

## HISTORY 243C/343C

### People, Plants, and Medicine: Atlantic World Amerindian, African, and European Science

Professor Londa Schiebinger

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Office Hours: please email me for an appt.

Spring 2022

Mondays: 1:30-4:30

Classroom:

This course explores the global circulation of plants, peoples, disease, medicines, technologies, and knowledge. Colonial sciences and medicines were important militarily and strategically for positioning emerging nation states in global struggles for land and resources. This seminar considers primarily French and British colonialism in the West Indies, but also takes examples from Iberia, Jesuit, and other traditions. Readings treat science and medicine in relation to voyaging, colonialism, slavery, and environmental exchange.

Readings are listed below. Students will be asked in advance to lead our weekly discussions of the readings. The class runs on active discussion! Students will present readings in class.

Paper topics (paragraph plus a beginning bibliography) are due April 25. Presentations of final papers begin May 16. Final papers due June 6 at 5:00 PM (via email). Undergraduate: 8-10 pages, double spaced, 12-point font, plus notes (notes are not included in the page count); graduate: 15-17 pages, 12-point font, plus notes (notes are not included in page count). Stanford Honor Code applies.

Tutors at the Hume Writing Center are available to consult on history assignments at any stage of the writing process from brainstorming a topic to revising a final draft.

All reading materials are on Canvas (unless other access is noted). “Research Resources,” is also on Canvas with resources for papers—this is simply a place to begin. See also “Paper + Preparation” and “Critical Reading.”

Grading: Class discussion plus reading presentations: 50%; Paper presentation: 20%; Final paper: 30%.

#### March 28 Week 1 Introduction

Muwekma Ohlone peoples acknowledgement; Ohlone plant use

The Atlantic World and Colonial Science

The Actors: London Natural History Museum, *Slavery and the Natural*

*World*: Chapter 2, People and Slavery. Canvas

Using images in historical research

[http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/exhibition/1\\_3.html](http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/exhibition/1_3.html)

Historical Research: <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/>

How do we evaluate historical work? Critical Reading

Watch: Botany of Desire <https://watchdocumentaries.com/the-botany-of-desire/>

(40 minutes)

You may wish to watch: Belle or Amistad, which stream on some services.

**April 4 Week 2 Background**

- Guest: 1:30-2:15. Julia Fine, Postgraduate Plant Humanities Fellow, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Plant Humanities Lab, Harvard University. Julia will discuss colonial foodways, cassava, and hops.
- Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 40-70, pp. 73-110. Provides necessary historical context. Canvas
- London Natural History Museum, *Slavery and the Natural World*: Chapter 3, Commercial Plants, intro, tobacco, sugar, cacao. Canvas
- Michael Balick & Paul Cox, *Plants, People, and Culture: The Science of Ethnobotany* (Scientific American Library, 1996), pp. 13-32; 132-141. Canvas
- Rodigo Cámara-Leret & Jordi Bascompte (2021). Language extinction triggers the loss of unique medicinal knowledge. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118(24).
- Maria Sibylla Merian, *Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium*, Plate XLV. Look at indigenous names. Original Dutch available at: <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/129308#page/15/mode/1up>

**April 11 Week 3 Four Great Articles on Various Topics**

- Doris Garraway, "Race, Reproduction and Family Romance in Moreau De Saint-Méry *Description...de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue* 38 *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (2005): 227-246. Canvas
- Lydia Murdoch, "Carrying the Pox: The Use of Children and Ideals of Childhood in Early British and Imperial Campaigns against Smallpox," *The Journal of Social History* 48 (2015): 1-25. Canvas
- Meredith Reifschneider and Dana N. Bardolph, "An Archaeobotanical Approach to Well-Being: Enslaved Plant Use at Estate Cane Garden, 19th Century St. Croix." *Journal of Field Archaeology* 45.7 (2020): 512-526. Canvas
- Jennifer Anderson and Anya Zilberstein, "Empowering Appetites: The Political Economy and Culture of Food in the Early Atlantic World," *Early American Studies* 19.2 (2021): 195-214.

**April 18 Week 4 Atlantic World Agnotology and Gender; Circulation of Knowledge in the Atlantic World**

- Schiebinger, "West Indian Abortifacients and the Making of Ignorance," *Agnotology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), chap. 6. Canvas
- Maria Sibylla Merian, *Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium*, Plate 45. Original Dutch available at: <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/129308#page/15/mode/1up>
- Anonymous, "(In)Visible Women Embodying Botanical Knowledge in Paramaribo: The Role of African and Amerindian Women in the Production of Maria Sibylla Merian's *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium* (1699–1705).

