

HIST 325: PRECOLONIAL AFRICA

Fall 2013 – MW 4:00-5:20pm, Chapman 204 – CRN 17218

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Overview and Objectives

Africa is central to human history. It is the continent where our species arose, where some of the greatest ancient civilizations thrived, and where dynamic, complex, and innovative cultures confronted a variety of social, political, and environmental challenges. Many African states and societies were materially wealthier than their European counterparts until the 1700s, and Africa has always been connected—however tenuously at times—to the wider world. Yet in the popular, Eurocentric historical imagination in the U.S. and Europe, there is sparse knowledge of Africa's history, and it was rarely even considered a subject for historical study until the 1950s. For the period before European political dominion in Africa (c.1880-1960), this lack is even more pronounced. In this course we will explore the history of Africa between the 800s and the late 1800s, while at the same time discovering the logic behind African historical developments and tracing the broader implications of Africa's history.

Our core themes in this course involve power, trade, and the production of social and cultural orders, which interact with environmental factors locally as well as the broader development of global orders beyond the African continent. After an overview of the geography and early history of Africa, we will consider a number of regional histories and themes successively in units. The topics we will encounter in our journey include the development of long-distance trade networks and cross-cultural contacts, state formation and social organization, the nature and impact of slavery and the slave trade in Africa, Africa's place in the "first globalization" of the 1800s, and periodically the issues surrounding African history as a discipline. Geographically we will deal primarily with the regions now south of the formidable barrier of the Sahara Desert, but the desert was hardly impregnable, and the wide influence of Africa made the edges of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans increasingly important over time. No one course can cover more than a tiny sliver of the complexity and variety in Africa—home today to nearly a billion people, 55 nations (as of 2011), and thousands of communities of language and culture—but students completing this course will be able to write about and discuss major themes in African history with contextual sensitivity and will possess the knowledge necessary to undertake further study.

Although this course extends into the late 1800s, a large number of 19th-century developments relative to colonial empires, medicine, environment, religion, and production will be treated in HIST 326 this Spring, where they flow more neatly and logically into the modern period. I hope you will stay with us!

An Important Note About This Syllabus

Everything on this syllabus is important. Read it carefully and refer to it frequently. **You alone are responsible for knowing its contents.** The paper copy you receive at the beginning of the course is, ideally, the final version, but sometimes the unexpected intrudes and changes must be made. In all cases I will inform you of these changes and assure that an updated version is available and accessible on Blackboard. Pay attention to the version numbers if you are unsure which schedule is the latest, and don't hesitate to contact me with questions.

Assignments and Grading

Because African history requires the mastery of entirely new bodies of knowledge for most students, it is important for you not only to keep up with the reading but to think actively about it through analytical writing. Therefore, this course will incorporate **three short papers** (1200 to 1500 words, roughly 4 to 6 pages, **adjudged by word count**) on topics connected to the major course readings. These papers will be due on the dates indicated in the syllabus, and must conform to the instructions given a week or so prior. For guides to writing history, I would suggest M. L. Rampolla's *Pocket Guide to Writing History*, 7th edition, which includes a citation guide as well as stylistic pointers that will greatly improve your work. **These papers must be submitted via Blackboard, under "Assignments."** This course employs SafeAssign, and your enrollment in the course constitutes assent to the submission of your papers to it.

Besides the papers, you will be required to complete **two ID/essay examinations** (a midterm and a cumulative final weighted far more towards the second half), **a map quiz** the second week of the term, and the occasional pop quiz on the reading. The grade weighting breaks down as follows (out of 400+):

Map Quiz	5%	20 pts
Papers (3):	20% each (60%)	80 pts each (240)
Final Exam (Cumulative):	25%	120 pts
Participation/Quizzes:	5% (minimum*)	20 pts (or more*)

(*Noteworthy participation—questions, comments, and observations in class, etc—might provide a small boost to a grade beyond the 5% standard. Excess quizzes may also cause this percentage to grow.)

