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**Spring 2016**

**Black Britain: Slavery & Race in the  
Making of Modern England (HIST 348)**

**Course Description:**

The impact of Afro-Caribbean immigration to the United Kingdom is one of the most important issues in post-war British history. But the presence of people of African descent in Britain is not new. By the mid-eighteenth century, Britain was the greatest slave-trader in the world, and Atlantic sea-ports like Bristol were bustling centers of an enormously profitable trade in slaves and the products of slavery like tobacco and sugar. After the American Revolution, the black population of London rose to over 10,000, and by the nineteenth century, British colonial possessions in North America and the Caribbean, dominated by large-scale plantation agriculture and the ruthless exploitation of African labor, were an integral part of the most dynamic and powerful commercial economy in the world. This course explores the place of slavery in British history and of Afro-Britons and the black diaspora in the making of modern Britain. By excavating the hidden history of Afro-Britons, and connecting British history to the broader history of the black diaspora, students will be able to understand more clearly both the cultural specificity of contemporary English debates about race, citizenship and nationhood, and the relationship of these debates (and the history of Britain itself) to the broader history of the Atlantic world.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will develop an understanding of the role that slavery and Afro-Britons played in the making of a distinctive and diverse culture in modern Britain.
2. Students will understand how debates about race, empire, and immigration have shaped, and continue to shape, modern British politics and culture.
3. Students will gain a greater appreciation for the differences and similarities that shape issues of race and slavery within a broadly comparative transatlantic framework.
4. Students will use their understanding and knowledge of these issues to develop and strengthen their own critical thinking and historical writing.

**Required Texts**

Many of the course readings will be posted online. The longer texts I would like you to purchase and they are listed below. You can purchase them online before you leave for the UK or purchase them once you get there.

Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Johns Hopkins, 1991)  
V.S. Naipaul, *Miguel Street* (Vintage, 2002)  
James Walvin, *The Zong: A Massacre, the Law, and the End of Slavery* (Yale, 2011)

### **Recommended Viewing**

For those of you who've never taken a course in British history before it would be worth watching the relevant episodes of Simon Schama's *A History of Britain*, a 15 volume series on British (well, largely English!) history by one of our most eminent historians. There's a description of each episode as well as rich supplementary information at the BBC website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/programmes/hob/index.shtml>. The BBC History website of which this is part, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>, is a marvelous one for exploring all aspects of British social, political and cultural history. For this class, see especially, "Society and Culture" and "Multicultural History."

### **Class Requirements**

Regular attendance and reading for class. Your participation in all class discussions will be crucial as this course will take a seminar rather than lecture format. Attendance and participation in class discussions will account for 25% of your grade. Each of you will be asked to keep a class journal in which you will be expected to write about class readings and discussions, and to relate these readings and discussion to your daily experiences in Britain. I will collect this journal at regular intervals and provide feedback on your writing and thinking. The journals will also provide a basis for class presentations and peer discussion. The journal will account for 50% of your final grade. The last 25 % of your grade will be based on a final essay that will draw on the materials, issues and themes we've covered during the semester.

### **Class Schedule**

#### **Week 1: White Empire: Race and British Identity**

Reading: Caryl Phillips, "Color Me English: Reflections on Migration and Belonging" (2013)

#### **Week 2: Slavery and Empire**

Reading: James Walvin, *The Zong: A Massacre, the Law, and the End of Slavery* (2011)

#### **Week 3: Anti-Slavery From Above**

Film: *Amazing Grace* (2007)

#### **Week 4: Anti-Slavery From Below**

Reading: Robert Wedderburn, *The Horrors of Slavery* (1824)  
Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, “Robert Wedderburn and Atlantic Jubilee” in *The Many-Headed Hydra* (2000)

### **Week 5: Emancipation, Empire, and Free Trade**

Reading: Catherine Hall, “Governor Eyre and the Morant Bay Rebellion;” Thomas Carlyle, “Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question” (1849), and J.S. Mill “The Negro Question” (1850)

### **Weeks 6-7: Emancipation and Free Labor in the British Caribbean**

Reading: Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (1991)

### **Week 8: Empire, Pan-Africanism and Anti-Imperialism**

Reading: Cedric Robinson, “Black Intellectuals at the British Core: 1920’s-1940’s” in Gundara and Duffield eds. *Blacks in Britain*; C.L.R James, *Letters From London* (1932)

### **Week 9: On the Eve: Trinidad in the 1940’s**

Reading: V.S. Naipaul, *Miguel Street* (1959)

### **Week 10: On the Move: The Empire Windrush**

Reading: Trevor and Michael Phillips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Cultural Britain* (1999)

### **Week 11: Race and Nation in Modern Britain**

Reading: Winston James, “The Making of Black Identities” in Raphael Samuel ed. *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*; Paul Gilroy, *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack* (1991)

### **Week 12: Still No Black in the Union Jack?**

Reading: Kathleen Paul, “Still the Same Old Story” in *Whitewashing Britain* (1997); K. Anthony Appiah, “Language, Race and the Legacies of the British Empire” in Philip Morgan and Sean Hawkins eds. *Black Experience and the Empire* (2006)