

# HIS 115A: West African History

## The History and Memory of the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Introducing Myself and the Class (Tue. 1-8)





## Why teach African History?

“Undergraduates, seduced, as always, by the changing breath of journalistic fashion, demand that they should be taught the history of black Africa. Perhaps, in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is largely darkness, like the history of pre-European, pre-Columbian America. And darkness is not a subject for history.”

- Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Rise of Christian Europe* (1965)

## Statistics on African History in Higher Education (2018-2019)

### Africa

Number of Faculty: 5

W/O North Africa: 2

Upper Division courses: 7

All Pre-1900 Courses: 1

*HIS 15A: Africa to 1900*

**Conclusion:** One country of Europe gets four classes for its history before 1900. By contrast, the entire continent of Africa gets only 1 class for its history before that same period.

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### Europe

Number of Faculty: 11

Upper Division Courses Offered: 54

Pre-1900 Upper Division Courses: 35

*HIS 151A: England in the Middle Ages*

*HIS 151B: The Early Modern Centuries*

*HIS 151C: Eighteenth-Century England*

*HIS 151D: Industrial England*



## Why teach the Slave Trade?

“Contrary to what may be called entrenched popular perception and belief, the slave trade and its abolition are neglected subjects in the writing of West African history and indeed of the history of Africa as a whole...More importantly, the topic does not occupy a prominent enough place in the teaching programs of many of our colleges and universities. I have come across many history and social science graduates who know next to nothing about the slave trade in Africa and its abolition...”

- Adiele Eberechukwu Afigbo, “Africa and the Abolition of the Slave Trade,” *WMQ* (2009)



# The Zamani Reader

On Atlantic Africa and the West Indies (1655-1807)

HOME ABOUT ▾ SEARCH ARCHIVES BY GENRE ▾ SEARCH ARCHIVES BY DATE ▾ SEARCH ARCHIVES BY TOPIC ▾ CUSTOM BIBLIOGRAPHIES ▾ MISCELLANEOUS HISTORY RESOURCES ▾ SUBMISSIONS DONATIONS CONTACT



## About the Blog

My name is Devin Leigh, and I am a PhD Candidate and teaching assistant in the History Department at the University of California Davis in Yolo County, California. *The Zamani Reader* (abbreviated as *TZR*) is a blog that I created in 2014 to be a free and open forum for sharing my academic work in the field of History. This work focuses on the history of Atlantic Africa, the West Indies, and the British Empire in the early-modern period.



In one of the four lookout towers at the old Spanish fort—the Castillo de San Marcos—in St. Augustine, Florida (2016)



Logo for The Zamani Reader ©

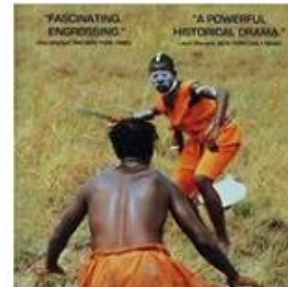
I first created *TZR* on Saturday afternoon, February 1, 2014. It grew out of my experience writing posts for a different blog, called *The Lakefront Historian*, when I was an master's student at Loyola University Chicago (LUC). The History Department at LUC has a special strength in the field of Public History. This is the study of the production of history specifically for and generally in collaboration with the public.

### FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER

Tweets by @TheZamaniReader 0

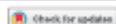
Devin Leigh  
@TheZamaniReader  
Replying to @TheZamaniReader  
Thanks @MissCurtin! just requested it from ILL. Looks like there is a copy at Berkeley that is on its way.  
Dec 11, 2018

Devin Leigh  
@TheZamaniReader  
Does anyone know how I might obtain a copy of the film *Adanggaman*, directed by Roger Grosse Wolske? I really want to show the film in my upcoming class on the memory of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Africa, but I cannot seem to find a way to get a hold of it. Thank!



