

JHR 511: Contemporary Slavery and Human Trafficking
Community Embedded Seminar
Spring 2009

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FAB N230H

Office Hours: MWF 10:30-11:30am (and by appointment)

A hundred thousand new-born babes are annually added to the victims of slavery; twenty thousand lives are annually sacrificed on the plantations of the South. Such a sight should send a thrill of horror, through the nerves of civilization and impel the heart of humanity to lofty deeds. So it might, if men had not found a fearful alchemy by which this blood can be transformed into gold. Instead of listening to the cry of agony, they listen to the ring of dollars and stoop down to pick up the coin.

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, abolitionist (1857)

But we endure. We survive. It should be asked, "Why do these women stay alive?" Sometimes, maybe much of the time, we don't even know. Sometimes we do wish we were dead; we wish they would kill us; we can't take it anymore. So why do we stay alive? We stay alive because we do not want them, the masters, to win. We stay alive because there is something we want, something we seek. We may not even know exactly what it is; we may not have ever experienced it. Or we may have known it only for a moment when something deep inside, deeper than even they can penetrate, stirred, and we felt alive, joyous, loved, at peace. We stay alive because we are women in search of our lives; we are women in search of freedom

Christine Stark, a former sex slave (2007)

It can happen. Five thousand years of slavery can end forever. Two hundred years of pretending we don't have slavery anymore can end forever. The ugly crime that stains and divides our species can end forever. The use of violence to turn other people into livestock can end forever. It can happen, and it can happen starting now.

Kevin Bales, President of Free the Slaves (2007)

Course Description:

This seminar is a community embedded investigation of contemporary slavery and human trafficking internationally, nationally, and locally. Studying the work of antislavery activists and scholars and building on our critical knowledge of slavery and trafficking, we will move recursively through cycles of study, reflection, and action. As members of a community embedded seminar, it is our mission to integrate our course of study with the activities of experienced justice workers and to purposefully blur the line between academic and activist work. This semester, we will pursue this recursive practice in dynamic ways.

Course Goals:

By semester's end, students will have:

- Gained a solid understanding of the scope of world slavery and human trafficking with an emphasis on Phoenix and the region
- Developed the conceptual resources for reflective action as antislavery workers
- Gained skills for communicative action across media and rhetorical situation
- Become active participants within local and national antislavery networks
- Founded a local chapter of *Free the Slaves*
- Contributed materially to ending slavery and human trafficking

Required Texts:

Alcoff, Linda Martin'. "The Problem of Speaking for Others":
<<http://www.alcoff.com/content/speaothers.html>>

Bales, Kevin. *Ending Slavery: How We Free Today's Slaves*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2007.

Bales, Kevin and Zoe Trodd (Eds.) *To Plead Our Own Cause: Personal Stories by Today's Slaves*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.

DeStefano, Anthony. *The War on Human Trafficking: U.S. Policy Assessed*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007.

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, and American Slave* (1845). *New York: Dover Publications, 1995*.

Kaufman, Cynthia. *Ideas for Action: Relevant Theory for Social Change*. Cambridge: South End Press, 2003.

(NOTE: Other readings will be announced along the way. These will be made available to you at our Blackboard site or as photocopies)

Optional Reading:

Bowe, John. *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor and the Dark Side of the New Global Economy*. New York: Random House, 2007.

Seminar Requirements:

Our seminar is a collaboration, and its success depends on the energy and efforts of all its participants. Seminar meetings will consist primarily of discussion of readings and activities and planning for future action. Regular attendance and engaged, active participation are expected. I will regularly offer comments to add context, pose important questions, or keep us moving towards our course goals, but students will be expected to lead the discussion each week. During each seminar meeting, we will make time to discuss and plan *Free the Slave* activities and to generate and share ideas for Seminar Projects. Please visit our Blackboard site weekly, watching for announcements of events and new material that has been added to the site.

Because we will work as partners with agencies beyond our own seminar group, we must hold to a strict ethic of responsible work sharing and collaborative generosity. “Keep your eyes on the prize” each step along the way, and make sure you are conducting your academic work with full cognizance of its relationship to the greater antislavery movement.

