**Poetries of Slavery**

**CHC 223H**

**WF, 12-1:20 pm, CHA 303**

**Prof. Matt Sandler**

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**Office Hours: WF, 1:20-3 pm**

**Office: Chapman 101H**

**Description:**

This course will examine the wide range of poetries of slavery, from the eighteenth to twenty-first centuries. We will focus on "chattel" or "New World" slavery-- meaning the treatment of people as property, specifically people of African descent in the Atlantic Basin. We will look at two main groups of writers: poets who dealt with slavery as a fact of contemporary life and African American poets who reckoned with the history of slavery after its abolition. A couple of major thematic concerns: the ethics/morality of slavery (esp. in poetic reinterpretations of Biblical slavery); slavery as the opposite of freedom (esp. in poetry imagined as the elaboration of freedom); slavery as a form of economy (esp. in poetry as a form of value); and slavery as an organization of gender and sexuality (esp. in poetry as romance). The second half of the course, we’ll confront a number of questions about the after-life of slavery in contemporary cultural memory (for instance, what does the recent vogue for literature about slavery tell us about the dawn of a supposedly “post-racial” culture and society?). As far as skills I’m hoping you will acquire, we will focus especially on how to establish (through effective research and writing) that history and literature affect each other dynamically. We will also spend considerable time thinking through research as an aspect of artistic practice.

**Assignments:**

--2 Close readings (40%)

--Proposal, Outline, Annotated Bibliography (10%)

--Final Paper (40%)

--Participation [means actually talking every class] (10%)

**Texts (available at the Duckstore, you must purchase these and have them in front of you on the appropriate day):**

--Evie Shockley, *The new black* (Middletown: Wesleyan U.P., 2012)

--Frank X Walker, *Buffalo Dance: The Journey of York* (Lexington: U.P. of Kentucky,

2004)

--Thylias Moss, *Slave Moth* (NY: Persea, 2006)

--Course Packet

**Absences:**

You are allowed 2 absences without penalty. In other words, do not email me with excuses, or to find out “what happened” in class. Feel free to relay on each other for this kind of help.

**Schedule (this may change according to our progress as a group):**

W Apr. 3: Introduction

F Apr. 5: Shockley, *The new black* (pg. 1-47)

W Apr. 10: Shockley, *The new black* (pg. 48-end)

F Apr. 12: Wheatley and Hammon (packet) FIRST CLOSE READING DUE

W Apr. 17: British poets on Abolition (Romantic period) (packet)

F Apr. 19: American poets on Abolition (packet)

W Apr. 24: George Moses Horton (packet)

F Apr. 26: ATTEND AFRICAN AMERICAN LIT. CONFERENCE

W May 1: F.E.W. Harper (packet)

F May 3: Paul Laurence Dunbar (packet) 2ND CLOSE READING DUE

W May 8: Selections from Harlem Renaissance Poets(packet)

F May 10: Hayden and Reed, E. Alexander and N. Tretheway (packet)

W May 15: Walker, Buffalo Dance (all)

F May 17: Young, Ardency, Philip, Zong! (packet) PROPOSAL DUE

W May 22: Moss, Slave Moth (pg. 1-88)

F May 24: Moss, Slave Moth (pg. 89-end) BIBLIOGRAPHY/OUTLINE DUE

W May 29: LIBRARY VISIT

F May 31: ROUGH DRAFT DUE IN CLASS FOR REVISION

W Jun. 5: SHORT PRESENTATIONS

F June 7: Wrap-up, FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS