Citation

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CAPITALISM & SLAVERY

1. Describe how the Historic events of the period contributed to the social, political and economic circumstances of African Americans during that historical period.
2. Identify or describe the Historical Period addressed in your selected text.
3. Identify/discuss any important events that affected or impacted the African American community.
4. Discuss significant challenges or obstacles confronting the African American community during your historical period.
5. What methods or strategies were used or adopted by African Americans to confront or overcome these obstacles and challenges?
6. If applicable, did your historical topic have an impact beyond the U.S.? Explain.
7. Citation Form: please use MLA and in-text citations only.

# The book

1. THE PRESENT STUDY is an attempt to place in historical perspective the relationship between early capitalism as exemplified by Great Britain, and the Negro slave trade, Negro slavery and the general colonial trade of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
2. It is strictly an economic study of the role of Negro slavery and the slave trade in providing the capital which financed the Industrial Revolution in England and of mature industrial capitalism in destroying the slave system.
3. of mature industrial capitalism in destroying the slave system. It is therefore first a study in English economic history and second in VU Vlll PREFACE West Indian and Negro history. It is not a study of the institution of slavery but of the contribution of slavery to the development of British capitalism
4. WHEN IN 1492 COLUMBUS, representing the Spanish monarchy, discovered the New World, he set in train the long and bitter international rivalry over colonial possessions for which, after four and a half centuries, no solution has yet been found.2?
5. the Pope issued in 1493 a series of papal bulls which established a line of demarcation between the colonial possessions of the two states: the East went to Portugal and the West to Spain.2?
6. According to Adam Smith, the prosperity of a new colony depends upon one simple economic factor "plenty of good land." 3 The British colonial 4?possessions up to 1776, however, can broadly be divided into two types.
   1. The first is the self-sufficient and diversified economy of small farmers, "mere earthscratchers" as Gibbon Wakefield derisively called them, 4 living on a soil which, as Canada was described in 1840, was "no lottery, with a few exorbitant prizes and a large number of blanks, but a secure and certain investment.
      1. In the first category fell the Northern colonies of the American mainland;
   2. The second type is the colony which has facilities for the production of staple articles on a large scale for an export market.5
      1. the second, the mainland tobacco colonies and the sugar islands of the Caribbean.5
7. Under certain circumstances slavery has some obvious advantages. In the cultivation of crops like sugar, cotton and tobacco, where the cost of production is appreciably reduced on larger units, the slaveowner, with his large-scale production and his organized slave gang, can make more profitable use of the land than the small farmer or peasant proprietor.
8. From the standpoint of the grower, the greatest defect of slavery lies in the fact that it quickly exhausts the soil. The labor supply of low social status, docile and cheap, can be maintained in subjection only by systematic degradation and by deliberate efforts to suppress its intelligence.7
9. Slavery in the Caribbean has been too narrowly identified with the Negro. A racial twist has thereby been given to what is basically an economic phenomenon. Slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery. Unfree labor in the New World was brown, white, black, and yellow; Catholic, Protestant and pagan.
10. The first instance of slave trading and slave labor developed in the New World involved, racially, not the Negro but the Indian. The Indians rapidly succumbed to the excessive labor demanded of them, the insufficient diet, the white man's diseases, and their inability to adjust themselves to the new way of life.8
11. The immediate successor of the Indian, however, was not the Negro but the poor white. These white servants included a variety of types. Some were indentured servants, so called because, before departure from the homeland, they had signed a contract, indented by law, binding them to service for a stipulated time in return for their passage.9
12. A regular traffic developed in these indentured servants. Between 1654 and 1685 ten thousand sailed from Bristol alone, chiefly for the West Indies and Virginia. 29 In 1683 white servants represented one-sixth of Virginia's population. Two-thirds of the immigrants to Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century were white servants; in four years 25,000 came to Philadelphia alone. It has been estimated that more than a quarter of a million persons were of this class during the colonialperiod, and that they probably constituted one-half of all English immigrants, the majority going to the middle colonies.10
13. Convicts provided another steady source of white labor. The harsh feudal laws of England recognized three hundred capital crimes. Typical hanging offences included: picking a pocket for more than a shilling; shoplifting to the value of five shillings; stealing a horse or a sheep; poaching rabbits on a gentleman's estate. 11
