

Non-Traditional Slaveholding in the Atlantic World

July 11-12 2014
Senate House, London
Call for Papers



Plenary Speakers:

Seymour Drescher (University of Pittsburgh)

Brent Weisman (University of South Florida)

Studies of slaveholding in the Atlantic World traditionally imagine a particular type of slave holder – a wealthy landowning white man who has extensive political and cultural power, his status in the community defined by or at least enhanced by his slaveholding. He has a set of attitudes towards his slaves and their economic and cultural work that he shares with others of his class. This conference sets out to challenge these preconceptions by bringing together scholars working on different regions of the Atlantic world to discuss a hitherto neglected area of the study of African American slavery: non-traditional slaveholding.

We welcome proposals that consider slaveholding by poor whites, women, free blacks, Native Americans and Jewish Americans in every area of the Atlantic. The conference is designed to be explicitly comparative, encouraging scholars to discuss significant issues such as: what counts as ‘slavery’ in this context? How widespread was the phenomenon of slaveholding among the non-white population? Are non-traditional slave holders distinct from white slave holders in their attitudes and behaviour towards the institution and towards their slaves? To what extent did regional specificities, historical contexts and particular legal frameworks encourage slaveholding among non-traditional slave owners and influence the nature of the bondage? Do slave culture and slave agency emerge differently from a study of non-traditional slaveholders? Is the line between slavery and freedom more blurred? What are the epistemological consequences of acknowledging slave ownership by non-traditional slaveholders? How does it alter our understanding of ‘the colour line’?

Please send proposals of no more than 300 words (for papers or panels) and a brief CV to nontraditionalslaveholders@gmail.com by 15 January 2014. We welcome papers that cover any region of the Atlantic and proposals for round table discussions as well as formal academic papers.

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Conference Organisers: Lawrence Aje (University of Montpellier), Catherine Armstrong (Manchester Metropolitan University), and Lydia Plath (Canterbury Christ Church University).