a course that has something to offer students but that, by virtue of our Mellon conversations, was also clearly ripe for renovation. Here are some of the changes instituted in the new syllabus, which I think will help literature students draw more explicit connections between their very nascent interests and the various kinds of intellectual opportunities that can grow out of interest and intuition:

1. Rebalancing of site visits. As I mentioned before, in *Representing Slavery*, students traveled to several archival centers in order to become acquainted with a variety of primary source materials from the era of American enslavement. The ultimate goal of these experiences was to generate independent digital projects that pair archival work with the students' concurrent explorations of contemporary critical theory. The new syllabus for this class will attempt to accomplish the same thing through multiple trips to fewer sites, to reduce some of the sense of newness and to develop the students' self awareness in the process of building a relationship with archival materials. In the Mellon seminar we talked a lot about how much of the work of such a course is to help students develop a particular disposition towards research. I was able to accomplish some of this in the original course, but sacrificed some depth for breadth.

2. Introducing more narratives about the experience of research itself, across disciplines. In the first permutation of this class, I felt somewhat stymied by the fact that I did not want to (nor can I!) teach a history class. Talking to professors in other disciplines, as well as initiating some of the Mellon conversations in my own department, helped me recast much of the course's reading toward evaluating the research experiences and archival affinities germane to different kinds of writers, particularly poets and novelists.

4. More small-scale projects. Alongside this increased focus also came a different way to help introduce students to some of the research skills they need, as they will now carry out several "micro-projects" that reproduce some of the steps followed by some of the

course's authors. This came out of our discussions regarding the extent to which everything in the class has to be about a single final project. Revising this aspect of the course should be especially useful, as the students' final projects are very different and will ultimately require different skill sets regardless.

5. More “professional development.” The last time I taught this course, several students went on to pursue various grants for research opportunities, which made me see that they should be more involved in the development side of the course. This time I have integrated more practicum experience around the preliminary work that has to come before a researcher's arrival at an archival site—including securing funds—, so that students are better equipped to make such approaches on their own.

6. More different kinds of writing, more constantly. One challenge of this course is that, at the same time students are working on their own final projects, some are still struggling with how to craft their writing. In this syllabus, more of the micro-projects also involve more varieties writings, to help students develop more comfort and agility over the course of the semester.

Representing Slavery

English 466, Prof. Parham : mparham@amherst.edu : bit.ly/see_mp → Johnson Chapel 108



Mining a variety of archives in search of captivity narratives created by American slaves and their progeny, this class uses a broad combination of historical, fictional, and visual texts to consider larger questions about the overlapping roles of voice, testimony, trauma, and narrative endemic to cultural and historical understandings of American slavery.

left. Kara Walker. *Exodus of Confederates from Atlanta* (2005)

Workload & Grading

This is a course in both archival investigation and also literary and cultural criticism, which means that we are not only interested in the identification and gathering of cultural objects, but also in building and refining the critical apparatuses through we interpret what we find. We will also pay both practical and theoretical attention to matters that surface around the presentation of our research, as the goal of this course is the creation of a multimedia journal issue based on our investigations.

Over the course of the semester, each student is responsible for writing **one 3-5 page multimedia article** chosen and designed in editorial collaboration with the rest of the class. Weekly, you are also required to engage the ongoing discussion of class materials on the class **blog**, with a minimum of 1 post and 1 comment per week. Sometimes this posting must come in response to specific research assignments, but you are also welcome to post on your own pursuits and interests at any time. An **outline** of your project, including an **abstract**, will be due two weeks before your publication date, with a draft due one week before. At the end of the semester, you will also be asked to write a short retrospective essay, reflecting on your reading, writing, and researching practices in this course.

As you might imagine, because we will be travelling this semester, enrollment in this course requires both a commitment to the process and some degree of flexibility. Attendance is vital, though I will not detract from your final grade until after your first absence, after which you will lose 1/3 of a point from your final grade for every subsequent absence (so, for instance, an A would become an A- and so on down the line). This logic of threes does have an end: 3 absences means automatic failure.

Texts

Literary Criticism and Cultural Theory

- Introduction to *The Bondswoman's Narrative*
- Woolfork + supporting (Caruth, La Capra, Hartman)
- Mandel, "I Made the Ink"
- Morrison, "The Site of Memory" & "Making *The Black Book*"
- Moten, "Aunt Hester's Scream"
- *Modern Medea* + newspaper project

Slaves' Narratives

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass + My Bondage and My Freedom*
Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
David Blight, ed. *A Slave No More*
Ira Berlin, ed. *Remembering Slavery*

Fiction and Poetry

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
Marlene NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!*
Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Assignments


Paper 1 due by midnight on 10/1

(No short papers accepted after 12/8)


