

HIST 325: PRECOLONIAL AFRICA

Winter 2019 – MW 1000-1120, Lillis 112 – CRN 27250

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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 own 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 processes in African history.

Our core themes in this course involve power, trade, and the production of social and cultural orders locally, in the context of developing global systems tied to the African continent. No one course can cover more than a tiny sliver of the complexity and variety in Africa, home today to over a billion people, 55 nations, and thousands of communities of language and culture. We will deal primarily but not exclusively with regions now south of the formidable 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. Students completing this course satisfactorily will, at minimum:

- Develop a broad understanding of how various African societies evolved before the mid-1800s;
- Discover the important position of precolonial Africa within local and global historical processes;
- Interpret primary sources for major themes and episodes in African history within their own particular social, cultural, political, and economic contexts; and
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze and discuss material dealing with Africa's past in writing, with sensitivity to various African historical contexts.

Although this course extends past the mid-1800s, a large number of 19th-century developments relative to colonial empires, medicine, environment, religion, and production will only appear in HIST 326 (Spring term), where they flow more neatly and logically into the modern period. We 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 on Canvas. Check the date at the top of page one if you are unsure which syllabus is the latest, keep up to date with Canvas announcements, and don't hesitate to contact me or Ms. Ndakalako-Bannikov with any 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 thesis-driven analytical papers (1300 to 1600 words of actual text, which is roughly 5 to 7 pages)** on topics connected to the major course sections. These papers must be tendered to Canvas at the indicated dates / times and conform to the prompts’ accompanying instructions. For guides to writing history, I would suggest M. L. Rampolla’s *Pocket Guide to Writing History*, 9th edition, which includes a citation guide as well as stylistic pointers that will greatly improve your work. These papers must be submitted via Canvas. This course employs VeriCite to check papers, and your enrollment constitutes assent to the submission of your papers there.

Besides these papers, you will be required to complete a written **final examination** (cumulative, but weighted far more towards the second half and weeks 9-10), a **map quiz** the second Monday of the term, and the occasional pop quiz on the reading. The grade weighting breaks down as follows (out of 400 pts):

Map Quiz	5%	20 pts
Papers (3):	20% each (60%)	80 pts each (240)
Final Exam (Cumulative):	30%	120 pts
Quizzes (& Participation):	5% (minimum*)	20 pts (or more*)

(*Noteworthy participation—questions, comments, observations, and discussion in class—might reach above the 20-point limit. Small extra-credit opportunities may or may not be available.)

Course grades will be assigned according to percentages on a decimal scale, with 93.00+ as an A, 90.00-92.99 as A-, 87.00-89.99 as B+, 83.00-87.99 as B, 80.00-82.99 as B-, 77.00-79.99 as C+, 73.00-76.99 as C, and so on). There is no standard percentage for A+, which we award only in cases of extreme merit, and at my (LFB) sole discretion. As a final notice, **we do not change paper, exam, or course grades**, clerical errors excepted, though we’re happy to discuss your work and aid improvement going forward.

Please pay close attention to the important due dates & times, which we recapitulate in a list at the end of this syllabus for your convenience. Late papers will be marked down 5% (4 pts) per 24 hours or portion thereof. No further papers will be accepted after that essay’s grades are released. No special exam sittings will be arranged except as required by University policy, and never before the exam date. **You alone are responsible** for assuring we receive your work on time and in proper format, so double-check.

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, are very different. Also, do not splurge for his brand-new 4th edition.

- Collins, Robert O., ed., *Documents from the African Past*. Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2001. ISBN 1-55876-289-2
- Hamdun, Said and Noel King. *Ibn Battuta In Black Africa* expanded ed. Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2005/09/10. ISBN 1-55876-336-8 or 4 (hardcover of this ed. is also OK, but expensive)
- Niane, D. T. (trans and comp). *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali* 2nd ed. New York: Longman, 2006. ISBN 1-40584-942-8
- Shillington, Kevin. *History of Africa*, 3rd ed. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012. ISBN 0-23030-847-3 (also used in HIST 326 for Spring 2019.)

All other readings will be posted on Canvas under “Files” a week or so before they must be read. Some related “recommended” readings will also appear there for your reading interests. Prioritize them. If you have any trouble obtaining them, please let me know immediately. I can always email PDFs to you.

Policies and Provisions:

Attendance: We monitor attendance, but there is no regular grade attached to it beyond the quizzes. We also ask that you be as punctual as possible despite the inadequate passing time that UO allows, and if you must leave early please do so as quietly as possible to minimize disruption. Experience has shown that poor attendance correlates very strongly with lower grades, likely because in-class material does not merely recapitulate the readings and notes from a classmate are a weak substitute. This is most evident on the final exam, but falling behind in readings and attendance will compound very quickly.

Special Needs and Gizmos: I am committed to working with students who have special needs, but these must be documented through the **Accessible Education Center** (<http://aec.uoregon.edu>). I am not empowered to make other special arrangements. Please see us if you need more information.

