

PHIL 361

Topics in Social & Political
Philosophy: "Slavery, Religion,
and the Philosophy of
Freedom"

Professor Alznauer

T/Th
12:30 – 1:50
Fisk 114



Overview of class

This course examines the historical development of one of the most important ideals of our time—freedom—in the context of slave-holding societies. It is centrally concerned with the question of how and why slavery was regarded as legitimate, necessary, or permissible in those societies throughout most of human history, and how and why it came to be regarded as the very paradigm of injustice. The course will examine both the role that slavery played in various places and times and the religious and philosophic justifications that were provided for slavery during those periods. Four general periods receive focus: antiquity, the medieval period, early modernity, and the nineteenth century. The course readings will focus on key themes that include: the role of slavery and freedom in religious traditions; Hegel's conception of freedom and slavery; the Haitian Revolution; slavery and abolition; the causal relation between slavery and freedom.

Learning Objectives

This course is designed to offer students both a basic historical background in the history of slavery, as well as an understanding of some of the ideological debates that this institution gave rise to.