



(Abolishing) British Slavery

Syllabus

Let's get this out of the way: Like summer term, winter term 2020/21 will be an experiment in pandemic pedagogics; it is also my first term at Goethe-University, so please bear with me! I look forward to experimenting with new forms of (online) teaching, but I will need your help. Please keep in touch, take part in the Zoom classes, and use the forum/wiki/padlet for asynchronous coursework (timelines, study questions, book reviews – tasks specified below). Most importantly, please let me (and the other course members) know if something does not work for you or if you have different ideas about how to do things. Let's do this together!

class:

- **Thursday, 10:15-11:45 [online]**

As Zoom is not the perfect medium for everyone (and some of you might struggle with technical issues) the seminar will combine synchronous Zoom classes and asynchronous sessions (see schedule & tasks below).

contact:

- [office: 4.154 IG-Farben-Haus]
- **e-mail:**
- **office hours:** Tuesday, 9:00-10:30 (and on appointment) on Zoom – please send me an e-mail for the Zoom link.
- **twitter:** @susannegruss

resources:

- **OLAT:**

literature:

- You need to **buy** the following primary texts (listed in the order of discussion in class):

- (1) Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, or: The Royal Slave*
- (2) Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (Norton Critical Edition)
- (3) Caryl Phillips, *Cambridge*
- (4) Sara Collins, *The Confessions of Frannie Langton*

Please make sure that you have read at least *Oroonoko* by the beginning of term!

- Apart from these longer primary texts, all **other texts** that are mandatory reading are available on OLAT.
- Please check the **bibliography** for further references (full bibliographical details, further reading).

course description:

Slavery and the slave trade in the British Empire are still often 'sold' as a success story in public discourse – Britain was one of the first countries to abolish slavery, after all (the Act of Parliament to abolish the British Slave Trade was passed on 25 March 1807). At the same time, writers and critics have made abundantly clear that British slavery (and its political repercussions) have not been worked through sufficiently. In this seminar, we will study both non-fictional abolition texts and literary texts that became part of the cause of abolition (Behn's romance/novel *Oroonoko*, Equiano's autobiography *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, as well as excerpts from Mary Prince's autobiographical *History of Mary Prince*, and some poetry), and supplement our readings with critical race theory. In a second step, we will discuss two contemporary novels that shed light on slavery and its abolition (Phillips's *Cambridge* and Collins's recent *The Confessions of Frannie Langton*).



e-mail and Zoom etiquette:

- Please give me some time to answer your **e-mails** (up to 3 or 4 days). I will not write e-mails after 8pm or on weekends.
- The usual: Please **mute yourself** if you are not talking. If you feel uncomfortable talking into the camera (or if you have connection issues), feel free to use the **chat** to contribute to class discussions.
- I obviously won't (and can't) force anyone to turn on their **camera** when we zoom but would still kindly ask you to do so (or drop me a brief note at the beginning of term explaining why you would rather not). Yes, staring at yourself onscreen can be cringeworthy, but if we want to use Zoom to create a **seminar experience**, being able to see each other's faces and nonverbal communication just makes everything so much easier for me (and you). Imagine trying to keep a discussion going while staring into a void of black rectangles.
- Most of us will zoom from our **private spaces** – this means that my kids might make an appearance at some point (sorry). Zoom bombing family members, flatmates or pets are always welcome! Added bonus: you get to eat and drink during classes (as long as you have muted yourself, see above).
- Our Zoom seminar should be a **safe space** for everyone. Recording (parts of) sessions or taking (and posting) screenshots is an absolute no-go. All material shared onscreen will be made available to you on OLAT.
- I am not exempt from the occasional **technical blip** – please be patient if I freeze and simply carry on with your discussion. Like the terminator, I will be back, promised.
- **Be kind (to yourself, to each other, and to me).**

course performance & requirements:

- Apart from preparing the **compulsory reading**, please stick to the tasks detailed in the course schedule below.
- I expect you to take part in class **regularly** and **actively**, both in synchronous and asynchronous sessions. As indicated below, I will use your activity in the forum to track participation. Communication is key, so talk to me if you are struggling.
- For **asynchronous sessions**, I have indicated the tasks I expect you to cover over the week in the schedule below. This should not take more time than the 90-minute course slot (plus the time you would normally take to read/prepare for class).
- Instead of an oral presentation, **each** of you is expected to write at **least two 1½–2 page book reviews**. Please write an academic review focussing not only on plot, but also on the thematic context of the seminar (how are slavery/abolition depicted? how do the contemporary novels engage with the historical contexts they re-vision?). Please hand in the book reviews on the date specified in the schedule below. I will read them and send you feedback. For those of you who do not need a term paper but an **assignment**, please revise and slightly extend your book reviews (2x **3 pages**) and hand them in by the end of term at the latest.

term paper:

- If you need to write a term paper for this course, please stick to the department's style sheet and attend the Zoom session of term papers.
- You can, of course, use ideas developed in your book reviews as part of your term paper – see the books reviews as an exercise in academic writing.
- Developing a topic **independently** and coming up with a suitable **thesis** is part of your assignment. Please talk to me/chat with me as soon as possible – I will not accept & grade your term paper if I have not talked to you about your topic.



 mandatory reading / viewing

 to do

 background reading

01 05.11.20

Zoom

*organisation**Black Lives Matter (today)*: the Colston statue (Bristol), Critical Race Theoryto read / to do:

- watch Vanessa Kisuule, "Hollow" (YouTube, <https://youtu.be/b3DKfaK50AU>) – I uploaded a transcript of the poem to OLAT if you want to take notes 
- P. Parkes, "Who was Edward Colston and why is Bristol divided by his legacy?" *BBC News*, 8 June 2020. 
- V. Kisuule, "Edward Colston does not represent us." *NME*, 12 June 2020. 
- A. Bland, "Edward Colston statue replaced by sculpture of Black Lives Matter protester Jen Reid." *The Guardian*, 15 July 2020. 

task: Please have a quick look at the forum **before we start** and introduce yourself (including your pronouns) – if you want to, you can also upload a selfie and/or a picture of your workspace. And if you have a pet, upload a pic for us (pretty please).

02 12.11.20

Zoom

*Slavery**The Life of Slaves*to read / to do:

- from J. Walvin, *A Short History of Slavery*: "4. The Origins of Atlantic Slavery" (37-49), "5. The Coming of the British" (50-67), "6. Slave Ships" (68-89) 
- from K. Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America*: "Slavery and the Slave Trade" (7-33), "Work, Law, and Culture" (101-26) 

tasks:

- Read the chapters from Walvin's *Short History of Slavery* carefully and **take some notes**: what are their main points about (British) slavery? think about what aspects you were already familiar with and which were new.
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback – we will discuss your questions at the beginning of next session!

03 19.11.20

*Aphra Behn, Oroonoko (1688)*¹

reading response – genre

to read / to do:

- read the romance/novel 
- L. J. Rosenthal, "Oroonoko: Reception, Ideology, and Narrative Strategy" (151-165) 
- hand in a 1½–2 page **book review** (keep in mind that you need to write two for the seminar) 
- T. O. Beebee, "2 The Genres of Ethnography: Oroonoko in the *Tristes Tropiques*" (31-66) 

tasks:

- Answer the **forum question** and engage with the others' entries – there will be an open question for every asynchronous week of this seminar, and I will use your forum questions to track participation. Please start your answer with a brief **reading response** (What did you think about Behn's romance/novel? How is slavery depicted? Which topics would you like to discuss?).
- Watch my **video on genre** (link in today's OLAT session). Do let me know if you have any questions!



- Read Rosenthal's article and **take notes** – do you have any questions? Please add any new aspects about **slavery** you might come across to the **wiki** (or extend/correct already existing entries). We will use the class wiki to create a history of (the abolition of) British slavery & document our discussions of literary depictions there, as well (so you should also engage with the entries on Behn/*Oroonoko*).
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback – I will upload results & answers to open questions in the folder for next session!

We will evaluate your experience of this asynchronous session at the beginning of our next (Zoom) session.