Portfolio due @ noon on 12/22


weekly blog and project entries


















Film and Visual Art

Gone with the Wind
Roots
selections by *Kara Walker*

Troubling Genre

Zora Neale Hurston, *Barracoon*
Alex Haley, *Roots*
Toni Morrison, et al., *The Black Book*
Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*

unit		Readings / Lectures / Discussions	Notes and Practices
1	welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🗣️ Introduction to the course : themes and technologies 🗣️ What do we “remember” about American Slavery? 🗣️ videos by Kanye West, Missy Elliot, Prince, and Dave Chappelle 	<p style="text-align: center;">📄</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Please complete the media skills assessment at http://...</p>
2	dominant narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🗣️ Representing origin, representing race, and other problematics 📖 <i>The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano</i> (Ch. 1 – 5 : available online) 🗣️ <i>Roots</i> 📖 <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i> 🗣️ <i>Gone With The Wind</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">📄</p> <p>Introduction to collaborative reading practices using online services. Please prepare your username arrays and service links before class. We will review the software and interfaces in class. Focus your first collaborative reading posts on the online selection of articles on the history and economics of American slavery (moodle), as we continue watching and discussing <i>Roots</i>, <i>Wind</i>, and <i>Cabin</i> over the few next weeks.</p>
	excavating domination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🗣️ “Viewing” or “experiencing”? Kara Walker 	
3	reading theoretical texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🗣️ Making first, second, and third order distinctions in theory and criticism 🗣️ Strategies for reading critical theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ selections from Woolfork, Caruth, La Capra, Felman, and Hartman 	
4	memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🗣️ National memory or collective memory? Tragedy or trauma? 📖 Saidiya Hartman, <i>Lose Your Mother</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">📄</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Use this week’s moodle workforum to attempt a first, second, third order digression series that speaks to this week’s discussion of memory, history, and trauma.</p>
5	remembering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🗣️ Narrative, record, or artifact? 📖 selections from Ira Berlin, ed. <i>Remembering Slavery</i> 📖 <i>The American Memory Project</i> (Library of Congress) 	<p style="text-align: center;">🗣️</p> <p>Come to class prepared to present (briefly), your experience with the Berlin text and the LOC site. Your report should address at least three registers of response, with particular attention to the embodied dimensionality of your reading experience.</p>
6	the library!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🗣️ Visiting a research library (What not to wear: archive edition!) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ selections from The Frost Library Collection + workshop with Mike Kelley 	<p style="text-align: center;">📄</p> <p>We will be meeting in Frost Library, Special Collections. Please be sure to charge and bring your research devices, so that we can also take everything for a dry run!</p>
SB	looking vs. finding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🗣️ The Question of Provenance 📖 <i>The Black Book</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zora Neale Hurston, “Finding <i>Barracoon</i>” ▪ Toni Morrison, “Making <i>The Black Book</i>” ▪ Introduction to <i>The Bondswoman’s Narrative</i> ▪ Introduction to <i>A Slave No More</i> 	<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em;"><i>Spring Break!</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">📄</p> <p>During Break, spend some time online with catalogs of some of the research centers we will have discussed. On moodle, each student should complete a preliminary assessment of one center (first come, first serve!) Include information re digital access, contact person, finding aids, etc. Finally, draft your letter of introduction for a real or imaginary projected sited in your chosen archive.</p>
8		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🗣️ Check-in: Finding materials and finding the self in research 	<p style="text-align: center;">📄</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Please complete your project declaration and assessment form in Evernote</p>

9	reading underneath the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Narrative, record, or artifact?  Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass + Bondage</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moten, "Aunt Hester's Scream" 		 Please complete the field trip information and contract form at http://...
10	reading textual surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Site visit: Schomburg Center for Research in African American Culture  Jacobs, <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Morrison, "The Site of Memory" 	 Please make sure your research twitter account is linked to the blog and your Evernote repository is linked to the group <i>before</i> departure!	
11	research and imagination 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  The literary and the archival  Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mandel, "I Made the Ink" 	 Please revise your project declaration and assessment form in Evernote	
12		<ul style="list-style-type: none">  <i>The Black Book</i>  <i>Modern Medea</i>  mining national newspaper archives 	 Use this unit's moodle workforum to share your newspaper pathfinding. Using <i>Modern Medea</i> and <i>The Black Book</i> as your starting point, use the databases to follow Weisenberg and Morrison's movement through the archives. How might you account for what they chose to include in their imaginings and analyses? What kinds of significant (to you) things have been left out of their narratives?	
13	research and imagination 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Working with literary manuscripts : Hurston's <i>Barracoon</i>  In Hurston's footsteps : follow or avoid? 		
14	research and imagination 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Site visit: The African Burial Ground + Schomburg Center  What is "information"? What is "data"? Where is the story?  Marlene NourbeSe Philip, <i>Zong!</i> 	 When to show, when to tell: presenting our research repositories	