

History of Africa to 1800

History 114-01

Fall 2011
MWF 10:50-11:50
Main 009
Office Hours: Mon & Wed 2:30-4:00 and by appointment

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Course Description:

This course is a survey of African history from early times to the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is designed to introduce you to some of the broad themes that dominate the study of African history before 1800 as well as many of the key scholars and the debates of the field. We will use primary sources, literature, scholarly works, videos, and food to explore this history, and assignments will draw on class materials to reinforce important ideas. Major themes we will address include Trans-Saharan trade, West African empires, the Swahili coast, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the impact of early European contact on societies in Africa.

Course Goals:

By the end of the course, you will:

- Recognize the range of historic, geographic, and cultural diversities of the African continent
- Be able to read critically, distinguishing between accepted truths and an author's opinions
- Be able to read and analyze texts for arguments and critique the use of sources and evidence
- Recognize that history is a study of change over time, and all societies are constantly adapting to internal and external pressures, so that there is no "timeless past," but a complex historical web of shifting beliefs, practices, behaviors, and interactions.

Outside the Classroom:

A significant portion of the course is on Moodle, including readings, reflections submissions, forums for questions, and the latest version of the syllabus. I will also use your Mac email for correspondence, so please check it regularly or have it forwarded to your main email account.

I will be in my office most days, but am more regularly available by email than by phone. You are always welcome to use the Google Chat feature if you see me online. I encourage you to contact or visit me for any questions, concerns, or comments you have about the course.

Required Texts:

Erik Gilbert and Jonathan T. Reynolds, *Africa in World History, Second Edition*
D.T. Niane, *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*
Said Hamdun and Noël King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa*
John Thornton, *The Kongolese St. Anthony*
Randy J. Sparks, *Two Princes of Calabar*

Requirements:

- *Participation:* Discussions will constitute a significant portion of this course, so you are expected to come to class having completed the readings and ready to listen and contribute. I do expect you in class every day, but you are allowed two free absences. After that, you must speak to me and get special approval. Because so much of the course is discussion, missing classes will affect both your participation grade and your ability to learn the material.
 - To help you prepare, you will submit reading reflections on Moodle before most classes; these reflections are graded for completion (if you do it, you get credit). You must complete at least 20 (out of 24) graded reflections, including the books.
 - The use of electronic materials in class (phones, tablets, laptops, etc) can be distracting for both the user and those in the vicinity. If this becomes a problem, I will disallow their use.
 - *Map Quiz:* The map quiz will include all the states in Africa and will be September 16. It will factor into your participation grade.
- *Food Presentation:* In small groups, you will research, write a brief report, and prepare a dish and accompanying presentation based on a major African staple. These presentations will be October 24. I will hand out more information in class.
- *Midterm Exam:* Your midterm will be take-home, and is due in class October 26
- *Essay:* Your essay will address a major area of contention in the scholarship on pre-1800 African History. You will write an essay analyzing and critiquing the arguments and presenting your own opinion based on what you have found. I will provide more information in class. You will hand in a draft November 23, and the final copy is due in class on December 5. I will hand out more information in class.
- *Final Exam:* The final is Friday, December 16 from 10:30-12:30

Grade Breakdown:

Participation: 25%

Food Presentation: 15%

Take-Home Midterm: 20%

Essay: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

Special Needs and Accommodations:

If you have any special needs or require accommodations for this course please let me know as soon as possible so that I can work with you to make the appropriate arrangements.

If you have a documented disability, I encourage you to make an appointment with the Associate Dean of Students, Lisa Landreman, at 696-6220. Visit www.macalester.edu/studentaffairs/disabilityservices for more information.

Honor Policy

All scholarly work, including the essays you will write for this class, involves using the ideas and help of others. It is very important, however, to understand how to give credit to other people's words and ideas. Broadly:

Don't claim the ideas or words of someone else as your own. Do use the ideas and words of others to help develop your own. Do have friends read and comment on drafts of your papers. Always give explicit credit when you use anyone's exact thoughts or language, whether in paraphrasing or quoting them. Give an acknowledgment to someone who's helped you overall. Intellectual work is about developing and sharing your ideas, and it's about taking note of and praising other people who have shared good ones with you.

