Introduction to African History: Diversity, Mobility, Innovation
Fall 2017

Professor
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Class Meeting Time & Place
Lectures: T & Th @ 4:30-5:45pm, Gilman Hall 17

Scope, Themes and Purpose
This course is a one-semester introduction to African history from about 1200 CE to the present. Like any introductory survey of a continent, its aim is to introduce students to some key themes in the history of a very large and complex place. An introduction is never comprehensive or exhaustive. The course explores a chronological sequence of important themes such as trade and state formation before 1850, forms of European colonization, political reform, and independence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the massive growth of cities and rise of both misery and middle classes during the second half of the twentieth century. We will focus on three lasting themes crossing these eras that I believe are absolutely essential to understanding Africa’s past and present: diversity, mobility, and innovation. Other fascinating themes (such as religion, slavery, war, music, food security and insecurity) will be explored more ephemerally. The course will include interactive learning and aims to be fun and social as well as informative and challenging.

Learning Goals
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

• articulate orally and in writing how diversity, mobility, and innovation are key features of both the past and the present of Africa, its peoples and its societies.
• describe and analyze the occurrence and consequences of long-distance domestic and international travel and trade in Africa from the thirteenth through the nineteenth centuries CE, and their relationship to the formation of states and transformations in society.
• explain the key characteristics of European colonization of Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and articulate how those characteristics influenced diversity,
mobility, and innovation there, setting off various movements for political reform and independence.

- name key challenges faced by African countries, cities, and citizens from 1945 to the present, interpreting ways in which each of these entities have striven to cope with and solve (or failed to solve) problems stemming from those challenges.
- compose 5-page essays interpreting major historical topics in African history covered in this course and intelligently analyze those topic with respect to diversity, mobility, and innovation.
- recall most African countries by placing their names on a political map of Africa showing contemporary country boundaries.

Required Books
(Any edition of the following books is fine, whether print or electronic; ISBNs given here are to the print versions ordered by the JHU Bookstore)


Written Assessments

- Map Quiz of African countries, administered in class twice: September 19 & December 5. Reason: twice is better than once for long-term memory retention.
- Three 5-page essays, each covering one-third of the class and depending heavily on integrating information from the required readings, lectures, discussions and other in-class activities. Each essay question will be provided 10 days prior to the due date:
  - Essay 1: Covers weeks 1-4. Due by or before 4 pm, October 6.
  - Essay 2: Covers weeks 5-9. Due by or before 4 pm, November 10.
  - Essay 3: Covers weeks 10-13. Due by or before 4 pm, December 19.
- One 5-page Project Write-up. Due by or before November 27 @ noon. You have a choice of one of the below:
  - A book review of one of the books listed at the end of this syllabus.
  - An analysis of five works of African Art from one or more major collections of African Art you have studied in person and/or online from a museum listed at the end of this syllabus.
  - An analysis of four films on Tanzania, listed at the end of this syllabus.
  - An analysis of four films on Congo/Kinshasa, listed at the end of this syllabus.
Written Assignment Due Dates (these reminders are for your calendar)
- September 19 (Tuesday): In-class map quiz of African countries
- October 6 before or by 4 pm (Friday): Essay One due
- November 10 before or by 4 pm (Friday): Essay Two due
- November 27 before or by noon (Monday): Project Write-up due
- December 5 (Tuesday): In-class map quiz of African countries
- December 19 before or by 4 pm (Tuesday): Essay Three due

Grading

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<tr>
<th>Assessment Instrument</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map Quizzes</td>
<td>50 points each</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three Essays</td>
<td>200 points each</td>
<td>600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Write-up</td>
<td>150 points</td>
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<td>Peer Assessment</td>
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<td><strong>1,000</strong></td>
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Class Schedule

**Week One. Diversity, Mobility and Innovation: Key Themes in African History**
September 5 & 7
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ted Talk (watch), “The danger of a single story,”
  (https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story#t-1110058)
- https://videocast.nih.gov/podcast/evmed/evmed051308/evmed051308.mp4
- http://science.sciencemag.org/content/sci/suppl/2009/04/30/1172257.DC2/1172257.mp3

**Week Two. West & Northern African Connections: Trade, Islam, State Formation**
September 12 & 14

**Week Three. East Africa and the Indian Ocean: Global Exchanges of People, Things, Finance**
September 19 & 21
- Map Quiz in Class on September 19
Week Four. Slave Trading and Slavery: The Consequences of Forced Migration
September 26 & 28

Week Five. Layers of a South African Story: The Many Lives of Shaka Zulu
October 3 & 5
- Mofolo, Chaka (entire book).

Week Six. European Colonization: Choices Made (or, Who Falls Apart?)
October 10 & 12: From Cosmopolitanism to Colonialism

Week Seven. Administration on the Cheap: Colonialism and the Seeds of its own Destruction
October 17 & 19
- Sharkey, Living with Colonialism, pages. 1-119 (the remainder of the book will be read in week nine).