04 26.11.20
Zoom

Aphra Behn, Oroonoko (1688) 2

slavery

to read / to do:

- J. Lipking, "Others', Slaves, and Colonists in *Oroonoko*" (166-187) 
- A. R. Beach, "Behn's *Oroonoko*, the Gold Coast, and Slavery in the Early-Modern Atlantic World" (215-233) 
- L. Brown, "The Romance of Empire: *Oroonoko* and the Trade in Slaves" (180-207) 

tasks:

- Read the chapter by Lipking and **take notes**: what are her main points about slaves/colonialism in *Oroonoko*? and how does she interpret *Oroonoko* in this context?
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback – we will discuss your questions at the beginning of next session!

05 03.12.20

Abolitionism

The History of Mary Prince (1831)

to read / to do:

- read *The History of Mary Prince* (online @ <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/prince/prince.html>) 
- read the section on "The English Debate About the Slave Trade" in your Norton Critical Edition of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (277-287) 
- B. Baumgartner, "The Body as Evidence: Resistance, Collaboration, and Appropriation in *The History of Mary Prince*" (253-275) 

tasks:

- Answer the **forum question** and engage with the others' entries. Please start your answer with a brief **reading response** (What did you think about Prince's autobiography? How are slavery & abolition depicted?).
- Watch my **video on abolitionism** (link in today's OLAT session). Do let me know if you have any questions!
- Use the **wiki** to extend existing entries / create new entries on the history of (the abolition of) British slavery. New entries on Prince & her *History*!
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback – I will upload results & answers to open questions in the folder for next session!



06 10.12.20 *Olaudah Equiano, Interesting Narrative (1789) 1*

Zoom

reading response 1 – narrative voice & reliability

to read / to do:

- read volume I of Equiano's autobiography 
- listen to the Equiano-episode in Fern Riddell's *Not What You Thought You Knew*-podcast (<https://play.acast.com/s/notwhatyouthought/> – sorry, no precise link, the episode had not been released yet when I wrote this syllabus 😊) 
- V. Carretta, "Olaudah Equiano: African British Abolitionist and Founder of the African American Slave Narrative" (44-60) 
- M. Ellis, "Narratives of Resistance in the Literary Archives of Slavery" (25-39) 

tasks:

- While reading the text, think about the **narrative voice** of *The Interesting Narrative* – and how it would have shaped an audience's understanding of slavery & abolitionism (think about our discussion of Mary Prince!).
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback – we will discuss your questions at the beginning of next session!

07 17.12.20 *Olaudah Equiano, Interesting Narrative (1789) 2*

reading response 2 – trauma & memory

to read / to do:

- read volume II of Equiano's autobiography 
- I. Corley, "The Subject of Abolitionist Rhetoric: Freedom and Trauma in *The Life of Olaudah Equiano*" (139-156) 
- hand in a 1½–2 page **book review** (keep in mind that you need to write two for the seminar) 
- R. Mallipeddi, "'A Fixed Melancholy': Migration, Memory, and the Middle Passage" (235-253) 
- A. Carrigan, "Negotiating Personal Identity and Cultural Memory in Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*" (42-47) 

tasks:

- Answer the **forum question** and engage with the others' entries. Please start your answer with a brief **reading response** (What did you think about vol. II of Equiano's autobiography? How are slavery & abolitionism depicted?).
- Read Corley's article carefully and take **some notes** – what is Corley's thesis? what are her main points? do you (dis)agree with her argument?
Use the **wiki** to extend existing entries / create new entries on the history of (the abolition of) British slavery. New entries on Equiano & his *Interesting Narrative*!
- Watch my **video on trauma (literature)** (link in today's OLAT session). Do let me know if you have any questions!
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback – I will upload results & answers to open questions in the folder for next session!
- For **next year**: Do you have **specific questions** about writing an academic paper / an abstract for next session? Post them in the **forum**.

🎄 *Christmas Break* 🎄

08 14.01.21

Term Papers



Zoom*Abolitionist Poetry*

close readings

to read / to do:

- T. Day & J. Bicknell, from “The Dying Negro” (1773) (*Equiano Norton Critical Edition* 288-291); W. Cowper, “The Negro’s Complaint” (1788); W. Blake, “The Little Black Boy” (1789) 
- hand in a potential topic / thesis / abstract for your term paper 

tasks:

- Read the poems and **take notes**: how do the poems articulate their point of view on slavery / its abolition? We will engage in close readings of these texts, so please make sure that you have read them in detail.
- Think about your **term paper**! Ideally, you should have developed a rough idea by now – today is the day to articulate this idea in class and get some (peer) feedback.
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today’s OLAT session) for some feedback – we will discuss your questions at the beginning of next session!