-Richard Wightman Fox, "A Heartbreaking Problem of Staggering Proportions," *The Journal of American History* (March 2004), 19.

Please refer to <http://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/integrity.html> for information on Macalester's Academic Integrity policies. You are responsible for understanding what constitutes a violation and the consequences.

Late Submissions

Because reading reflections are designed to facilitate class discussions, and because not all of them are required, I will not accept late submissions unless you have extenuating circumstances and receive my approval. I expect the essays to be handed in on time, typed and in hard copy, the day they are due. If you need an extension you must speak with me in advance. I will penalize late papers.

PART I: Introduction and Context

WEEK 1: Introduction: History and Africa

What is "African History"? What sources do we have, and how do they inform our study of the African past? What is the place of African History in World History?

September 7: Introductions and Framing

In class we will look at an article from *Rolling Stone*, available at <http://archive.rollingstone.com/Desktop/#/20081030/90>. You need Silverlight installed on your computer to view the article (available for free at <http://www.silverlight.net/>).

- [Wainaina Binyavanga, "How to Write about Africa"](#)

September 9: Situating African History: Discussion

- Steve Feierman, "African Histories and the Dissolution of World History" in *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contribution of Research in Africa to the Social Sciences and Humanities* (1993), 167-212.

WEEK 2: When, and where, to begin? Early Patterns

When does history "start"? How has geography shaped African history? How do early patterns shape the development of human societies? What is the "Bantu Expansion"?

September 12: Human Origins and African Geographies

- Gilbert and Reynolds, "Chapter 1: Africa and Human Origins" and "Chapter 2: Physical Context of African History: Geography and Environment"

September 14: Migration and settlement

- Gilbert and Reynolds, "Chapter 3: Settled Life: Food Production, Technology, and Migrations"
- [Jan Vansina, "New Linguistic Evidence and 'the Bantu Expansion'," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 36, No. 2 \(1995\), 173-195.](#)

September 16: Africa and Early Civilization: An Historiographical Interlude (MAP QUIZ)

- [Martin Bernal, "The Afrocentric Interpretation of History: Bernal Replies to Lefkowitz," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 11 \(Spring, 1996\), 86-94](#)
- [Mary Lefkowitz, "The Afrocentric Interpretation of Western History: Lefkowitz Replies to Bernal," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 12 \(Summer, 1996\), 88-91.](#)

*****MAP QUIZ*****

PART II: Africa Before 1500

WEEK 3: North Africa and the Sahara

What is the relationship between African regions north and south of the Sahara? How did this relationship influence early North African states? What factors contributed to the rise and fall of the West African Kingdoms?

September 19: Egypt and Nubia

- Gilbert and Reynolds, "Chapter 4: North and Northeast Africa in Early World History"

September 21: Cities and States: The Niger Delta

- Roderick J. McIntosh, "Clustered Cities of the Middle Niger: Alternative Routes to Authority in Prehistory," in David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone, *Africa's Urban Past* (2000), 19-35

September 23: Islam across the Sahara

- Gilbert and Reynolds, "Chapter 6: North and West Africa and the Spread of Islam"

WEEK 4: Row, row, row your camel: Trans-Saharan Trade and the States of West Africa

How did societies and travelers forge connections across the Sahara? How did these trade routes influence the development of states and societies?

September 26: The Empires of West Africa

- Hamdun and King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa*, Foreword (ix-xxxii) and Intro (1-11)

September 28: Trade and Travel: Discussion

- Hamdun and King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa*, "The West African Journey" (29-75)

September 30: Video: Wonders of the African World: The Road to Timbuktu

WEEK 5: Sundiata/Central Africa

How did the Bantu Expansion impact societies in Central Africa? What role did agricultural innovations play in the area's development?

October 3: The Epic Poem in West Africa: Discussion

- *Sundiata* (Please read the intro and background for context)

October 5: Pygmies!

