

HISTORY 243C/343C/434C

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

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Office Hours: please email me for an appt.

Winter 2024

Mondays: 1:30-4:20

Classroom: 200-201

Explores the global circulation of plants, peoples, disease, medicines, technologies, and knowledge. Considers primarily Africans, Amerindians, and Europeans in the eighteenth-century Atlantic World and focuses on their exchanges in the Caribbean, in particular within the French and British empires. We also take examples from other knowledge traditions, where relevant. Readings treat science and medicine in relation to voyaging, the natural history of plants, environmental exchange, racism, and slavery in colonial contexts. Colonial sciences and medicines were important militarily and strategically for positioning emerging nation states in global struggles for land and resources.

Graduate students taking the course as a one-quarter seminar should enroll in 343C. Grad students taking the course as a two-part graduate research seminar should enroll in the 443C-part-I number in Winter and the 443C-part-II number in Spring.

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

Paper topics (paragraph plus a beginning bibliography) are due in class Feb 12. Presentations of final papers begin on March 4. Final papers are due at 5:00 PM (via email) March 20. No late papers accepted. Undergraduates: 8-10 pages, double spaced, 12-point font, plus notes (notes are not included in the page count); graduates taking 343C: 15-17 pages, 12-point font, plus notes (notes are not included in page count); graduates taking 443C: 25 pages due at end of Spring quarter, 12-point font, plus notes (notes are not included in page count).

All reading materials are linked here or on Canvas. “Critical Reading” and “Paper Preparation” are also on Canvas. A resource for your papers: www.oxfordbibliographies.com. Search “Atlantic World” or other topics.

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

Honor Code: All students are responsible for fully understanding and complying with the Honor Code. If you have any questions about plagiarism and the Honor Code, you should speak directly with me and/or visit: <https://communitystandards.stanford.edu/policies-guidance/honor-code>. University policy on generative AI: Absent a clear statement from a course instructor, use of or consultation with generative AI shall be treated analogously to assistance from another person. In particular, using generative AI tools to substantially complete an assignment or exam (e.g., by entering exam or assignment questions) is not permitted. Students should acknowledge the use of generative AI (other than incidental use) and default to disclosing such assistance when in doubt.

Access and Accommodations: If you have an Academic Accommodation Letter, please share your letter with me at your earliest possible opportunity.

Jan 8 Week 1 Introduction

Guest: Michael Wilcox, the first Native California faculty member at Stanford, is a senior lecturer in the Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity. He will talk about Ohlone history and the natural environment.

The Atlantic World and Colonial Science

The Actors: London Natural History Museum, *Slavery and the Natural World*: Chapter 2, People and Slavery. Canvas

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

Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: <https://www.slavevoyages.org/>

Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (via Databases Stanford Library).

It's searchable!

Biodiversity Heritage Library: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/>

How do we evaluate historical work? Critical Reading. Canvas

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.

Background reading:

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 some historical background. 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

Jan 22 Week 3 A Few Great Articles on Various Topics. Discuss article content plus historiography, methodology, and primary sources.

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

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.

Pier Larson, "African Slave Trade in Global Perspective," *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History* (Oxford University Press, 2013). Online in Green Library.

You can download a PDF of the chapter.

Jamaica's best kept secret: Blacks owned slaves

Kathleen Gutierrez. (2023). From Objects of Study to Worldmaking Beings: The History of Botany at the Corner of the Plant Turn. *History Compass*, 21(8), e12782.
 Stephen Bocking, Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives, in the *Handbook of the Historiography of the Earth and Environmental Sciences*, Springer Verlag, 2023.

Jan 29 Week 4 African Women in a Colonial Context

Guest: Rachel Jean-Baptiste, Michelle Mercer and Bruce Golden Family Professorship in Feminist and Gender Studies, 1:30-2:45

“The Right to My Daughter’: African Women, French Men, and Custody of Métis Children in Twentieth Century French Colonial Africa.” In *The Routledge Companion to Sexuality and Colonialism*, edited by Dagmar Herzog, and Chelsea Shields, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2021. Download on link page.

“A Black Girl Should Not Be with A White Man: Sex, Race, and African Women's Social and Legal Status in Colonial Gabon, c. 1900–1946.” *Journal of Women's History*, Volume 22, Number 2, 2010, pp. 56-82.