Course grades will be assigned according to percentages on the standard scale (90s = A range, 80s = B range, with 93 or more as an A, 90-92 as A-, 87-89 as B+, 83-87 as B, 80-82 as B-, 77-79 as C+, and so on), with fractional percentages rounded to the nearest percentage point (up or down). There is no standard percentage for the A+, which I award only in cases of extreme merit and at my discretion. As fair warning, **I do not change paper, exam, or course grades**, except in cases of arithmetical error. I am however always willing to discuss your grade and assist you if improvement is necessary.

Please pay close attention to the important due dates & times, which are recapitulated in a list at the end of this syllabus. Late papers will be marked down 20 points per calendar day or portion thereof. No special midterms or finals will be arranged, except as required by University policy. You are responsible for your work reaching me in the format you intend, so please plan ahead.

Course Texts

The following books are required and can be purchased at the Duck Store or online from several retailers. **Make sure you get the editions indicated because content and pagination vary dramatically.** Older editions, especially of Shillington, will lead you badly astray. That's why they cost so little on Amazon.

- Kevin Shillington. *History of Africa*, 3rd ed. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012. ISBN 0-23030-847-3 (also used in HIST 326; this is *not* the more common purple-covered edition.)
- Said Hamdun and Noel King. *Ibn Battuta In Black Africa* expanded ed. Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2005. ISBN 1-55876-336-8 (hardcover of this ed. is also OK, but pricey)
- Fa-Digi Sisòkò, *The Epic of Son-Jara: A West African Tradition* rev. ed., trans. and ed. J. W. Johnson Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. ISBN 0-25320-713-5
- Robert O. Collins, ed., *Documents from the African Past*. Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2001. ISBN 1-55876-289-2

All other readings will be posted on our Blackboard site a week or so before they must be read (most will be up at the start of term). Some "recommended" readings will also appear there if you're interested. If you have any trouble obtaining them, please let me know immediately. I can always email them to you.

Policies:

Attendance: Attendance is expected at all class meetings. I monitor attendance, but there is no grade attached to it beyond the quizzes (documented absences or emergencies will exempt you from a quiz in any case). My experience however indicates that poor attendance correlates very strongly with low grades, because in-class material does not merely recapitulate the readings and getting notes from a classmate is a poor substitute. Finally, I ask that you be as punctual as possible, because having many late arrivals and early departures—including anticipatory “rustling” at 5:15—are disruptive to everyone.

Special Needs and Gizmos: Although I am a technophile, gadgets in class are annoying and distracting, if not to you then to those around you. Laptop and tablet computers are particular problems, and they have a demonstrably negative effect on learning and participation in lecture-heavy courses like ours.¹ **I therefore do not permit the use of laptop/tablet computers or personal communications devices (text or voice) in the classroom.** Please turn your cell phone off or to “silent” before you come in, and quietly exit if you absolutely must use it at a certain time. If you have physical or learning differences that require you to have special accommodations such as a laptop, notice from the Accessible Education Center (<http://aec.uoregon.edu>) is **required**. I am not empowered to make such arrangements myself, but rest assured that I will do everything in my power to address your documented needs.

Writing Style: All writing for this course must be typed and should employ grammatically correct and clear college-level English. For citation format and the like, make sure you are using some kind of style guide such as the *Chicago Manual of Style* or the *MLA Guide*. Although I don’t grade it directly, poor style and grammar can lower your grade if I am unable to figure out what you’re really saying.