Week Eight. Key Changes of the 20th Century: Urbanization, Labor Migration, Land Values
October 24 & 26
**Week Nine. Decolonization: Choosing Nationalisms and Nations (and their Consequences)**
October 31 & November 2
- Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism*, pp. 120-41.

**Week Ten. Women and the Family: Experiences of Independence**
November 7 & 9

**Week Eleven. Cities in Postcolonial Africa**
November 14 & 16
- Watch the 6 short films called “African Metropolis” (2013). 1h32m. $2.99 rental for 48 hours on Vimeo.com. After watching the films, please take notes about them and also view the brief discussion of them on YouTube: “Spotlight—African Metropolis,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--LvSnuzxEE. As you ponder the stories, each with its own meanings and characteristics, you may wish also to refer back to the Ted Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie from Week One. Are there some themes about the African city that run through these disparate stories?

**Week Twelve. Gender and Conflict: Family, Mobility, Property, War**
November 28 & 30
- Watch the documentary “The Redemption of General Butt Naked” (2011). 1h25m. Available for rent ($2.99) on Amazon Video, iTunes, YouTube, Google Play.
Week Thirteen. Complex Present: Middle Classes, Business Opportunities, Flight

December 5 & 7
Map Quiz in Class on December 5


Review Book Option for Project Write-Up (select only one book to read and discuss/review):

- Kathryn M. de Luna, Collecting Food, Cultivating People: Subsistence and Society in Central Africa (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2016).


- Edward A. Alpers, The Indian Ocean in World History (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). [focus the book review on Africa & the Indian Ocean, which is a key part of this book.]


African Art Option for Project Write-up (analysis of five of your favorite works of African art after visiting some major collections in person and/or online—visiting the Baltimore Museum of Art in person is mandatory and you should have a good excuse for not visiting in person the National Museum of African Art in DC). Your five favorite works of art for this assignment must be in these major collections:

- Baltimore Museum of Art (Baltimore)
- Virginia Museum of Fine Art (Richmond)
- Penn Museum (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania)
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York)
- Brooklyn Museum of Art (New York)
- Newark Museum (Newark, NJ)
- Museum of Fine Arts (Boston)
- Harvard Art Museums, including Peabody Museum (Boston, Cambridge)
- Musée des Beaux Arts (Montréal)
- Cleveland Art Museum (Cleveland)
- Indiana University Art Museum (Bloomington)
- Indianapolis Museum of Art (Indianapolis—probably the best installation in the world)
- Detroit Institute of Arts (Detroit)
- Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago)
- The Field Museum (Chicago)
- Chazan Museum of Art (Madison, University of Wisconsin)
- Minneapolis Institute of Arts (Minneapolis)
- Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (Kansas City)
- High Museum (Atlanta)
- Museum of Fine Arts (Houston)
- Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art (Gainesville)
- Menil Collection (Houston)
- Dallas Museum of Art (Dallas)
- New Orleans Museum of Art (New Orleans)
- De Young Museum (San Francisco)
- UCLA Fowler Museum (Los Angeles)
- Seattle Art Museum (Seattle—one of the best for installation)
- British Museum (London)
- Louvre (Paris)
- Musée Dapper (Paris)
- Musée Quay Branly (Paris)
- Neues Museum (Berlin)
- Ethnological Museum (Berlin)
- Any art Museum on the African Continent
Congo Kinshasa Films Option for Project Write-up (watch four of the films below and write-up one essay discussing and analyzing them together)

- Viva Riva! (2010). 1h38m. (sex and violence). Available on Amazon video, iTunes, YouTube, Google Play; inexpensive. Gangster film. At least three parties vie in the city of Kinshasa over a truckload of gasoline stolen from neighboring Angola.
- Kinshasa Symphony (2010). 1h35m. Available on Amazon video; expensive.
- Cemetery State (2010). 1h10m. MSEL may have or procure this.
- Félicité (2017). 2h3m. MSEL may have or procure this.
- Congo in Four Acts. 1h12m. Available for rent on Vimeo.com. $2.99.

Tanzania Films Option for Project Write-up (watch four of the films below and write-up one essay discussing and analyzing them together)

- Siri ya Mtungi (2013). Television series; watch several series free at http://www.siriyamtungi.com (watching four episodes of this series counts as one film)
- Dogo Masai (2014). 1h50m. MSEL may have or procure this.
- Samaki Mchangani (2014) 30m. Watch on vimeo.com for free & Shoeshine (2013). 24m. Free viewing at afrolandtv.com (these two shorts count as one film).
- Dar Noir (2015). 1h54m. $3.99 rental on afrolandtv.com.
- Homecoming (2016). 1h30m. MSEL may have or procure this.

Reference Books on African History (available on reserve at MSEL).

You may consult these general histories of Africa if you want more general background information about a period, region, or topic of African history. If you want to read more but don’t know which one to read, ask the professor what might be best given your specific interests.

• John Parker and Richard Reid, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). This reference text has chapters organized by broad theme. It is not a comprehensive, chronological book, but the essays on themes are generally excellent.