Canvas

Listen to song: [Weed Woman](#)

### **Circulation of Knowledge in the Atlantic World**

Schiebinger, *The Secret Cures of Slaves: People, Plants, and Medicine in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford University Press, 2017), chap. 2. E-book, Green Library, or Canvas

“Medical News,” *Medical and Philosophical Commentaries, by a Society in Edinburgh* 2 (1774): 90-92. Canvas

### **April 25 Week 5 Presentation Tips; Who Owns Nature? Circulation of Knowledge**

Guest 1:30-2:00: Helen Lie, Program in Writing and Rhetoric and Oral Communication Program, Interactive Workshop on Oral Presentations, [hlie@stanford.edu](mailto:hlie@stanford.edu)

### **Paper Topics plus Bibliography Due. Initial discussion of papers: Sources, methods, narrative, images.**

#### **Who Owns Nature?**

Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire*, 39-46. E-book, Green Library or Canvas

Thiery de Menonville, Nicolas-Joseph. *Traité de la culture du nopal et de l'éducation de la cochenille dans les colonies Françaises de l'Amérique*. Cap-Français, 1787. English version: Menonville, Travels to Guaxaca, excerpts are on Canvas. For full text, see Google books: John Pinkerton, *Voyages and Travels*, vol. 13, starting on 753. Canvas

### **May 2 Week 6 Taíno Artifacts and Design; Medical Experiments with Slaves**

Guest: 1:30-2:30. Professor Robert Proctor. The Mystery of Taíno Artifacts and Design *Taíno Pre-Columbian Art and Culture from the Caribbean*, 68-79. Canvas  
N.B. not all pages were scanned. Please read as background.

#### **Medical Experiments with Slaves**

Schiebinger, *The Secret Cures of Slaves: People, Plants, and Medicine in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford University Press, 2017), chap. 4. E-book, Green Library or Canvas

Robert Baker, *Before Bioethics: A History of American Medical Ethics from the Colonial Period to the Bioethics Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 245-255. Canvas

James Thomson, “Observations and Experiments on the Nature of the Morbid Poison called Yaws, with Coloured Engraving of the Eruption,” *The Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, 15 (1819): 321-328. Canvas

J. Marion Sims, “Two Cases of Vesico-Vaginal Fistula, Cured,” *Journal of Health* 5 (1854): 1-7. Canvas

Watch in class: Alexandra Stern, segments of [video](#). The password is

StanfordEugenics2021!

**May 9 Week 7 Atlantic World Plant Exchange; Clash of Knowledges and Medical Regimes  
Atlantic World Plant Exchange: European, African, Amerindian**

Judith Carney, "Out of Africa: Colonial Rice History in the Black Atlantic,"  
*Colonial Botany*, chap. 12. Canvas

Judith Carney, "Fields of Survival, Foods of Memory," in R. Slocum & A. Saldanha,  
eds., *Geographies of Race and Food: Fields, Bodies, Markets*  
(Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2016), 61-78. Canvas

**Clash of Knowledges and Medical Regimes**

Schiebinger, *The Secret Cures of Slaves: People, Plants, and Medicine in the  
Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford University Press, 2017),  
chap. 5. The Colonial Crucible: Debates over Slavery.

Esp. section 1. Obeah and Sorcery & Section 2. Experiments  
with Placebos. E-book, Green Library. Available on Canvas as,  
*Human Experimentation in the Atlantic World Medical Complex*

Benjamin Moseley on Obeah ("Obi"), *A Treatise on Sugar with  
Miscellaneous Medical Observations, 2nd ed.* (London, 1800),  
190-205. Canvas

Placebos: Franklin Miller, ed., *The Placebo: A Reader*, ed. (Baltimore:  
Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 1-9. Canvas

Kate Ramsey, "Powers of Imagination and Legal Regimes against "Obeah" in  
The Late Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth Century British Caribbean,"  
*Osiris* 35 (2021): 46-63.

Watch in class Voodoo documentary: [CNN](#) & [National Geographic](#)

**May 16 Week 8 Paper Presentations**

**May 23 Week 9 Paper Presentations**

**May 30 Week 10 Memorial Day, no class.**

**June 6, Final paper due, 5:00 pm PDT**