Academic Honesty: The information in this subsection isn’t necessary for 99+% of the students in my courses, but unfortunate ongoing experience obligates me to include it in my syllabi. I refer you, for your information, to Student Conduct and Community Standards at the Office of Student Life:

<http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/tabid/68/Default.aspx>

In practice, the issues of academic honesty that arise most often are cheating and plagiarism. The written final exam format tends to discourage the former, but the latter has become a greater problem in the take-home papers. If you are unsure of what plagiarism is, the UO has a very good guide:

<http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html>

It is a gross understatement to say that academic dishonesty will adversely affect your grade. At the very least, you will receive an automatic failing mark for the course. My personal view of the matter is that plagiarists and cheaters do not belong in an institution of higher learning, which usually means judicial review and ultimately suspension or expulsion from the University. If you have any concerns or you’re not sure whether something is plagiarism, ask **before** you turn it in for a grade. **Ignorance is no excuse.**

One final warning, regarding the potential crutch of the Internet: if you can find it, so can I—so resist the temptation to cut corners. By all means use internet tools (such as Google or Wikipedia), but use them properly and judiciously, and accept nothing from an unaccredited source like Wikipedia or a random webpage alone as reliable or authoritative—and never use them as substitutes for actual course material. If you are in doubt about a source’s reliability, get in contact with me.

Everything Else: In all other matters of classroom policy, I default to the Duck Guide or the relevant Departmental policy. If you’re not sure of something, please ask!

¹ See *inter alia* C. B. Fried, “In-class Laptop Use and Its Effects on Student Learning,” *Computers and Education* 50, no. 3 (2008): 906-914 (available online via the UO Libraries).

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Class Schedule (subject to change based on our shared interests and available time)

Readings are to be completed *before* the class assigned, and be ready to talk about them in case of quizzes, exercises, or participation opportunities. Readings marked (BB) will be on Blackboard. Other readings marked (Collins) are from the Collins sourcebook; you may find them by title.

Part I: Foundations (week 1)

- M 30 Sep Introduction to the Study of Africa and African History**
- W 2 Oct The Very Short Course: Africa to 800 (Geography, History, & Concepts)**
 Reading: James McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land* (1999), 9-22 (BB).
 Pier M. Larson, “Myths about Africa, Africans ...” (BB)
 Recommended: Skim Shillington, Chapters 1-5 (1-84) as background.

Part II: Trading Kingdoms of the Western Sudan, to 1600 (weeks 2-3)

- M 7 Oct The Expansion of Trans-Saharan Trade to 1200**
MAP QUIZ: PHYSICAL FEATURES (see syllabus pp. 7-8)
 Reading: Shillington, Chapters 6-7 (85-100).
 Chronicles of Al-Ya^cqubi, Ibn Hawqal, and Al-Muhallabi, in Levtzion and Spaulding, eds., *Medieval West Africa: Views from Arab Scholars and Merchants* (2003), 1-8. (BB)
- W 9 Jan From Wagadu (“Ghana”) to the Empire of Mali**
PAPER TOPIC #1 DISTRIBUTED
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 7 (100-108).
 Sisòkò, *The Epic of Son-Jara*, 1-58 (plus annotations as necessary).
 Hamdun & King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* (2005), ix-xxxii, 101-115.
- M 14 Oct Malian Society: Oral Tradition, Islam, and Syncretism**
 Reading: Sisòkò, *The Epic of Son-Jara*, 59-101 (plus annotations as necessary).
 Hamdun & King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* (2005), 29-75, 99-100. **Pay attention to the translation endnotes, 76-94; they explain a lot and will enrich your reading.** This is our heaviest session so start reading early.
- T 15 Oct FILM EVENT, 7-9PM (Location TBA)**
 Film: Dani Kouyaté, “Keïta: Heritage of the Griot” (Video 02733). If you cannot see the film at this time, you must see it before the weekend for any quiz or paper use. Compare the film’s telling with Sisòkò, up to line 1647.
- W 16 Oct The Ascendancy of Songhai and the Limits of the Savanna Kingdoms**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapters 7, 11, & 13 (108-113, 173-75, 187-91).
 Leo Africanus, “The Western Sudan in the Sixteenth Century, 1526.” (Collins)
 Recommended: Abd al-Rahman al-Sadi, “Songhay & the Moroccan Invasion, 1591.” (Collins)
- F 18 Oct PAPER #1 DUE VIA BLACKBOARD BY 5:00PM**