Dec 1, 2018

Devin Leigh  
@TheZamaniReader  
So I am about to start working on a new dissertation chapter. This one is about the 18th-century, Anglo-



## The origins of a source: Edward Long, Coromantee slave revolts and *The History of Jamaica*


Devin Leigh

### ABSTRACT

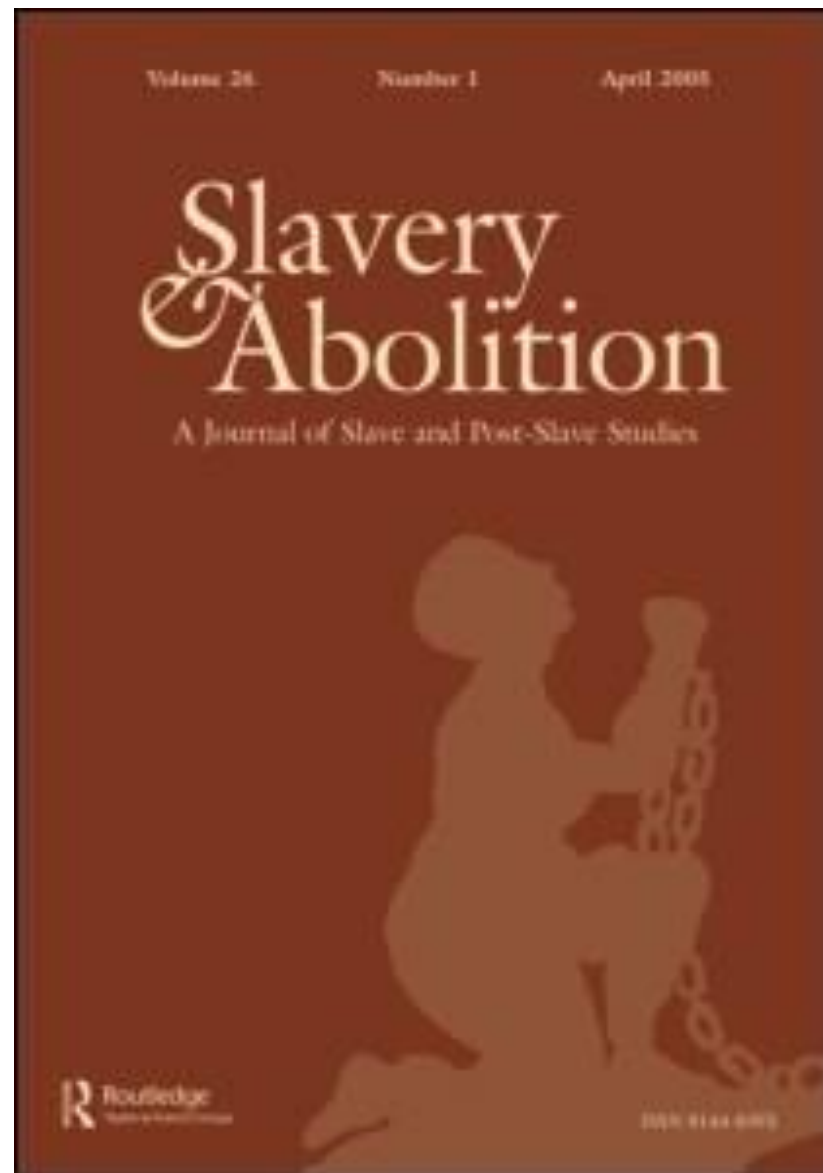
Since the 1960s, historians of the early-modern era have been working with colonial sources to uncover the ways that Africans with connections to the Gold Coast – often known as ‘Coromantees’ in the Anglo-American colonies – shaped the history of the Atlantic World. One of the most influential primary sources used in this literature is a 32-page section of the second volume of *The History of Jamaica*, written by the planter-historian Edward Long in 1774. ‘The origins of a source’ uses Long’s life and works, both published and unpublished, to tell the story of this source’s creation. In doing so, it provides a detailed case study for how a prominent and controversial intellectual acquired knowledge of African culture, and then repurposed and deployed that knowledge as a tool in the abolitionist debates. It argues that the political context of abolition is essential to understanding Long’s writings on the Coromantee.

### Introduction

In 1766, the planter-historian Edward Long stood before the Jamaican House of Assembly and proposed a bill that would place an import duty on slaves from the present-day region of Ghana in West Africa, then known as the ‘Gold Coast’.<sup>1</sup> The bill would ban the importation of Gold Coast Africans – known in the Anglo-American colonies as ‘Coromantees’ – from Britain’s most profitable overseas colony on the belief that they had been responsible for most of its slave revolts. The Assembly rejected the proposal that day, and Long did not forget it. In 1774, he was living in England and working on what would become the most comprehensive study of Jamaican society in the early-modern era, *The History of Jamaica* in three volumes. When he came to a section that he devoted to the ‘History of Negroe insurrections in this island’, he returned to his proposal from 1766.<sup>2</sup> At 32 pages, he wrote more than any author before him on connections between slave rebellion and the Coromantee.<sup>3</sup> This time, however, his argument was different than it had been eight years ago. Then it had been a private appeal to fellow planters, inspired by a series of recent

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## Distinguished Visitors @ The AJL: Devin Leigh



Devin Leigh is a PhD Candidate in the History Department at the University of California, Davis, in the United States of America. He researches the history of the English-speaking Atlantic World during the long eighteenth century, which he dates from roughly the 1650s to the 1830s. His research typically explores connections between West Africa, the West Indies, and Britain. Currently, he is conducting research for his dissertation project. This work is tentatively entitled "Necessary at This Time: The Politics of African History in an Age of Abolition, 1760-1807." In this project, Devin explores the lives and works of British slavers who turned to writing African History as a way to prevent slave-trade abolition. Two of the figures that he studies were prominent residents of the West Indies.

Devin came to the Caribbean this summer to research his project and network with scholars of Caribbean history. After attending the 50th Annual Conference of the Association of Caribbean Historians in Barbados in mid-June, Devin flew to Trinidad to consult materials here in the West Indians and Special Collection (WISC) Division of Aima Jordan Library. Specifically, Devin is examining minute books for two eighteenth-century lobbyist organizations. These are the Society of West India Planters and Merchants and the Society of West India Merchants. The books are preserved in manuscript, under call number SC 89, as part of the Library's West India Committee Records. These books were originally purchased by the government of Trinidad and Tobago in the late-twentieth century, and the WISC is the only place in the world that the originals can be seen. They are crucial for helping Devin trace the activities of the central figures in his study.

Devin is grateful to all of the staff here at the Aima Jordan Library for welcoming him into their research community and for accommodating him during his visit to Trinidad and Tobago. The WISC Division of the Aima Jordan Library is a special institution, and Devin has thoroughly enjoyed his time here.



West India Committee  
@WL\_Committee

Follow

PhD student Devin Leigh discovers unique archive in our library, a letter between two prominent [#Jamaican](#) historians dated 1792. [#heritage](#)



8:15 AM - 10 Aug 2017

Barnabas Wale





## H15: AFRICA TO 1900

### STATES AND SOCIETIES, SLAVERY, AND THE SCRAMBLE

WINTER 2018, LEC: TR 12:10-1:30 PM CHEM 179



With 55 countries, thousands of languages, and a geographic area that surpasses the United States, China, and Europe combined, the defining characteristic of Africa is its diversity. History 15 introduces students to key shifts in the history of Africa up to 1900, including the foundation of states and societies, the spread of Islam and Christianity, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the onset of European colonialism. Students will examine the continent's past through oral and written primary sources, scholarly debates, music, film, art, and news.

Contact Professor Corrie Decker for more information:  
[cdecker@ucdavis.edu](mailto:cdecker@ucdavis.edu)

NEW COURSE OFFERED WINTER QUARTER, 2019

# HIS 115A: West African History

Special Topic: The History and Memory of the Transatlantic Slave Trade



**WQ, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:40 - 6:00 PM, Hart Hall 1120**

Enrollment for this class is limited. Register with CRN 54662 to reserve your spot. If you have any questions or you would like to see the syllabus, please contact the instructor, Devin Leigh, at [dleign@ucdavis.edu](mailto:dleign@ucdavis.edu)