HIST-GA.2555 African Slavery and the Atlantic Slave Trade
This colloquium is designed around a number of provocative readings, including core texts, novels, films, and presentations by Professor Hull and enrolled students. We explore the various dimensions of master-servant relationships in pre-colonial African societies and how they were transformed into more classical forms of human bondage and exploitation. Issues to be examined are slavery and male/female relationships, slavery and empowerment, and the commoditization of humanity in Africa. We will also consider origins and expansion of the Atlantic slave trade itself and plantation agriculture. We will assess the financing and actual conduct of the slave trade from point of capture, to embarkation, overseas voyage, and finally to the plantations in the Americas. Students will explore how and why this trade began, who financed and operated it, and who in society were its beneficiaries and its victims. We will consider the impact of the slave trades on Africa, the Americas, the Middle East, and on European countries that were directly involved. Finally, students will analyze the motivations and outcomes of efforts in Europe, Africa, and the Americas, to legalize and ultimately to abolish the slave trade. We will also explore why slavery and the slave trade persisted in Africa and the Middle East until well into the 20th century and why it is re-emerging in many parts of the world today.

This graduate course is open to advanced undergraduate students with permission of Professor Hull.