14. The transportation of these white servants shows in its true light the horrors of the Middle Passage not as something unusual or inhuman but as apart of the age. The emigrants were packed like herrings. According to Mittelberger, each servant was allowed about two feet in width and six feet in length in bed.13
15. The transportation of servants and convicts produced a powerful vested interest in England. When the Colonial Board was created in 1661, not the least important of its duties was the control of the trade in indentured servants. 14
16. The status of these servants became progressively worse in the plantation colonies. Servitude, originally a free personal relation based on voluntary contract for a definite period of service, in lieu of transportation and maintenance, tended to pass into a property relation which asserted a control of varying extent over the bodies and liberties of the person during service as if he were a thing 16
17. Defoe bluntly stated that the white servant was a slave. 77 He was not. The servant's loss of liberty was of limited duration, the Negro was slave for life. The servant's status could not descend to his offspring, Negro children took the status of the mother. The master at no time had absolute control over the person and liberty of his servant as he had over his slave. The servant had rights, limited but recognized by law and inserted in a contract. 18
18. Here, then, is the origin of Negro slavery. The reason was economic, not racial; it had to do not with the color of the laborer, but the cheapness of the labor. As compared with Indian and white labor, Negro slavery was eminently superior.19
19. Both Indian slavery and white servitude were to go down before the black man's superior endurance, docility, and labor capacity.' 7 85 The features of the man, his hair, color and dentifrice, his "subhuman" characteristics so widely pleaded, were only the later rationalizations to justify a simple economic fact: that the colonies needed labor and resorted to Negro labor because it was cheapest and best. This was not a theory, it was a practical conclusion deduced from the personal experience of the planter.20
20. The plantation is not to be accounted for by climate. It is a political institution." It is, we might add, more: it is an economic institution. The climatic theory "is part of an ideology which rationalizes and naturalizes an existing social and economic order, and this everywhere seems to be an order in which there is a race problem.22
21. Negro slavery, thus, had nothing to do with climate. Its origin can be expressed in three words: in the Caribbean, Sugar; on the mainland, Tobacco and Cotton.23
22. It was not the climate which was against the experiment. Slavery had created the pernicious tradition that manual labor was the badge of the slave and the sphere of influence of the Negro. The first thought of the Negro slave after emancipation was to desert the plantation, where he could, and set up for himself where land was available. White plantation workers could hardly have existed in a society side by side with Negro peasants.28
23. In accordance with the economic policies of the Stuart monarchy, the slave trade was entrusted to a monopolistic company, the Company of Royal Adventurers trading" to Africaincorporated in 1663 for a period of one thousand years. The Earl of Clarendon voiced the enthusiasm current at the time, that the company would "be found a model equally to advance the trade of England with that of any other company, even that of the East Indies.31
24. The Royal African Company was powerless against the competition of the free traders. It soon went bankrupt and had to depend on parliamentary subsidy. In 1731 it abandoned the slave trade and confined itself to the trade in ivory and gold dust. In 1750 a new organization was established, called the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, with a board of nine directors, three each from London, Bristol and Liverpool. Of the slave traders listed in 1755, 237 belonged to Bristol, 147 to London, and 89 to Liverpool.32
25. The journal of one slave dealer during his residence in Africa admits that he had "found no place in all these several countrys of England, Ireland, America, Portugal!, the Caribes, the Cape de Verd, the Azores or all the places I have been in ... where I can inlarge my fortune so soon as where I now live." Money made the man.35
26. An eighteenth century writer has estimated the sterling value of the 303,737 slaves carried in 878 Liverpool ships between 1783 and 1793 at over fifteen million pounds. Deducting commissions and other charges and the cost of the outfit of the ships and maintenance of the slaves, he concluded that the average annual profit was over thirty per cent. 36
27. But the slave trade was always a risky business. "The African Commerce," it was written in 1795, "holds forward one constant train of uncertainty, the time of slaving is precarious, the length of the middle passage uncertain, a vessel may be in part, or wholly cut off, mortalities may be great, and various other incidents may arise impossible to be foreseen.38
28. Prior to 1783, however, all classes in English society presented a united front with regard to the slave trade. The monarchy, the government, the church, public opinion in general, supported the slave trade. There were few protests, and those were ineffective.39