- Kairn Klieman, "Of Indigeneity and Incorporation: Immigrants and Autochthons on the Central African "Frontier"" and "New Economies, New Communities: The Impact of Bananas and Iron," in *The Pygmies were our Compass: Bantu and Batwa in the History of West Central Africa, Early Times to c. 1900 C.E.*, 66-132.

October 7: Early Central African societies

- Jan Vansina, "Part II Introduction" and "Of Water, Cattle, and Kings," in *How Societies are Born: Governance in West Central Africa before 1600*, 101-159.

WEEK 6: East Africa and the Indian Ocean World

Why were cattle and bananas significant in the development of societies in the Great Lakes region? How was the east coast of Africa connected to other areas of the world before the arrival of Europeans? Who were the Swahili?

October 10: Cows and Bananas: The Great Lakes

- [David L. Schoenbrun, "Cattle Herds and Banana Gardens: The Historical Geography of the Western Great Lakes Region, ca AD 800-1500," *The African Archaeological Review*, Vol. 11, Papers in Honour of Merrick Posnansky \(1993\), pp. 39-72.](#)

October 12: Trade and Islam

- Gilbert and Reynolds, "Chapter 7: East Africa and the Advent of Islam"
- Said Hamdun and Noël King, "The East African Journey," 13-25

October 14: Creating a Swahili Identity: Discussion

- "An Arabic History of Kilwa Kisiwani, c. 1520" in GSP Freeman-Grenville, *The East African Coast: Select Documents from the first to the earlier nineteenth century*, 34-49
- Derek Nurse and Thomas Spear, "Early Swahili Society, 800-1100," in *The Swahili: Reconstructing the History and Language of an African Society, 800-1500*, 68-79

WEEK 7: Southern Africa/Great Lakes

What types of societies developed in Southern Africa? Why? Who were the Khoisan? How was society organized in the early kingdom of Rwanda?

October 17: Rhinoceros!

- [Thomas N. Huffman, "Mapungubwe and the Origins of the Zimbabwe Culture," *Goodwin Series, Vol. 8, African Naissance: The Limpopo Valley 1000 Years Ago. \(Dec., 2000\), pp. 14-29*](#)

October 19: Hunting and Gathering in the Cape

- Boonzaier et al., *The Cape Herders: A History of the Khoikhoi of Southern Africa*, 2000, Chapters 1-4 (pgs 1-51)

October 21: Inland developments: The Emergence of Rwanda

- Jan Vansina, “1: Central Rwanda on the Eve of the Emergence of the Kingdom” and “2: The Rwanda of Ndori,” in *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom*, 2004, 14-66.

WEEK 8: A culinary interlude with historical overtones

What roles have food cultivation and production played in African history? What can we learn about broader historical patterns from food?

October 24: Food Presentations

No reading; bring appetite and open mind :-)

October 26: Reflections

*****MID-TERM EXAM DUE*****

October 28: FALL BREAK; NO CLASS

PART III: Africa After 1500: Slavery, Trade, and Transitions

WEEK 9: Gold and Slaves: Early West and Central African Trade

How did the slave trade begin? How would you characterize early trading relationships between Europeans and Africans? What were the advantages and limitations to the trade?

October 31: Early Contact along West and Central Africa

- Gilbert and Reynolds, “Chapter 9: West and West-Central Africa: 1500-1880”

November 2: Mutually Advantageous Arrangements: Coastal Interactions

- John Thornton, *The Kongolese St. Anthony*, Introduction-Chapter 4 (1-104)

November 4: Internal Transitions: Discussion

- John Thornton, *The Kongolese St. Anthony*, Chapter 5-9 (105-214)

WEEK 10: Traversing the Atlantic

Why were Africans enslaved in the New World? What sustained and propagated the slave trading networks? How did Africans experience the trade?

Go to www.slavevoyages.org and play around—you can search ship manifests based on departure and arrival ports, flag of ship, and so on.