Love, Marriage, and Families in Africa,” co-authored with Emily S. Burrill. In *Holding the World Together: African Women in Changing Perspective*, edited by Nwando Achebe and Claire Robertson. University of Wisconsin Press, 2019. This is Chapter 13. Book is online.

Atlantic World Plant Exchange: European, African, Amerindian

Judith Carney, In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), intro. Available online via the Stanford library.

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

Kim, Julie Chun. "Cataloging Indigenous Life." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 56, no. 2 (2023): 229-236.

Rhianna Marks, "Interpreters of Nature: Louis Nicolas and his Indigenous Guides." *Early American Literature* 57, no. 2 (2022): 413-444. (This is about New France, not French-held lands in the Caribbean.)

Feb 5 Week 5 Sexual Violence and the Marketplace of Slavery

Guest: Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers, Chancellor's Professor of History; Director, African and African-American History Writer's Workshop, UC Berkeley, via Zoom. 1:30-2:45

Jones-Rogers, S. (2020). ‘[S] he could... spare one ample breast for the profit of her owner’: white mothers and enslaved wet nurses’ invisible labor in American slave markets. In *Motherhood, Childlessness and the Care of Children in Atlantic Slave Societies* (pp. 100-116). Routledge. Online.

Jones-Rogers, S. (2018). Rethinking Sexual Violence and the Marketplace of Slavery: White Women, the Slave Market, and Enslaved People's Sexualized Bodies in the Nineteenth-Century South. *Sexuality and slavery: Reclaiming intimate histories in the Americas*, 109-123. Canvas.

Atlantic World Agnotology and Gender

Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Harvard University Press, 2004). E-Book, Green Library

Maria Sibylla Merian, *Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium*, Plate 45. Original Dutch available at:

<http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/129308#page/15/mode/1up>

Listen to song: *Weed Woman* (in class)

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), Intro through chap. 2. E-book, Green Library.

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

Katharine Gerbner, "Maroon Science: Knowledge, Secrecy, and Crime in Jamaica." In *Critical Approaches to Science and Religion* (Columbia University Press, 2023), 325-347.

Feb 12 Week 6 Are there Slaves in Paris?

Guest: Miranda Spieler, Associate Professor of History and Politics, The American University of Paris. Via Zoom from Paris. 1:30-2:45. *All Spieler readings on Canvas*

Spieler, M. Introduction, Conclusion, and chapter two from "Slaves in Paris," forthcoming from Harvard University Press. Please do **not** circulate these unpublished chapters.

Spieler, M. "The Vanishing Slaves of Paris: The Lettre de Cachet and the Emergence of an Imperial Legal Order in Eighteenth-Century France," in *The Scaffolding of Sovereignty: Global and Aesthetic Perspectives on the History of a Concept*, edited by Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, Stefanos Geroulanos and Nicole Jerr (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 230-245.

Spieler, M. "Slave Voice and the Legal Archive: the Case of Freedom Suits before the Paris Admiralty Court," in *Hearing Enslaved Voices*, edited by Sophie White and Trevor Burnard (New York: Routledge, 2020), 165-187.

Spieler, M. "Être esclave dans une capitale impériale: Paris au XVIIIe siècle," in *Les Mondes de l'esclavage : une histoire comparée*, edited by Ismard Ismard, Benedetta Rossi, and Cécile Vidal (Paris: Seuil, 2021). 231-238.

Interactive Workshop on Oral Presentations

Guest Helen Lie, Program in Writing and Rhetoric and Oral Communication Program, 3:15-3:50. 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

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

Feb 26 Week 8 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

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, *The Story of My Life*, ed. H. Marion Sims (1884), 227-250. Canvas
Watch: Alexandra Stern, *Reckoning with Eugenics in California*, [video](#). The passcode is StanfordEugenics2021!

March 4 Week 9 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.

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

Nicolas Vonarx, "[Haitian Vodou as a Health Care System: Between Magic, Religion, and Medicine](#)," *Alternative Therapies in Health & Medicine* 17, no. 5 (2011).

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*

Begin Paper Presentations 2-3 student presentations

March 11 Week 10 Paper Presentations

March 20, Final paper due, 5:00 pm