29. Quaker nonconformity did not extend to the slave trade. In 1756 there were eighty-four Quakers listed as members of the Company trading to Africa, among them the Barclay and Baring families. 78 Slave dealing was one of the most lucrative investments of English as of American Quakers, and the name of a slaver, The Willing Quaker, reported from Boston at Sierra Leone in 1793, symbolizes the approval with which the slave trade was regarded in Quaker circles. The Quaker opposition to the slave trade came first and largely not from England but from America, and there from the small rural communities of the North, independent of slave labor.43
30. The slave traders were among the leading humanitarians of their age. John Gary, advocate of the slave trade, was conspicuous for his integrity and humanity and was the founder of a society known as the "Incorporation of the Poor." 102 The Bristol slaver "Southwell" was named after a Bristol parliamentarian, whose monument depicts him as true to king and country and steady to what he thought right. 103 Bryan Blundell of Liverpool, one of Liverpool's most prosperous merchants, engaged in both the slave and West Indian trades, was for many years trustee, treasurer, chief patron and most active supporter of a.charity school, the Blue Coat Hospital, founded in 1709. 47
31. These slave traders held high office in England. The Royal Adventurers trading to Africa in 1667, a list headed by royalty, included two aldermen, three dukes, eight earls, seven lords, one countess, and twenty-seven knights.48
32. The triangular trade thereby gave a triple stimulus to British industry. The Negroes were purchased with British manufactures; transported to the plantations, they produced sugar, cotton, indigo, molasses and other tropical products, the processing of which created new industries in England; while the maintenance of the Negroes and their owners on the plantations provided another market for British industry, New England agriculture and the Newfoundland fisheries. By 1750 there was hardly a trading or a manufacturing town in England which was not in some way connected with the triangular or direct colonial trade. 4 The profits obtained provided one of the main streams of that accumulation of capital in England which financed the Industrial Revolution. 52
33. The amazing value of these West Indian colonies can more graphically be presented by comparing individual West Indian islands with individual mainland colonies. In 1697 British imports from Barbados were five times the combined imports from the breadcolonies; the exports to Barbados were slightly larger. 54
34. Shipbuilding in England received a direct stimulus from the triangular trade. Vessels of a particular type were constructed for the slave trade, combining capacity with speed in an effort to reduce mortality. Many shipwrights in Liverpool were themselves slave traders. The outstanding firm was Baker and Dawson, one of the largest exporters of slaves to the West Indies, and engaged, after 1783, in the supplying of slaves to the Spanish colonies.58
35. pendent more indirectly on the trade with Africa. 43 In addition to the seamen, there were the ancillary trades. Carpenters, painters and boat-builders; tradesmen and artisans connected with repairs, equipment and lading; commissions, wages, dock duties, insurances all depended partly on the ships trading to Africa.59
36. This dependence on the slave trade has proved very awkward to sensitive and patriotic historians. A generation, argued a Bristol historian in 1939, which has seen the spoilation of Ethiopia, the brutal dismemberment of China and the rape of Czechoslovakia, cannot afford to condemn the slave trade 64
37. The goods in the triangular trade
    1. It is necessary now to trace the industrial development in England which was stimulated directly or indirectly by the goods for the triangular trade and the processing of colonial produce.65
    2. Wool; cotton manufacture; sugar refining; rum distillation; pacotille (sundry items and gewgaws which appealed to Africans); metallurgical industires (fetters, chains, padlocks, etc);
38. The political economist, Merivale, later in the nineteenth century argued that the change from residence to absenteeism was a credit rather than a disgrace to the English character, as evincing a distaste for the deep-rooted hard-heartedness and profligacy of life in the slave colonies.86
    1. absenteeism, however, had serious consequences in the islands. Plantations were left to be mismanaged by overseers and attorneys.86
39. Many a humble individual in England rose to wealth and affluence from some chance legacy of a West Indian plantation. The time came when such a legacy was considered gall and wormwood, 36 but it was not so in the eighteenth century.92
40. The investment of profits from the triangular trade 98
    1. Many of the eighteenth century banks established in Liverpool and Manchester, the slaving metropolis and the cotton capital respectively, were directly associated with the triangular trade.99
    2. Heavy Industry Heavy industry played an important role in the progress of the Industrial Revolution and the development of the triangular trade. Some of the capital which financed the growth of the metallurgical industries was supplied directly by the triangular trade.102
    3. Insurance: In the eighteenth century, when the slave trade was the most valuable trade and West Indian property among the most valuable property in the British Empire, the triangular trade occupied an important position in the eyes of the rising insurance companies.