November 7: The Trans-Atlantic Trade

- Gilbert and Reynolds, “Chapter 8: Slavery and the Creation of the Atlantic World”

November 9: Slaving Societies: The Example of Dahomey

- Excerpts from Edna G. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard: Gender, Politics, and Culture in the Kingdom of Dahomey*, pgs 1-27; 40-71.
- Randy J. Sparks, *Two Princes of Calabar*, 1-32

November 11: Trans-Atlantic Networks: Discussion

- Randy J. Sparks, *Two Princes of Calabar*, 33-148

WEEK 11: East African Slavery and Society

What were some major features of the Indian Ocean trade? How did the slave trade influence racial and social identities?

November 14: The Indian Ocean Trade

- Gilbert and Reynolds, "Chapter 11: East Africa, 1500-1850"

November 16: Sexuality, Race, and Identity in African-European interactions: Discussion

- [Megan Vaughan, "Slavery and Colonial Identity in Eighteenth-Century Mauritius," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Sixth Series*, Vol. 8, \(1998\), 189-214](#)
- [Prestholdt, Jeremy, "Portuguese Conceptual Categories and the "Other" Encounter on the Swahili Coast," *Journal of Asian & African Studies*, 2001, Vol. 36 Issue 4, 383-406](#)

November 18: TBA

WEEK 12: African-ness: An Historiographical Interlude

How is memory constructed? How do we assess and value "authenticity"? Why are these important in African and African American Histories?

Recommended: <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/freedom/freedom.htm>, where you can read accounts of Africans taken into slavery in the United States. Also, Equiano's autobiography is available free online at <http://www.hh-bb.com/equiano.pdf>.

November 21: Memory and Meaning

- [Paul Lovejoy, "Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, alias Olaudah Equiano, the African," *Slavery and Abolition*, Vol. 27, No. 3, \(December 2006\), pp. 317-347](#)
- [Vincent Carretta, "Response to Paul Lovejoy's 'Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, alias Olaudah Equiano, the African'," *Slavery and Abolition*, Vol. 28, No. 1, \(April 2007\), pp. 115-119](#)

November 23: Using Sources: Discussion

- [James Sweet, "Mistaken Identities? Olaudah Equiano, Domingos Álvares, and the Methodological Challenges of Studying the African Diaspora," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 114, No. 2 \(April 2009\), pp. 279-306](#)

*****ESSAY DRAFT DUE*****

November 25: THANKSGIVING BREAK; NO CLASS

WEEK 13: Southern Africa

Why did Europeans settle in Southern Africa? How did this settlement affect African polities? What was mfecane and why is it significant?

November 28: Dutch Settlers and African States

- Gilbert and Reynolds, "Chapter 12: Southern Africa, 1500-1870"

November 30: Territorial Limits and Segregationist Policy

- Alan Lester, "The Margins of Order: Strategies of segregation on the Eastern Cape frontier, 1806-c. 1850," *Journal of Southern African Studies*; 23, 4 (Dec 1997), 635-653.

December 2: Historiographical Interlude: Debating Mfecane

- [Norman Etherington, "A Tempest in a Teapot? Nineteenth Century Contests for Land in South Africa's Caledon Valley and the Invention of the Mfecane," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 45, No. 2 \(2004\), 203-219](#)

WEEK 14: Abolition, "Legitimate" Trade, and Creeping Colonialism

How did the European abolition of the slave trade affect African societies? What were African responses to abolition and the rise of so-called legitimate trade? Why did slavery persist within Africa?

December 5: West African Coastal Elites and Shifting Trade Dynamics

- Ty M. Reese, "'Eating' Luxury: Fante Middlemen, British Goods, and Changing Dependencies on the Gold Coast, 1750-1821," *The William and Mary Quarterly* LXVI, 4 (Oct 2009), 853-872.

*****FINAL ESSAY DUE*****

December 7: Internal Societies and the end of the coastal Slave Trade

- David M. Gordon, "The Abolition of the Slave Trade and the Transformation of the South-Central African Interior during the Nineteenth Century," *The William and Mary Quarterly* LXVI, 4 (Oct 2009), 915-938.

December 9: Looking Ahead: The persistence of slavery and the rise of colonial interest

WEEK 15: Review and Final Exam

December 12: Wrap-up and Review

December 16: FINAL EXAM: 10:30-12:30