Part III: East African and Indian Ocean Systems, to 1500 (weeks 4-5)

- M 21 Oct** **Northeast Africa: Traders, Muslims, and Christians**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 8 (114-22).
 Harold Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (1994), 17-47. (BB.)
 Francisco Alvarez, “The Land of Prester John, 1525.” (Collins)
- W 23 Oct** **Development of the Swahili Coast**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 9 (128-37, 143).
 Hamdun & King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* (2005), 15-25, 129-47. **Again, be sure to read the relevant translation endnotes!**
 Tuan Ch’êng-Shih, “China’s Discovery of Africa, 863.” (Collins)
- M 28 Oct** **States of the South Central Interior: Cattle, Gold, Trade, and Power**
 PAPER TOPIC #2 DISTRIBUTED
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 10 (151-59).
 Innocent Pikirayi, “Cattle, Gold, and Copper: Traders, Chiefs, and Kings,” in *The Zimbabwe Culture* (2001), 123-55 (BB)
 Manuel de Faria e Souza, “The Kingdom of the Monomotapa, 1666.” (Collins)
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Part IV: Travelers Unbidden, c.1400-1700 (weeks 5-6)

- W 30 Oct** **The Rise of Atlantic Commerce: African States and European Visitors**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapters 13 & 14 (191-97, 203-7).
 John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World* (1992), 43-71 (BB).
 Antonius Malfante, “Tawat and the Western Sudan Trade, 1447.” (Collins)
- M 4 Nov** **The Transformation of Atlantic Africa**
 Reading: Rui de Aguiar, “King Affonso I, 1516.” (Collins)
 Alvare II and Alvare III, “Relations between the Kingdom of Congo and the Papacy, 1613.” (Collins)
 John Barbot, “Benin, 1680.” (Collins)
- W 6 Nov** **New Factors in East Africa and the Indian Ocean Network**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 9 (137-43).
 Edward A. Alpers, “The Impact of Portuguese Intervention,” in *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa* (1975), 39-69. (BB)
 Duarte Barbosa, “The East Coast of Africa at the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century, 1540 [1516].” (Collins)
 Father Lobo, “Portuguese Missionaries in Ethiopia, 1620.” (Collins)
- F 8 Nov** **PAPER #2 DUE DUE VIA BLACKBOARD BY 6:00PM**
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Part V: African Slavery and the Slave Trades (weeks 7-8)

- M 11 Nov** **Slavery and Slave Systems in Africa**
 Reading: John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World* (1992), 72-97 (BB).

- W 13 Nov** **The Atlantic Slave Trade: Practices, Factors, Developments**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 12 (176-86).
 Gomes Eannes de Azurara, “The Discovery of Guinea, 1435.” (Collins)
 William Snelgrave, “The Slaves Mutiny, 1730.” (Collins)
- M 18 Nov** **The African Effects of the Atlantic Slave Trade**
PAPER TOPIC #3 DISTRIBUTED
 Reading: P. D. Curtin, “The Slave Trade and the West African Economy in the
 Eighteenth Century” from *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex* 2d
 ed. (1998), 113-28 (BB).
 William Bosman, “Justice and Warfare at Axim, 1700.” (Collins)
 Archibald Dalziel, “Dahomey and its Neighbors, 1793.” (Collins)
- W 20 Nov** **Abolition, “Legitimate Trade,” and Their Complications**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 16 (237-46).
 [Response to] Mercator Honestus, “A Defense of the African Slave Trade,
 1740.” (Collins)
 T. F. Buxton, “The Principles of Abolition, 1840.” (Collins)

Part VI: Africa and the “First Globalization” to 1880 (weeks 9-10)

