Slavery. It was wrong, wasn’t it? That much we know. Yet, why was it wrong? The societies that benefitted from slavery had to be convinced that it was wrong. Indeed, they had to be persuaded to give it up. Moreover, for them, it was not enough that the case for slavery was shown to be unsound; they wanted to hear the case against slavery. Although we don’t need to be persuaded by the case against slavery, we struggle to explain exactly what that case is. For this reason, we will revisit, analyse, and evaluate some of the arguments historically used to explain the wrongness of slavery. To do this, we shall focus on a period of time that we might call ‘the longer eighteenth century of British abolitionism’: it begins with the Germantown Protest of 1688 and ends, 150 years later, with the final emancipation of all persons enslaved-as-negro in the British Empire, in 1838. However, we frame our investigation by the anglophone world established by British imperialism, not because Britain’s abolition of negro slavery was the first—no, that occurred in St-Domingue (later Haiti), in 1793—but rather because Britain currently enjoys (deservedly or not) special moral praise for its ‘leading’ contribution to the emancipation of all persons enslaved-as-negro, across all the European empires. Ultimately, by evaluating the arguments of (1) European abolitionists, (2) enslaved Africans, and (3) Haitian revolutionaries, we will grasp the place that these arguments occupy in the broader philosophical debate among three major moral theories: (a) the utilitarian idea that a policy is wrong, if its painful results outweigh its pleasurable results, (b) the theory of natural rights, according to which a policy is wrong, if it violates a person’s human right, and (c) the theory of human flourishing, according to which a policy is wrong, if it corrupts a person’s character.

The purpose of the weekly seminar is to model a way of exploring scholarly questions of research that arise during your reflective reading of texts and during your active listening to my lectures. This model is what you should emulate, as you draft your formative and summative essays. The ‘questions for reflection’ are offered to you, to guide your reading, to show you where you should focus your energy and time, when exploring both the 'texts for reflection', which are required, and the 'texts for research', which are recommended. At least 48hrs before each seminar (i.e. by 2pm each Sunday), you should post to Moodle your Sentence of the Week. This should consist in a paragraph, of no more than 150 words, containing (1) a single, striking, sentence, clause, or phrase, from the texts for reflection or research for that week, (2) a well-crafted, intriguing, scholarly question for research, and (3) an explanation of how that question arises from reflection upon that sentence. You should arrive at the seminar prepared to read your Sentence of the Week aloud. The purpose of this regular exercise is to train you in crafting a concise, original, and scholarly question for research. You will need this training, when you compose your formative and summative essays. Every student must compose a formative essay. This is not optional, but rather a crucial step on the long road of regular and frequent re-visions, re-thinking, and re-writing, that is indispensable for the careful composition of a compelling summative text. You will be required to defend the argument of your formative essay orally, in a tutorial. The purpose of the tutorial is to explore the potential that your formative essay has for being developed into a summative essay. The criteria against which your summative essay will be marked are here: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/philosophy/current-students/ba-programmes. Your formative essay is due at noon, on Monday 24th February 2014. Your summative essay is due at noon, on Monday 28th April 2014. Both essays are to be submitted via Moodle. Finally, since your feedback on the seminar is very valuable to the tutor, please keep a running log of that feedback, by writing a sentence or two, immediately after each seminar, on how any future offering of this seminar should continue, or develop, its format, or content.

You may find the following texts helpful, as an introduction to this seminar:


**Davis, David Brion. 1966. The problem of slavery in Western culture. Cornell UP.**


Week 1: Tuesday 14th January 2014

Question for reflection:

1. What is, or was, ‘(negro) slavery’?

Texts for reflection:

Wilberforce, William. 1807. West Indian compared with ancient slavery. In A letter on the abolition of the slave trade: Addressed to the freeholders and other inhabitants of Yorkshire, at 128–131. (3pp)


Hume, David. 1742. Of the populousness of ancient nations, §13-14, 22. (1p)


Texts for research:

Seneca, Lucius Annaeus. 56. de clementia 1.24.
—. 64. ad Lucilium epistulae morales 47.