41. American revolution
    1. IN 1770 the continental colonies sent to the West Indies nearly one-third of their exports of dried fish and almost all their pickled fish; seven-eighths of their oats, seven-tenths of their corn, almost all their peas and beans, half of their flour, all their butter and cheese, over one-quarter of their rice, almost all their onions; five-sixths of their pine, oak and cedar boards, over half their staves, nearly all their hoops; all their horses, sheep, hogs and poultry; almost all their soap and candles. 1 As Professor Pitman has told us, "It was the wealth accumulated from West Indian trade which more than anything else underlay the prosperity and civilization of New England and the Middle Colonies.108
    2. Mercantilists looked askance at the northern colonies in particular. They were full of farmers, merchants, fishermen, seamen but no planters. They were, with the exception of their yet undeveloped manufactures, in a very literal sense New England. 5 Rivalry with Old England was inevitable. They competed with the home country in the fisheries, which became a nursery for the seamen of New England109
    3. Thus did the North American colonies come to have a recognized place in imperial economy, as purveyors of the supplies needed by the sugar planters and their slaves, and the New Englanders came to be regarded as the Dutchmen of America.110
    4. It all amounted to this the whole empire was to be browbeaten into paying tribute to the sugar planters and accepting sugar at a monopoly price because it was British grown. The mainland colonists turned naturally, if unpatriotically, to the foreign sugar colonies.115
    5. The Americans became foreigners, subject to all the provisions of the Navigation Laws, and the islands were deflected from their natural market in accordance with the world historical situation of that time.121
    6. The old colonial system had been based on the idea that, without a monopoly of the colonial market, British manufactures would not be sold.124
42. Development of british capitalism
    1. The cotton industry was the capitalist industry par excellence. A calculation in 1835 gave an average employment figure of 175 for all cotton mills, 125 for silk, 93 for linen, 44 for wool. The size of the average cotton mill was something unprecedented in British economic history. Forty-three important mills in Manchester had an average labor force of 300 in 1815. 129
    2. In 1821 British exports to the world amounted to forty-three million pounds; in 1832 they were sixty-five million, an increase of one-half. 53 In both years Europe took nearly half of the total. 54 The East Indies and China took one-twelfth in 1821, one-tenth in 1832; the exports increased by three-quarters
43. The new industrial order
    1. The attack on the West Indians was more than an attack on slavery. It was an attack on monopoly. Their opponents were not only the humanitarians but the capitalists. The reason for the attack was not only that the West Indian economic system was vicious but that it was also so unprofitable that for this reason alone its destruction was inevitable134
    2. The attack falls into three phases: the attack on the slave trade, the attack on slavery, the attack on the preferential sugar duties. The slave trade was abolished in 1807, slavery in 1833, the sugar preference in 1846.136
    3. they had been taught in an age of commercial imperialism. When, to their surprise, the "invisible hand" of Adam Smith turned against them, they could turn only to the invisible hand of God. 6 The rise and fall of mercantilism is the rise and fall of slavery136
44. protection or laissez faire
    1. The West Indian monopoly was not only unsound in theory, it was unprofitable in practice. In 1828 it was estimated that it cost the British people annually more than one and a half million pounds. 19 In 1844 it was costing the country 70,000 a week and London 6,ooo. 20 England was paying for its sugar five millions more a year than the Continent. 21 Three and a half million pounds of British exports to the West Indies in 1838, said Merivale, purchased less than half as much sugar and coffee as they would have purchased if carried to Cuba and Brazil.138
    2. in of all the circumstances connected with it." 26 The capitalists, eager to lower wages, advocated the policy of "the free breakfast table." It was injustice and folly to impose protective duties on food. 27 Monopoly was unsound, costly to all, and had destroyed the great colonial empires of the past139
    3. Protection and Labor these were their slogans in 1846 as they had been in 1746. Protection was simply justice. 44 To refuse it was un-English. 45 The protecting duty was necessary to safeguard the experiment of free labor. 46 Sugar cultivation requires labor. Give us indentured Africans, indentured East Indians, convicts, now that you have emancipated the Negroes and made them lazy; and some, in desperation, even advocated the renewal of the slave trade.141
45. British capitalism nd the west indies
    1. The West Indian planters in the eighteenth century were both exporters of raw cotton and importers of cotton manufactures. In both respects, as we have seen, they had become increasingly negligible. The steam engine and the cotton gin changed Manchester's indifference into downright hostility. As early as 1788 Wilberforce exulted at the fact that a liberal subscription towards abolition had been raised at Manchester, "deeply interested in the African trade.155
    2. After 1833 the Manchester capitalists were all for free trade in sugar, which meant slave-grown sugar. Philips supported the equalization of the East Indian sugar duties. 156
46. The commercial part of the nation and slavery
    1. THE CAPITALISTS had first encouraged West Indian slavery and then helped to destroy it. When British capitalism depended on the West Indies, they ignored slavery or defended it. When British capitalism found the West Indian monopoly a nuisance, they destroyed West Indian slavery as the first step in the destruction of West Indian monopoly.169
    2. This South American market, Brazil in particular, was based on slave labor and required the slave trade. The British capitalists, therefore, began a vigorous campaign against their government's policy of forcible suppression of the slave trade by stationing warships on the African coast.171
    3. The British capitalists, however, remained unimpressed. In 1857 an editorial in the London Times declared: "We know that for all mercantile purposes England is one of the States, and that, in effect, we are partners with the Southern planter; we hold a bill of sale over his goods and chattels, his live and dead stock, and take a lion's share in the profits of slavery176
47. The saints and slavery
    1. THIS STUDY has deliberately subordinated the inhumanity of the slave system and the humanitarianism which destroyed that system. To disregard it completely, however, would be to commit a grave historical error and to ignore one of the greatest propaganda movements of all time.178
    2. the humanitarians were the spearhead of the onslaught which destroyed the West Indian system and freed the Negro. But their importance has been seriously misunderstood and grossly exaggerated by men who have sacrificed scholarship to sentimentality and, like the scholastics of old, placed faith before reason and evidence.178
    3. the British humanitarians were a brilliant band. Clarkson personifies all the best in the humanitarianism of the age. One can appreciate even today his feelings when, in ruminating upon the subject of his prize-winning essay, he first awoke to the realization of the enormous injustice of slavery.179
    4. Clarkson was one of those friends of whom the Negro race has had unfortunately only too few.179
    5. Then there were James Stephen, the father, and James Stephen, the son. The father had been a lawyer in the West Indies and knew conditions at first hand. The son became the first outstanding permanent under-secretary of the Colonial Office, the "Oversecretary Stephen" and "Mr. Mother Country" of unfriendly jibes. In this capacity he held a watching brief for his helpless constituents, the Negro slaves. He was constantly spurring on Wilberforce to greater and more public efforts instead of the policy of memorials and interviews with ministers. Theonly thing to check colonial crimes was "blazon them to the English public, and arm ourselves with public indignation."180
    6. One of the earliest, ablest and most diligent of the abolitionists was James Ramsay, who, as a rector in the West Indies, had had some twenty years' experience of slavery. "The only use," he wrote to Wilberforce in 1787, "I can be of in the business is as pioneer to remove obstacles; use me in this way and I shall be happy.180
    7. As far as the abolitionist leadership was concerned, however, their attitude to West Indian slavery must be seen in its relation to slavery in other parts of the world. Their condemnation of slavery applied only to the Negro and only to the Negro in the British West Indies. First, India.183
    8. The abolitionists did this not out of ignorance. As an apology for the East India Company, Zachary Macaulay urged that "they had obtained dominion over countries which had been previously under the Hindu and Mogul Government. They therefore could not be blamed if, when they came into possession of those countries, they found principles acted upon with which, however adverse to their feelings, it would be unsafe to interfere, without due caution.185
    9. suppress the slave trade by force. The pressure on the government was terrific. The government pleaded for time, for caution. "Morals," said Castlereagh, "were never well taught by the sword." 77 He begged the humanitarians to "moderate their virtuous feelings, and put their solicitude for Africa under the dominion of reason." 78 But the abolitionists gave the government no peace. As Liverpool confessed on one occasion to Wilberforce: "If I were not anxious for the abolition of the slave trade on principle, I must be aware of the embarrassment to which any government must be exposed from the present state of that question in this country.189
    10. The barbarous removal of the Negroes from Africa continued for at least twenty-five years after 1833, to the sugar plantations of Brazil and Cuba. Brazilian and Cuban economy depended on the slave trade. Consistency alone demanded that the British abolitionistsoppose this trade. But that would retard Brazilian and Cuban development and consequently hamper British trade. The desire for cheap sugar after 1833 overcame all abhorrence of slavery.192
    11. All the great names were here Wilberforce, Buxton, Macaulay, Brougham. All but Clarkson, a voice in the wilderness calling for the exclusion of all articles produced by manacled and fettered hands. 103 Yet even Clarkson in 1839 opposed suppression on the curious ground that it was "but putting money into the pockets of our men of war.194
48. Slaves and slavery
    1. WE HAVE CONSIDERED the different attitudes to slavery of the British Government, the British capitalists, the absentee British West Indian planters, and the British humanitarians. We have followed the battle of slavery in the home country. It would be a grave mistake, however, to treat the question as if it were merely a metropolitan struggle.197
    2. First, there were the white planters, who had to deal not only with the British Parliament but with the slaves. Secondly, there were the free people of color. And, thirdly, there were the slaves themselves. Most writers on this period have ignored them. Modern historical writers are gradually awaking to the distortion which is the result of this.197
    3. On the question of the abolition of the Negro Sunday market, Barbados refused to surrender one-sixth of its already reduced income. 8 Jamaica replied that the "pretence of having time for religoius duties" would merely encourage idleness among the slaves. 4 So great was the opposition of the planters that the governor deemed any attempt at alteration highly imprudent and could see no alternative but leaving it "to theoperation of time and that change of circumstances and opinions which is slowly but surely leading to the improvement of the habits and manners of the slaves198
    4. The whip, argued the planters, was necessary if discipline was to be maintained. Abolish it, "and then adieu to all peace andcomfort onplantations." 6 A Trinidadplanter called it "a mostunjust and oppressive invasion of property" to insist on a ninehourday for full-grown slaves in the West Indies, while theEnglish factory owner could exact twelve hours' labor fromchildren in a heated andsickly atmosphere.199
    5. Whilst the whites were plotting treason and talking of secession, the free people of color were steadfastly loyal. They deprecated "a dissolution of the ties which bind us to the MotherCountry as the greatest calamity that could possibly befall ourselves and our posterity201
    6. Contrary to popular and even learned belief, however, as the political crisis deepened in Britain, the most dynamic and powerful social force in the colonies was the slave himself.201
    7. Not nearly as stupid as his master thought him and later historians have pictured him, the slave was alert to his surroundings and keenly interested in discussions about his fate. "Nothing," wrote the governor of British Guiana in 1830, "can be more keenly observant than the slaves are of all that affects their interests."202
    8. The consensus of opinion among the slaves, whenever each new discussion arose or each new policy was announced, wasthatemancipation had been passed in England but was withheld by their masters. The governor of Jamaica reported in1807 that abolition of the slave trade was construed by the slaves as "nothing less than their general emancipation."203
    9. this was in 1824. Seven years later the same discussions about property and compensation and vested rights were still going on. In 1831 the slaves took the matter into their own hands. An insurrectionary movement developed in Antigua. The governor of Barbados had to send reinforcements. 69 In Barbados itself the idea prevailed that the King had granted emancipation but thegovernor was withholding the boon, while a rumor spread that, in the event of insurrection, the King's troops had received positive orders not to fire upon the slaves.206
49. conclusion
    1. THIS STUDY, though treating specifically of Britain, has beengiven the general title of "Capitalism and Slavery." The title "British Capitalism and Slavery," though pedantically more accurate, would nevertheless have been generically false.209
    2. The crisis which began in 1776 and continued through the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars until the Reform Bill of 1832, was in many respects a world crisis similar to the crisis of today, differing only in the more comprehensive range, depth and intensity of the present.209
    3. The decisive forces in the period of history \*we have discussed are the developing economic forces.201
       1. imperceptible, but they have an irresistible cumulative effect. Men, pursuing their interests, are rarely aware of the ultimate results of their activity. The commercial capitalism of the eighteenth century developed the wealth of Europe by means of slavery and monopoly. But in so doing it helped to create the industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century, which turned round and destroyed the power of commercial capitalism, slavery, and all its works210
    4. The various contending groups of dominant merchants, industrialists and politicians, while keenly aware of immediate interests, are for that very reason generally blind to the longrange consequences of their various actions, proposals, policies.210
    5. The political and moral ideas of the age are to be examined in the very closest relation to the economic development211
       1. Politics and morals in the abstract make no sense. We find the British statesmen and publicists defending slavery today, abusing slavery tomorrow, defending slavery the day after. Today they are imperialist, the next day anti-imperialist, and equally pro-imperialist a generation after.211
    6. An outworn interest, whose bankruptcy smells to heaven in historical perspective, can exercise an obstructionist and disruptive effect which can only be explained by the powerful services it had previously rendered and the entrenchment previously gained.
    7. The ideas built on these interests continue long after the interests have been destroyed and work their old mischief, which is all the more mischievous because the interests to which they corresponded no longer exist.

# Review 1

* *Capitalism and Slavery* is the first and most important work by the late Trinidadian scholar and statesman, Eric Eustace Williams. Based on a dissertation written at the University of Oxford in 1938, entitled “The Economic Aspect of the Abolition of the British West Indian Slave Trade and Slavery,”
* is an “economic study of the role of Negro slavery and the slave trade in providing the capital which financed the industrial revolution in England and of mature industrial capitalism [eventually] destroying the slave system.”
* the book documents the historical shift of Britain’s political economy from monopolistic commercial mercantilism based on tropical, Caribbean islands with black-plantation slavery to *laissez faire* commercial capitalism based on white free-labor factories in temperate, Continental regions.
* it challenges one-hundred years of British imperial historiography by making the controversial argument that the causes of abolition and emancipation were economic, not humanitarian.
* **Williams has relied heavily upon the archival research that he conducted for his dissertation, which covered the years 1783-1833.**
* *Capitalism and Slavery* represents a dramatic departure from traditional, British imperial historiography as it had been written since the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833
* In general, Williams supports economic materialism, aligning himself against those who situate moral causality,
* In a chapter entitled “The ‘Saints’ and Slavery,” Williams goes so far as to call English abolitionists hypocrites and the “unconscious mouthpieces” of the “new industrial interest.”
* Williams places the year 1783 at the halfway point of *Capitalism and Slavery*. Like many historians before him, he has identified the American Revolution as the turning point of his analysis. Prior to 1783, “all classes of English society,” with the exception of a few voices of Cassandra, “supported the slave trade.”
* The country was under the thumb of the West Indian Interest, a “solid phalanx” of slave society composed of the landed aristocracy, the commercial bourgeoisie, the ecclesiastical authorities, and the political elite.
* Profits from the slave trade and the Caribbean plantation complex penetrated all aspects of English society, and protectionist legislation and military force were marshalled to ensure that capital accumulated by England remained in the British economy. Politicians had vested financial interests in the slave trade, its Caribbean commodities, and its many ancillary industries, including, but not limited to, shipbuilding, dock building, sail making, cask making, rope making, gun making, coal mining, distilling, refining,  iron smelting, weaving, banking, licensing, insurance providing, investing and underwriting, and manufacturing.
* These politicians passed high import duties and embargos on foreign products, banned colonial trade with foreign nations,  and demanded that all aspects of overseas trade be nationalized: performed with English ships, English crews, and English victuals, supplies, and naval stores. As Williams describes, this was the economic “infrastructure of mercantilist England,” and it was far more important than the “ideological superstructure” of humanitarianism.
* By citing annual import-export profits, national emoluments, and personal connections, Williams shows how capital accrued from the slave trade and the Caribbean plantation complex financed the construction of English estates, seaport towns like Bristol, Liverpool, and London, and their manufacturing counterparts like Manchester.

## Continue here

* The triangular trade, of which the trade in black human bodies was one inextricable component, stimulated the domestic economy and lowered unemployment by establishing new overseas markets with high demands that needed a source of supply.
* While the Caribbean colonies offered sugar, tobacco, indigo, ginger, and wood to England, the English textile industries supplied woolens, linens, and cloths to the colonies; meanwhile, the English fisheries in Newfoundland and the mainland colonies of America supplied the necessary provisions.
* West Indian planters to specialize exclusively in lucrative cash crops while their absentee landlords lobbied for their political interests in Parliament.
* English foundries and furnaces emerged to supply the necessary instruments of enslavement and cultivation while English production centers emerged to supply the diverse, sundry items of the African trade.
  + In this way, the infrastructure of industrialism was galvanized by the market forces of slavery.  To borrow a phrase from Karl Marx and *The Communist Manifesto*, by supplying the necessary capital for the industrial revolution, West Indian planters were, in a sense, becoming their “own grave-diggers.”
* Williams tends to cite the annual flow of capital into English ports to show the accumulated wealth of the slave trade, he does occasionally offer more explicit connections. For example, he states that overseas markets and slave-trading capital motivated the cost-reducing technologies that came to define the English Industrial Revolution.
  + this includes the steam engine, the rotary engine, the steam loom, the railroad, and the hot blast and the puddling process in iron smelting. Profits fertilized the slate industry, the mining industry, the spinning jenny, the water frame, the construction of iron bridges, ships, and factories, and the beginning of interchangeable parts in the manufacturing process.
  + Williams argues that it is not a coincidence that slavery and the slave trade became unattractive as domestic production (secondary production) replaced foreign trade (barter or primary production) as the engine of the British economy.
* According to Williams, the demise of British mercantilism, the West Indian Interest, and the Caribbean planter class was a process of creative destruction that began with the American Revolution, and was epitomized by the synonymous publication of two capitalist-era texts, *TheWealth of Nations* and *The Declaration of Independence*.
  + “American independence destroyed the mercantile system” because it made America a foreign nation subject to the economic restrictions of the British Navigation Laws.
  + It left the Caribbean colonies starved for supplies because it eliminated the provisions market, it engendered renewed competition between the soil-exhausted English islands and the relatively virgin territories of foreign nations (think Saint-Dominique, Cuba, Brazil, and the Cotton Kingdom of the United States), it created conditions of overproduction in England which could no longer be filled by the diminishing markets of the Atlantic slave trade, and it created an economically weak position from which colonial slave rebellions became more bold and more frequent.
  + by the early nineteenth century, the slave trade and the institution of slavery had lost all of their economic viability and, for the first time, humanitarian protests became aligned with the material realities of British capitalism. In other words, the institution of slavery was no longer profitable, and Britain began to “cut its losses.”
* Williams spends the **first half of *Capitalism and Slavery* tracing the origins of the English slave trade from the late sixteenth century—the expedition of the privateer John Hawkins—to the year 1783.**
  + he discusses the rise of slaving interests from the English Civil War to the formation of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa in 1752.
  + its three major claims are less than controversial today. Williams shows that the “origin of Negro slavery was economic not racial;” he debunks the “climatic theory” that white people could not perform adequate labor in the tropics; and he also shows that “white servitude [and we might add Indian labor] was the historic base upon which Negro slavery was constructed.”
  + Today, most historians [David Brion Davis excepted] believe that racism emerged from the unique circumstances of Atlantic slavery and not the other way around.
  + Africans made ideal slaves for whites because “they were conspicuous by their color and features,” they were ignorant of European languages, customs, and laws, they were cheap to obtain by trade, there were existing structures in place for their acquisition in Africa, they could be deracinated from their home environments, and, in relation to Indians and Europeans, they seemed to possess a hardy constitution.
* Today, historians have also accepted the claim that the Middle Passage was a horrific experience for both white sailors *and* black slaves
  + many scholars are more reluctant to accept the claim that the victims of plantation slavery were “the Negroes in Africa and the small white farmers.”
  + by “Negroes in Africa,” Williams is referring to those individuals who were captured and shipped to the New World as slaves. By “white farmers,” he is referring to the yeomen laborers who wanted to work the land themselves but could not compete with the monopolistic, economic structure of plantation slavery.
  + Historians find a similar theme in the American abolitionist narrative, where white northerners supported the ban on slavery not for humanitarian or egalitarian reasons, but because they knew that wage labor could not content with the profit margins of free, slave labor.
* Many historians have critiqued *Capitalism and Slavery* as being too harsh on the English abolitionists, too cynical about their intentions, and too eager to dismiss them as collaborators with the regime of industrialism.
  + He believes that the “splendid moral isolation” of the abolitionists, the very idea that they were valiant heroes who won an uphill battle against racist imperialism, encouraged English society to believe that it could do no wrong in the future.
  + In this sense, the traditional abolition narrative served to justify the repetition of oppression
  + If racial imperialism was overcome by the abolitionists in the early nineteenth century, Williams asks, then how do we account for the East Indian replacing the “Negro” on English plantations between 1833 and 1917? How do we account for the brutal mistreatment of the English industrial workforce, the imperial violence of the Boer Wars, and the systematic colonization of the African continent? Unfortunately, the abolitionist-hero narrative has no easy answer for these problems.
* Many other  scholars are critiqued *Capitalism and Slavery* for its teleology, stating that British plantations continued to remain profitable long after the dramatic upheaval of the American Revolution.
  + In this sense, they accuse Williams of fast-forwarding the historical decline of the British plantation economy in order to fit his chronology.
  + I suspect that there is validity in this critique, as the British empire continued to suppress slave revolts with terror and violence until the eve of emancipation.

# eview 3

* This book does an excellent job of showing exactly how the development of British capitalism was dependent on slavery.
* Williams goes through his evidence in systematic detail, examining British economic and political development in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and showing the role of slavery at every turn.
  + Great banking families like the Barclays and the Barings got their start as slave traders. Insurance firms like Lloyd’s of London made big profits from insuring slave traders against the death of their cargo.
* Britain made fantastic profits from the Triangular Trade – manufactured goods to Africa, slaves from Africa to the West Indies, sugar from the West Indies back to Britain. The towns of Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow grew rich on this trade – Bristol’s West India trade in the 18th century, for example, was worth twice as much as all its other overseas trade combined.
  + the Triangular Trade gave an impetus to other British industries. Birmingham alone exported 100,000 muskets a year to Africa, most of them exchanged for slaves. Sugar refining became a major industry in Britain (it was banned in the colonies). The wool and cotton industries got a massive boost, both from the import of the raw material from the West Indies and later mainland America, and from the new markets for the export of their finished goods.
* The Industrial Revolution itself was financed largely from the profits of the slave trade and slave-produced sugar.
  + . James Watt, for example, depended on capital accumulated from the West Indian trade to finance the development of his new invention, the steam engine.
  + A key figure in the development of the slate industry, Lord Penrhyn, made his money from sugar plantations in Jamaica. The Bristol West India interest played a prominent role in the construction of the Great Western Railway.
  + Williams documents so many ways in which the development of British capitalism was dependent on the capital reaped from slavery.
* Britain’s abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and emancipation of the slaves in 1834 are presented not as humanitarian achievements, but as driven by economic imperatives.
  + Slavery was essential in the early development of the West Indian colonies, when labour was scarce. English migrants would want land of their own, not to work in extremely harsh conditions on a sugar plantation, and in any case the numbers were not sufficient. A supply of slaves from Africa allowed the sugar industry to grow as it never would have otherwise.
* by the early 19th century, the situation had changed radically. The plantation owners had become so rich and powerful that they held Britain to ransom.
  + West Indian sugar held a monopoly in Britain, and the plantation owners used that to their advantage, deliberately limiting supply so as to drive up the price. With free labour and a guaranteed market, they made huge profits, even though their production was inefficient. With no incentive to modernise, they remained hopelessly outdated compared with other industries and nations, but made money anyway.
* Britain had changed too. The Industrial Revolution, financed by capital from the colonial trade, created booming industries which demanded ever more markets for their goods.
  + **. Free trade, not mercantilism, was now the order of the day. The wealthy industrialists wanted to trade with India, Brazil and other markets around the world that could offer cheaper raw materials, and resented the fact that the plantations in the West Indies were propped up by slave labour and a guaranteed market**
  + **They also resented the diversion of capital to these now unprofitable islands. A final imperative was to obtain cheap labour for their own factories, and this was difficult when the cost of basic goods like sugar was so high – they wanted to import it more cheaply from other sources.**
* slavery played a big role in financing the Industrial Revolution, and that mature industrial capitalism then helped destroy the slave system which was no longer in its interests.