- M 25 Nov** **Slaves, Ivory, and Arabian Colonialism in East Africa**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 17 (247-62).
- T 26 Nov** **PAPER #3 DUE DUE VIA BLACKBOARD BY 5:00PM**
- W 27 Nov** **The Ottoman Empire, Algeria, and Egypt to 1880**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 19 (280-90).
 David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French* (1990), 62-93. (BB)
- M 2 Dec** **Southern Africa: Colonies, Kingdoms, and Treks**
 Readings: Shillington, Chapters 15 & 18 (218-29; 263-79).
 Anna Elizabeth Steenkamp, “The Great Trek, 1835.” (Collins)
- W 4 Dec** **The Sudan and Sahel: The Rise of Mass Islam and Eclectic Jihad**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 16 (230-36).
 David Robinson, “Revolutions in the Western Sudan,” in Levtzion and
 Pouwels, eds., *The History of Islam in Africa* (2000), 131-52.
 Abdallah ibn Muhammad, “The Hijra & Holy War of Sheik Uthman dan
 Fodio, 1804” (Collins) **with**
 Shaykh al-Kanami, “The Case Against the *Jihad*, 1813.” (Collins)
- W 11 Dec** **FINAL EXAMINATION, 3:15-5:15PM (designed for 80 minutes)**

Recapitulation of Major Due Dates:

- Monday, 7 Oct, in class: Map Quiz (Start of class)
 Friday, 18 Oct, 5pm: Paper 1(Blackboard)
 Friday, 8 Nov, 5pm: Paper 2 (Blackboard)
 Tuesday, 26 Nov, 5pm: Paper 3 (Blackboard)
 Wednesday, 11 Dec, 3:15-5:15pm: Final exam

Map Quiz Study Guide, HIST 325 Precolonial Africa, Mon 7 Oct 2013

On the quiz I will ask you for **twelve** of these, with letters A-M (omitting I); you must indicate by letter the location of **ten, and only ten**, on the blank map that will be provided (excess answers will be disregarded by random determination). Be as specific as possible; for large areas, such as the Sahara, **indicate the rough extent by circling the area in question**. Oceans and seas do not require such treatment, however, and you need not indicate the ENTIRE course of a river; the Congo in particular gets very difficult to recall before the confluence of the Ubangi. My rule of thumb is "can I understand what you're getting at?" and if I can, then all is well (provided what you're getting at is the right answer, naturally). "Close" therefore may count, at least for partial credit.

Bodies of Water:

Atlantic Ocean
 Indian Ocean
 Red Sea
 Mediterranean Sea
 Gulf of Aden
 Victoria Nyanza (aka Lake Victoria)
 Lake Tanganyika
 Lake Malawi (aka Lake Nyasa)
 Lake Chad
 Bight of Biafra (aka Bight of Bonny)
 Bight of Benin
 Gulf of Sidra (aka Gulf of Sirte)

Rivers:

Nile
 Niger
 Benue
 Congo
 Senegal
 Gambia
 Limpopo
 Zambesi
 Orange (Gariep)
 Volta

Landforms/Regions/Islands:

Sahara Desert
 Kalahari Desert
 Namib Desert
 Atlas Mountains
 Ahaggar (Hoggar) Mountains
 Tibetsi Mountains
 Drakensberg Mountains
 Mount Kilimanjaro
 Mount Cameroon
 Ethiopian Highlands
 Zimbabwe Plateau
 Cape of Good Hope
 Niger Inland Delta
 Niger Delta
 Horn of Africa
 Canary Islands
 Comoros Islands
 São Tomé
 Zanzibar
 "Gold Coast"
 "Ivory Coast"
 Madagascar

A copy of the full-size blank map is on the next page; **it is the same blank map** you will receive for the quiz. Note that it is a fairly "simplified" map as rivercourses go, but I believe all the rivers are indicated. Maps in Shillington or elsewhere online will help you find features, but please feel free to email me if you have any difficulty or questions.

