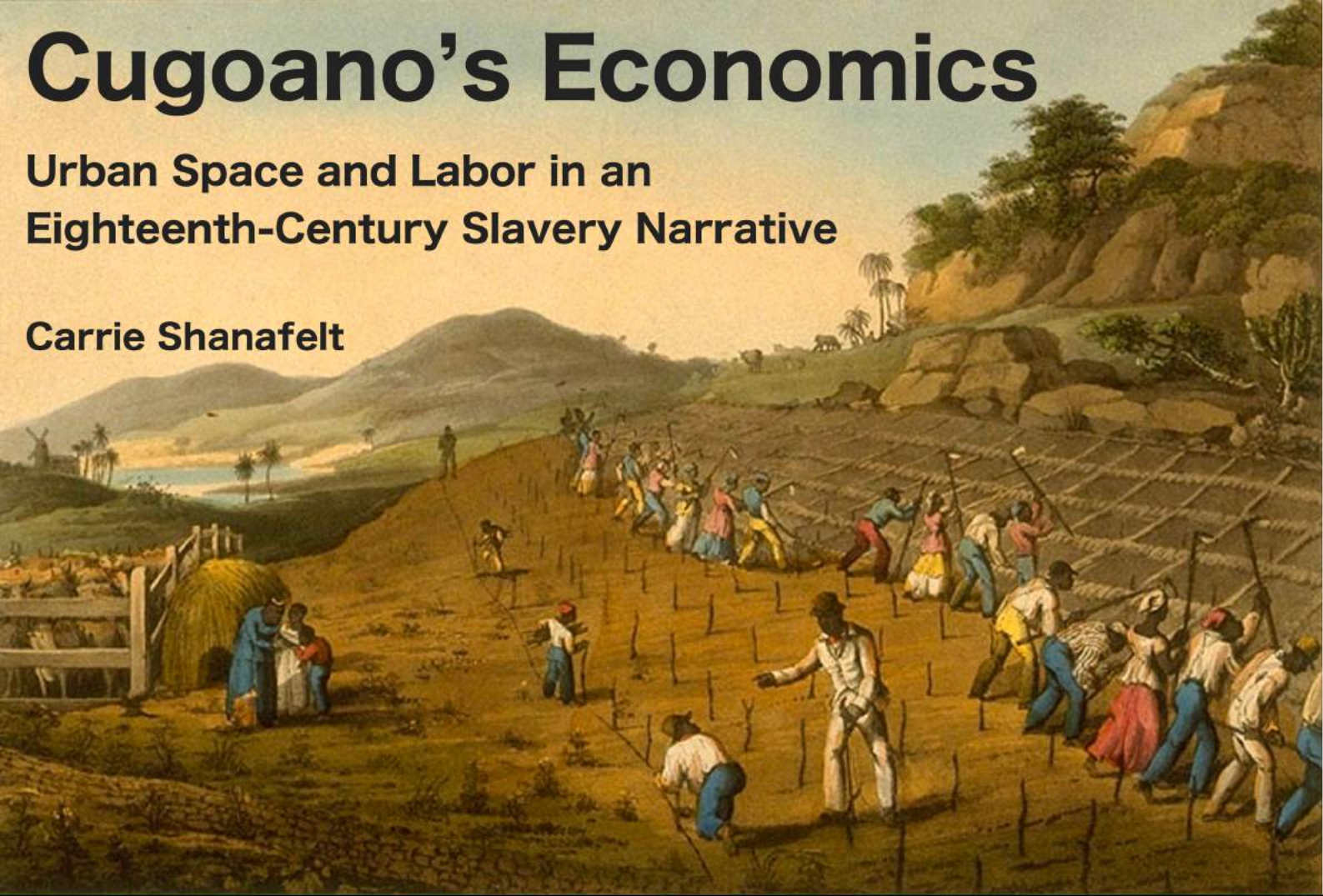


Cugoano's Economics

Urban Space and Labor in an Eighteenth-Century Slavery Narrative

Carrie Shanafelt



**Friday, May 31st, 2019 (5.30 pm - 6.45 pm), Building 2, Room 508
Sophia University, 7-1 Kioicho, Tokyo 102-8554**

In *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* (1787), Quobna Ottobah Cugoano describes his encounters with Caribbean and British labor practices from the perspective of West African ethics. Through an Afrocentric interpretation of John Locke, Adam Smith, and the Christian Bible, Cugoano challenges the emergent libertarian discourse of human rights in the context of Atlantic slavery. Cugoano concludes that the escalation of economic and moral debts incurred through abuse of African and indigenous American peoples can only be ended by a radical form of global forgiveness.

Unlike his contemporary Olaudah Equiano, who urged Africans to “modernize” by adopting European technology and competing in global markets, Cugoano instead demanded that Europe must adopt African economic ethics in order to live up to their own discourse of human rights.

This talk considers Cugoano's *Thoughts and Sentiments* in the context of urban space, global economics, and travel writing of the late eighteenth century. His descriptions of labor in West Africa, the Caribbean, and London reveal structural inequalities in economic systems of profit that ultimately impoverish not only enslaved and colonized persons, but also entire nations. Cugoano's proposal for the forgiveness of British national debt—both financial and moral—offers an imagined occasion for reckoning the accounts of the past for a more inclusive and sustainable future.



Carrie Shanafelt is an assistant professor of Humanities at Fairleigh Dickinson University, New Jersey.

Her articles on eighteenth-century literature, culture, and philosophy appear in journals including *Literature Interpretation Theory*, *CEA Forum*, and *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* (forthcoming).

Her book manuscript on Bentham and sexual nonconformity, *The Utility of Pleasure*, will be completed this year.