NOTE: Students with documented disabilities have the right to access campus services; please visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC) if you are in need of such accommodations. Please feel free also to discuss your situation with your professor.

Assignments:

Seminar Journal 40%

In order to foster the intellectual habit of critical self-reflection, we will keep a detailed journal chronicling all of our activities. Weekly entries of ***a minimum of 500 words*** will address our engagement with community partners, participation in events, our work as founding members of a local Free the Slaves chapter, our interaction with course texts, our Seminar Project work (see below), our discussions both in and outside of the seminar, our personal experience of intellectual and activist work, as well as other elements of our semester-long collaboration. Some weeks, I will assign prompts to guide your writing, but more often, the writing will be self-guided, a record of your own intellectual process. Assessing your journal at semester’s end,

Each week by ***Sunday at midnight***, drawing from the reflections recorded in the journals, each student will post at the Blackboard Discussion Board what they believe are the most important questions, assertions or issues to consider for the week. The idea here is that your weekly journal reflection will lead you to insights (or impasses) that you want to share with the seminar group. These rich moments from your journal will most often provide us a place to begin our seminar discussions.

NOTES: (a) Please bring a hard copy of your weekly journal to each seminar meeting. (b) You are not obliged to share everything from your journal; you should be the best judge of your own comfort level with regards to “personal” disclosure.

Assessment: Your Seminar Journal will be assessed according to the following criteria: (a) Completeness and timeliness (have you met weekly deadlines and length requirements? (b) Depth of your engagement with readings and ideas.

Introducing Theory 10%

Scrap any expectations you may have about the often-assumed binary opposition of “theory and practice” or any experience you have with the elite pretensions of theorists. Theory offers us resources for interrogating power relations in their myriad forms and for digging underneath the common sense assumptions that serve to stall social change or obscure its necessity. This semester, we will spend significant time reviewing theoretical traditions, drawing from them “ideas for action,” as Cynthia Kaufman’s book title prompts us. We do so to build our conceptual toolbox as activist scholars.

Prior to class: Working in *groups of two*, students will prepare a brief presentation (5-10 minute) on the assigned chapters from *Kaufman’s Ideas for Action: Relevant Theory for Radical Change* and prepare to lead a portion of the evening’s discussion. Use the following format to compose your presentation: (a) begin with a very brief summary of the chapter(s) (b) include a review of the central ideas, assertions, or arguments in the chapter(s) (c) evaluate the relevance of the chapter(s) to antislavery work, making connections with other course readings / activities (d) pose questions, design activities, etc. to facilitate discussion in the seminar. Please bring copies of the presentation for everyone.

During class: Each presentation group will lead the seminar for *approximately 30 minutes*. Deliver the main points of your written presentation (5-10 minutes), and spend the rest of your allotted time leading discussion. Remember that your primary responsibility is to facilitate discussion of the Kaufman chapters.

(**NOTE:** Alternate formats for the presentation are welcome. I encourage students to be creative, experiment, etc.)

Assessment: Your Introducing Theory presentations will be assessed according to the following criteria: (a) Depth and thoughtfulness of your engagement with theoretical concepts (b) Clarity of presentation (c) Effectiveness leading discussion. (NOTE: Presentation groups will receive a common grade unless there is a clear disparity within the collective effort.)

Seminar Project 50%

How can communication, some might say rhetoric or symbolic action, be taken up as an antislavery practice? This question will guide you as you design, compose, and revise

work that will contribute to the cause of ending slavery either by raising awareness, advocating on behalf of the enslaved, building antislavery community, or raising funds for antislavery workers in the field. Students may collaborate on projects or work individually. Our guiding assumption is, as Ishmael Reed once put it, that “Writin’ in Fightin’,” in this case, fighting slavery.