Arbiter, Petronius. 65. satyricon 102–103.

Wilberforce, William. 1814. A letter to his Excellency the Prince of Talleyrand Perigord on the subject of the Slave Trade. London.


Asante, Molefi Kete. 2007. The ideological origins of chattel slavery in the British world.


Sarich, Jody, & Kevin Bales. 2009. Forced marriage: Beyond conflict situations and toward Humanity.


Week 2: Tuesday 21st January 2014

Question for reflection:

2. How did ancient, mediaeval, and modern 'abolitionists', before the invention of negro slavery, explain the wrongness of slavery?

Texts for reflection:


Wulfstan II of York. 1014. sermo Lupi ad Anglos. (2pp)


Kant, Immanuel. 1785. Groundwork for the metaphysics of morals, ed. Denis. Broadview, 92–3 (2pp)

Texts for research:


Week 3: Tuesday 28th January 2014

Question for reflection:

3a. How did British abolitionists try to convince those who did not own persons enslaved-as-negro that negro slavery is wrong?

Texts for reflection:

**Fox**, George, et al. 1660. *A Declaration from the harmless and innocent people of God, called Quakers, against all plotters and fighters in the world, for the removing the ground of jealousy and suspicion from both magistrates and people in the kingdom, concerning wars and fightings.* (8pp)


**Clarkson**, Thomas. 1787. *An essay on the slavery and commerce of the human species, particularly the African*, translated from a Latin dissertation, which was honoured with the first prize, in the *University of Cambridge, for the year 1785, with additions*. In Thomas Clarkson and Ottobah Cugoano, ed. Mary A. Smith. Broadview, 2010, at 75. (1p)

**Priestley**, Joseph. 1788. *A sermon on the subject of the slave trade; delivered to a society of Protestant dissenters, at the New Meeting, in Birmingham; and published at their request*. Birmingham, at 18–22. (5pp)


Texts for research:


**Lay**, Benjamin. 1737. *All slave-keepers, that keep the innocent in bondage, apostates, pretending to lay claim to the pure & holy Christian religion; of what congregation so ever; but especially in their Ministers, by whose example the filthy leprosy and apostacy is spread far and near...*. Philadelphia.


Week 3: Tuesday 28th January 2014

Question for reflection:

3b. How did British abolitionists try to convince the owners of persons enslaved-as-negro that negro slavery is wrong?

Texts for reflection:

**Priestley**, Joseph. 1788. *A sermon on the subject of the slave trade; delivered to a society of Protestant dissenters, at the New Meeting, in Birmingham; and published at their request.* Birmingham, at 25-29 (5pp)

**Smith**, Adam. 1759. *The theory of moral sentiments*, 6.2.28. (1p)
—. 1776. *An enquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*, 1.8.40.; 3.2.12.; 4.9.47. (2pp)


Texts for research:


Question for reflection:

3c. Why did British abolitionists argue for the abolition of the trade in persons enslaved-as-negro, before they argued for the abolition of negro slavery?

Texts for reflection:


**Burke**, Edmund. 1792. Letter to the right honorable Henry Dundas, one of His Majesty's principal Secretaries of State. (2pp)

**Bentham**, Jeremy. 1843. Of security; Of property; Of slavery. In *Principles of the civil code*, 1.7.; 1.8.; 3.2. (9pp)

**Mill**, John Stuart. 1848. *Principles of political economy*, 2.2.7 (1p)


Texts for research:

**Burke**, Edmund. 1780. *Sketch of the negro code*.


**25th March 1807**: 47° Georgii III, Session 1, cap. XXXVI: An act for the abolition of the slave trade.

**1st August 1833**: 3° & 4° Gulielmi IV, cap. LXXIII: An act for the abolition of slavery throughout the British Colonies; for promoting the industry of the manumitted slaves; and for compensating the persons hitherto entitled to the services of such slaves.


Week 4: Tuesday 4th February 2014 (220th anniversary of the first abolition of negro slavery)

Question for reflection:

4. How did French abolitionists explain the wrongness of negro slavery?

Texts for reflection:

Didérot, Denis. 1755. Natural right. In Encyclopedia, at §6–9 (1p)
Jaucourt, Louis de. 1755. Slavery. In Encyclopedia, at 34–46 (1p)
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1762. Du contrat social, ou Les principes du droit politique, 1.4.6 & 13 (1p)
Condorcet, Nicolas de. 1790. Address to the National Assembly in favor of the abolition of the slave trade, 5th February. In Hunt 1996, 106–108. (2pp)
Cooper, Anna Julia. 1925. The attitude of France in regard to slavery during the revolution (1788-1805), trans. Frances Richardson Keller. Rowman & Littlefield, 2006, at TBC. (7pp)
Devega, Chauncey. 2012. Playing with sex, power, and race: Did you know that there are 'plantation retreats' where black people go to serve their white 'masters'? We are respectable Negroes. (2pp)

Texts for research:

Week 5: Tuesday 11th February 2014

Question for reflection:

5. Should we defer to the arguments of persons enslaved-as-negro?

Texts for reflection:


Douglass, Frederick. 1855. Chapter 23: Introduced to the abolitionists. In *My bondage, my freedom*. (1p)

Texts for research:


Anderson, Elizabeth Secor. 2013. Social movements, experiments in living, and moral progress: Case studies from Britain’s abolition of slavery. Arthur Allen Leff Fellowship Lecture, Yale Law School, 30th September. MS.
Question for reflection:

6. How did the Sons of Africa explain the wrongness of their own enslavement?

Texts for reflection:

Sons of Africa. 1789. *The Diary; or Woodfall's Register* 24, 25th April. (1p)
Cugoano, Quobna Ottobah. 1787. *Thoughts and sentiments on the evil and wicked traffic of the slavery and commerce of the human species, humbly submitted to the inhabitants of Great-Britain, by Ottobah Cugoano, a native of Africa* TBA (27pp)
Vassa, Gustavus. 1794. *The interesting narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* 1: 221–226 (7pp)

Texts for research:

Locke, John. 1689. Of the state of nature; Of slavery; Of property. In *Two treatises of government*, 2.2, 4, 5.
Emerson, Ralph Waldo. 1863. Boston hymn.
Week 7: Tuesday 4th March 2014

Question for reflection:

7. How did the Daughters of Africa explain the wrongness of their own enslavement?

Texts for reflection:

Prince, Mary. 1831. *The history of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (23pp)


Texts for research:


Week 8: Tuesday 11th March 2014

Question for reflection:

8. How did the Haitian Revolutionaries explain the wrongness of the enslavement from which they emancipated themselves?

Texts for reflection: TBC

Boukman, Dutty. 1791. Prayer, August 22.

Texts for research:

Smith, James McCune. 1841. Lecture on the Haytien Revolutions, with a sketch of the character of Toussaint L'Ouverture.
2008 Jean-Bertrand Aristide Presents Toussaint L'Ouverture
Jenson, Deborah. 2011. Beyond the slave narrative. Liverpool UP.
Week 9: Tuesday 18th March 2014

Question for reflection:

9. How did the actions of the Haitian Revolutionaries cause Prussians to re-explain the wrongness of negro slavery?

Texts for reflection:

Pratt, Jamie. 2009. Kant on slavery. The spectacled avenger. (1p)

Texts for research:

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1821. Philosophy of right, §57.
Honenberger, Phillip. 2007. 'Le Nègre et Hegel': Fanon on Hegel, colonialism, and the dialectics of recognition.
Walls, Laura Dassow. 2009 'All are alike designed for freedom': Humboldt on race and slavery. In The passage to Cosmos: Alexander von Humboldt and the shaping of America, 172–209. U of Chicago P.
Week 10: Tuesday 25th March 2014

Question for reflection:

10. How should we, today, explain the wrongness of negro slavery?

Texts for reflection:


Smith, Adam. 1776. An enquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations, 5.2.148, 160 (1p)


Garvey, Marcus. 1938. The work that has been done. The Black Man 3(10): 7–11, at 10. (1p)


Texts for research:


