Indian Slavery in New England

- Euro-Indian encounter crucial to development of English colonists’ ideas about race, identity
- Role of colonial institutions, law
  - Case study in treatment of conquered peoples
- Why don’t we know about this already?
  - Myth of New England exceptionalism v. reality of a “society with slaves”
  - Myth of the “vanishing Indian,” blood quantum
  - Slavery and servitude: evolving institutions/slippery terms in colonial America
Native Americans of N.E.
Indian slavery in the early 17th century

- Indians and captivity
  - Some evidence of a “slave” caste among pre-contact N.E. Indians
- Sporadic kidnapping of Indians by European voyages of exploration; hostage-taking
The Pequot War, 1637—a turning point

- Enslavement of Pequot and Algonkian combatants and non-combatants
English Rationales for Indian Slavery

- Captives in a “just war”; slavery a lesser penalty than death; “bootie”
  - The problem of non-combatant women and children
- Motivations: labor, export commodity, social control, acculturation
- Critics of enslavement: Native Americans; Roger Williams, Daniel Gookin, John Eliot
The Changing Nature of Indian Slavery

- King Philip’s War, 1675-76: another turning point
  - Mass enslavements (more than 1/10 who survived war), mass sales; internment, kidnapping of “friend Indians”
  - Colonists’ security concerns; confusion over legal status of captives
- Conquered Indians as “subjects” with legal rights
  - Creation of 8 Indian “towns” (reservations)
  - Laws prohibit enslavement of southern N.E. Indians
  - Imperial pressure
Shift to other modes of controlling Indian labor: “Judicial enslavement”; peonage; “apprenticeship”; pauper indentures

Importation of slaves from outside N.E.

“Spanish” and Carolina Indians, “Eastern” Indians (Pennacook and Abenaki) Indians during King William’s War, Queen Anne’s War, etc.
Race Frontiers

- Creation of a race-based legal code, approx. 1690-1720
- Indian servants and slaves defined as Black or mixed-race
Experiences of the Enslaved

- Serial servitude over generations; slippage into slavery: Ben Indian, Patience Boston, Hannah, Sarah Chauqum, Pardon Ned

- Resistance: Betty Coyhees

An away the Last Spring from her Master John Otis Esqr. of Barnstable, in the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England, an Indian Girl named Hannah Wapuck, aged about 20 years, middle sized, full faced, a comely Countenance, she speaks good English, not very perfect of the Indian Language; had on English Apparel: Whosoever shall apprehend and take up the said Servant, and deliver her to her said Master, or give any true Intelligence of her unto John Campbell Postmaster of Boston, or unto her said Master, so as that he may have her again, shall be sufficiently rewarded, besides all reasonable Cost and Charges paid.
Consequences

- Demographic catastrophe
- Devastating impact on family; changes in work, gender roles, transmission of culture & language
  - 30% of Rhode Island Indians lived in White households by 1770
- Social ties with White and Black New Englanders: influence upon N.E. culture and society