

The Atlantic Slave Trade in History and Memory

The Atlantic slave trade led to the forced migration of millions of Africans across the Atlantic Ocean, spurred the development of capitalism in Europe and the United States, and shaped the cultural terrain of the Americas. In this course, students will focus on interpreting primary sources related to the Atlantic slave trade and slavery. Course material will include slave ship records, autobiographies of slaves, legal documents and newspaper accounts related to the Haitian Revolution and Nat Turner's rebellion, and documents produced by abolitionists in the fight to end the slave trade.

Students will consider questions regarding the reliability of different kinds of historical evidence, of the relative value of various types of archival material such as ledger books vs. first-person narratives, and of the ethical dimensions of studying slavery. We will also consider the various forms of "silencing" within the archive of slavery and consider ways to write history in the context of limited and, at times, misleading data.