Although I (LFB) am a technophile, gadgets in class can be annoying and distracting, if not to you then to those around you. Laptop and backlit tablet computers are particular problems, and their use has a demonstrably negative effect on learning and participation in lecture-heavy courses like ours.¹ I therefore discourage their use unless you have an AEC-documented need, but **I will probationally permit them if you sit in the back row of the room where the screens will not be visible to other students.** Please, turn your phones off or silence them before you come in, and quietly exit if you truly must text or talk.

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

Academic Honesty: The information in this subsection isn't necessary for 99+% of the students in my courses, but unfortunate ongoing experience demands I link to the UO's academic misconduct guide:

<https://dos.uoregon.edu/academic-misconduct>

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 take-home papers even though we keep them on file. If you are unsure of what plagiarism is, the UO has a useful guide:

<http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism>

It is a gross understatement to say that academic dishonesty will adversely affect your grade. At the very least, you will receive an automatic zero for the assignment, which almost guarantees a failing course grade. At worst, you may be suspended or expelled from the University. If you have any concerns or you're not sure if something is plagiarism, ask before you turn it in for a grade. We are here to help!

One final warning, regarding the potential crutch of the Internet: if you can find it, so can we—so resist the temptation to cut corners. By all means use internet tools (such as Google or Wikipedia), but use them properly and judiciously. 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.

Everything Else: In all other matters of classroom policy, we default to the Duck Guide or the relevant Departmental standard. If you're not sure of something, or need to talk about a concern, please see us!

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; Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer, "The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand over Laptop Note-taking," *Psychological Science* 25, no. 6 (2014): 1159-68 (both available online via the UO Libraries).

HIST 325: PRECOLONIAL AFRICA

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

Readings are to be completed *before* the class assigned. Be ready to talk about them for discussion opportunities or quizzes, especially the Collins, Niane, and Hamdun/King primary sources.

Readings marked (C) will be on Canvas. Readings marked (Collins) are from that book.

Part I: Foundations (week 1)

- M 7 Jan** **Introduction to the Study of African History and Its Challenges**
 Reading: Pier M. Larson, “Myths about Africa, Africans ...” (C)
- W 9 Jan** **The Very Short Course: Geography and Core Concepts in Africa to 800**
 Reading: James McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land* (1999), 9-22 (C).
 Shillington, Chapters 1-5 (1-84) as background.
 Recommended: Richard Reid, “Past and Presentism: The Precolonial and the Foreshortening of African History,” *Journal of African History* 52 (2011): 135-55. **This is for history majors and others curious about treatment of the “precolonial.”**

Part II: States Around the Sahara and African Historical Sources, 800-1600 (weeks 2-4)

- M 14 Jan** **The Expansion of Trans-Saharan Trade & Islam to 1200**
MAP QUIZ: PHYSICAL FEATURES (see syllabus pp. 8-9)
 Reading: Shillington, Chapters 6-7 (85-100).
 D. T. Niane, *Sundiata* (2006), vii-xxiv.
 Chronicles of Al-Ya‘qubi, Ibn Hawqal, and Al-Muhallabi, in Levtzion and Spaulding, eds., *Medieval West Africa: Views from Arab Scholars and Merchants* (2003), 1-8. (C)
- W 16 Jan** **Wagadu (“Ghana”) and the Almoravids**
PAPER TOPIC #1 DISTRIBUTED
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 7 (100-108).
- M 21 Jan** **DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., HOLIDAY – NO CLASS SESSION**
- W 23 Jan** **Malian Society: Oral Tradition, Islam, and Syncretism**
 Reading: D. T. Niane, *Sundiata* (2006), 1-96.
 Hamdun & King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* (2005), ix-xxxii, 29-75. **Pay attention to the relevant translation endnotes, 76-94; they explain a lot and will enrich your knowledge. Start reading before Monday; it’s a lot to get through and think about!**
- W 23 Jan (also)** **FILM EVENT, 7-9PM (Location TBA)**
 Film: Dani Kouyaté, “Keita: Heritage of the Griot” (DVD 05213). You are not required to attend this particular showing, but we provide it as a convenience. 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 Niane’s transcription, and think about why they differ in detail, coverage, and tone.

- M 28 Jan** **From Mali to Songhai: The Limits of the Savanna Empires**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapters 7, 11, & 13 (108-113, 173-75, 187-91).
 Leo Africanus, “The Western Sudan in the Sixteenth Century, 1526.” (Collins)
 Abd al-Rahman al-Sadi, “Songhay & the Moroccan Invasion, 1591.” (Collins)

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

- W 30 Jan** **Northeast Africa: Traders, Muslims, and Christians**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 8 (114-22).
 Harold Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (1994), 17-47. (C)
 Francisco Alvarez, “The Land of Prester John, 1525.” (Collins)
- R 31 Jan** **PAPER #1 DUE VIA CANVAS BEFORE MIDNIGHT**
- M 4 Feb** **The Swahili Coast and the Rise of Kilwa Kisiwani**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 9 (128-37, 143).
 Tuan Ch’êng-Shih, “China’s Discovery of Africa, 863.” (Collins)
 Hamdun & King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* (2005), 15-25, 129-47. **Again, be sure to read the relevant translation endnotes!**
 Recommended: S. