



# **The Invention of Free Labor: The Employment Relation in English and American Law and Culture, 1350-1870 (Studies in Legal History)**

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Examining the emergence of the modern conception of free labor--labor that could not be legally compelled, even though voluntarily agreed upon--Steinfeld explains how English law dominated the early American colonies, making violation of all labor agreements punishable by imprisonment. By the eighteenth century, traditional legal restrictions no longer applied to many kinds of colonial workers, but it was not until the nineteenth century that indentured servitude came to be regarded as similar to slavery.



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