09 21.01.21*generic contexts*

neo-slave narrative – postmodernism – neo-Victorianism

to read / to do:

- S. Muñoz-Valdivieso, “Neo-Slave Narratives in Contemporary Black British Fiction” (43-59) 
- J. Anim-Addo & Maria Helena Lima, “The Power of the Neo-Slave Narrative Genre” (1-8) 
- V. Smith, “Neo-Slave Narratives” (168-186) 

tasks:

- Answer the **forum question** and engage with the others’ entries.
- Read the articles by Muñoz-Valdivieso and Anim-Addo & Lima carefully and **take notes**. How do they define the neo-slave narrative?
Use the **wiki** to extend existing entries / create new entries
- Watch my **video on postmodernism** and **neo-Victorianism** (link in today’s OLAT session). Do let me know if you have any questions!
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today’s OLAT session) for some feedback – I will upload results & answers to open questions in the folder for next session!

10 28.01.21**Zoom***Caryl Phillips, Cambridge (1991)*¹

reading response – postmodernism & cultural memory

to read / to do:

- read the novel 
- hand in a 1½–2 page **book review** (keep in mind that you need to write two for the seminar) 
- L. Eckstein, from *Re-Membering the Black Atlantic: “2 Caryl Phillips, Cambridge”* (63-115) 
- R. S. Trimm, “The Times of Whiteness; or, Race between the Postmodern and the Postcolonial” (231-253) 

tasks:

- When reading the novel, think about how Phillips makes use of **postmodernism** in a **postcolonial** context in his novel (read Trimm’s article if you have the time).



- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback – we will discuss your questions at the beginning of next session!

11 04.02.21 *Caryl Phillips, Cambridge (1991)* 2

hybridity & racial identity

to read / to do:

- D. Gunning, "Caryl Phillips' *Cambridge* and the (Re)Construction of Racial Identity" (70-80) 
- B. Buchanan, "Caryl Phillips: Colonialism, Cultural Hybridity and Racial Difference" (174-190) 
- T. Bewes, "Shame, Ventriloquy, and the Problem of the Cliché in Caryl Phillips" (33-60) 

tasks:

- Answer the **forum question** and engage with the others' entries.
- Read the article by Gunning carefully and **take notes**. Use the **wiki** to extend existing entries / create new entries.
- Watch my **video on ventriloquism** (link in today's OLAT session). Do let me know if you have any questions!
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback – I will upload results & answers to open questions in the folder for next session!

12 11.02.21 *Sara Collins, The Confessions of Frannie Langton (2019)* 1

reading response – gothic neo-slave narrative

to read / to do:

- read the novel 
- hand in a 1½–2 page **book review** (keep in mind that you need to write two for the seminar) 
- book reviews (linked in today's OLAT session) 

tasks:

- Answer the **forum question** and engage with the others' entries. Please start your answer with a brief **reading response** (What did you think about Collins's novel? How is slavery depicted?)
- Watch my **video** on the **gothic novel** of the play (link in today's OLAT session). Do let me know if you have any questions!
- Use the **Padlet** (link in today's OLAT session) to collect elements of the **gothic** in the novel. You can also use the comment function to add to already existing posts.
- Please take the **minute paper** (link in today's OLAT session) for some feedback – we will discuss your questions at the beginning of next session!

13 18.02.21 *Sara Collins, The Confessions of Frannie Langton (2019)* 2

Zoom

queerness & unreliability

Round-Up & Open Questions

to read / to do:

- Browse Collins's website (<https://saracollinsauthor.com/>) – how does she present her novel? 

task:

- In preparation for the session, think about how you would characterise Frannie as a **narrator** – do you trust her? why (not)?



Easter Egg: Finished reading the complete syllabus? Well done! Now please log on to OLAT (see link above), sign into the course, go to the forum (thread 00) and post your favourite meme to let me know that you are done. Please e-mail me if you cannot access OLAT (I am still trying to figure out how OLAT works, so this might be entirely my mistake).

Literature

primary literature

- Behn, Aphra. 1688. *Oroonoko or, the Royal Slave*. Ed. Joanna Lipking. New York and London: Norton, 1997. [Norton Critical Edition].
- Collins, Sara. *The Confessions of Fannie Langton*. London: Viking, 2019. Kindle file.
- Equiano, Olaudah. 1789. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*. Ed. Werner Sollors. New York, NY and London: Norton, 2001 [Norton Critical Edition].
- Parkes, Vanessa. 2020. "Hollow." YouTube. <https://youtu.be/b3DKfaK50AU>.
- Phillips, Caryl. 1991. *Cambridge*. London: Vintage, 2008.
- Prince, Mary. *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave*. Ed. Sara Salih. London, et al.: Penguin, 2004.

historical context

- Amussen, Susan Dwyer. *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Beck Ryden, David. *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Carey, Brycchan, Markman Ellis and Sara Salih, eds. *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and Its Colonies, 1760-1838*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Morgan, Kenneth. *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Walvin, James. *A Short History of Slavery*. London: Penguin, 2007.

secondary literature

- Anim-Addo, Joan, and Maria Helena Lima. "The Power of the Neo-Slave Narrative Genre." *Callaloo* 41.1 (2018): 1-8.
- Baumgartner, Barbara. "The Body as Evidence: Resistance, Collaboration, and Appropriation in *The History of Mary Prince*." *Callaloo* 24.1 (2001): 253-275.
- Beach, Adam R. "Behn's *Oroonoko*, the Gold Coast, and Slavery in the Early-Modern Atlantic World." *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 39 (2010): 215-233.
- Beckerman, Hannah. "The Confessions of Fannie Langton by Sara Collins review – bold and timely." *The Observer*, 21 April 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/apr/21/the-confessions-of-frannie-langton-by-sara-collins-review> (last accessed 27 October 2020).
- Beebee, Thomas O. *The Ideology of Genre: A Comparative Study of Generic Instability*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 1994.
- Bewes, Timothy. "Shame, Ventriloquy, and the Problem of the Cliché in Caryl Phillips." *Cultural Critique* 63 (2006): 33-60.
- Bland, Archie. "Edward Colston statue replaced by sculpture of Black Lives Matter protester Jen Reid." *The Guardian*, 15 July 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/15/edward-colston-statue-replaced-by-sculpture-of-black-lives-matter-protester> (last accessed 26 October 2020).
- Botkin, Frances R. "Questioning the 'Necessary Order of Things': Maria Edgeworth's 'The Grateful Negro', Plantation Slavery, and the Abolition of the Slave Trade." *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and Its Colonies, 1760-1838*. Eds. Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis and Sara Salih. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 194-208.
- Boulukos, George E. "Olaudah Equiano and the Eighteenth-Century Debate on Africa." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40.2 (2007): 241-255.
- Bozeman, Terry S. "Interstices, Hybridity, and Identity: Olaudah Equiano and the Discourse on the African Slave Trade." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 36.2 (2003): 61-70.
- Brown, Laura. "The Romance of Empire: *Oroonoko* and the Trade in Slaves." *Aphra Behn*. Ed. Janet Todd. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1999. 180-207.
- Buchanan, Brad. "Caryl Phillips: Colonialism, Cultural Hybridity and Racial Difference." *Contemporary British Fiction*. Eds. Richard J. Lane, Rod Mengham and Philip Tew. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003. 174-190.
- Carretta, Vincent. "Olaudah Equiano: African British Abolitionist and Founder of the African American Slave Narrative." *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative*. Ed. Audrey A. Fisch. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 44-60.



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- Eckstein, Lars. *Re-Membering the Black Atlantic: On the Poetics and Politics of Literary Memory*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006.
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- Gunning, Dave. "Caryl Phillips' *Cambridge* and the (Re)Construction of Racial Identity." *Kunapipi: Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 29.1 (2007): 70-80.
- Kisuule, Vanessa. "Edward Colston does not represent us." *NME*, 12 June 2020. <https://www.nme.com/features/vanessa-kisuule-edward-colston-statue-bristol-2686256> (last accessed 26 October 2020).
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