There are three components to your Seminar Project:

(1) Seminar Project Presentation: *On March 24, you will give a very brief presentation of your proposed Seminar Project. This proposal will consist of (a) a summary of the project (b) a statement of the intended outcome of the project work (c) a brief statement of your thinking about your audience(s) (d) if you are collaborating, how you will divide the work (e) the specific challenges you anticipate facing in your project work.*

(2) Seminar Project: *There is literally no end to the possible directions your project work might take. Conversations with a number of students and with MA SJHR faculty, some possibilities have been suggested: (a) a YouTube video addressing slavery and trafficking (b) a proposal directed to local businesses or institutions requesting divestment from slave interests (or investment in the antislavery cause) (c) a presentation about slavery and human trafficking to a faith-based community (d) an antislavery sermon (e) bilingual materials about wage theft for local workers’ rights centers (f) an antislavery play to be performed at a local theater (g) other artistic engagements meant to raise awareness and protest (h) research papers on any number of slavery / antislavery situations (g) consider also that we have to draft a constitution for our chapter of Free the Slaves*

(2) Reflective Letter: *In this letter, you will (a) assess the quality of your work (b) discuss the areas in which your project text, performance, etc. could be improved (c) discuss what you learned through the process of your project work, about writing, activism, collaboration, contemporary slavery and human trafficking, or all the above.*

Assessment: *Your Seminar Project will be assessed according the following criteria: (a) completeness and thoughtfulness of your Seminar Project proposal (b) the rhetorical quality of your project work (c) The thoughtfulness of self-assessment in your Reflective Letter*

Course Calendar (subject to change)

Week One

January 20: Kevin Bales public talk (12pm in La Sala A and B / seminar visit with Kevin Bales / read Free the Slaves website in advance / read first three chapters of *Ending Slavery: How We Free Today's Slaves*

Week Two

January 27: Introduction to course and assignments / read Alcoff's "The Problem of Speaking for Others" / a partial history of abolitionism in the Western hemisphere

Week Three

February 3: read *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, and American Slave* (1845) /and background material

Week Four

February 10: read *To Plead Our Own Cause*.

Week Five

February 17: read selections from Kaufma's *Ideas for Action*, chapters 1-4 (student groups present chapters)

Week Six

February 24: read selections from Kaufman's *Ideas for Action*, chapters 5-9 (student groups present chapters)

Week Seven

March 3: read the remainder of Bales' *Ending Slavery: How We Free Today's Slaves* / plan Border Justice presentation?

Week Eight

March 10: Spring Break

Week Nine

March 17: read Kaufman's *Ideas for Action*, chapters 10-11 / workshop Seminar Projects

Week Ten

March 24: Presentation of Seminar Project Proposals

Week Eleven

March 31: film or speaker TBA

Week Twelve

April 7: law and human right practicum, visit from Fran Bernat; read MacKinnon's "Crimes of War, Crimes of Peace," chapter from *Are Women Human?*

Week Thirteen

April 14: read De Stefano's *The War on Human Trafficking: The U.S. Policy Assessed*

Week Fourteen

April 21: some reading on secondary trauma

Week Fifteen

April 28: JHR 511 hosts Arizona League to End Regional Trafficking (ALERT) volunteer training

Week Sixteen

May 5: Wrap up party

Appendix

Introducing Theory Sign Up Sheet

(Chapters keyed to Cynthia Kaufman's *Ideas for Action: Relevant Theory for Radical Change*)

GROUP ONE: Chapter One Thinking About Liberation

GROUP TWO: Chapter Two: Capitalism, Freedom, and the Good Life

GROUP THREE: Chapter Three: Capitalism and Class

GROUP FOUR: Chapter Four: Transnational Capital and Anti-Capitalism

GROUP FIVE: Chapter Five: Theorizing and Fighting Racism

GROUP SIX: Chapter Six: Theorizing and Fighting Gender-Based Oppression

GROUP SEVEN: Chapter Seven: People, Nature, and Other Animals

GROUP EIGHT: Chapter Eight: Whose Side is the Government On?

GROUP NINE: Chapter Nine: Nations, Bureaucracies, Organization, and Utopia
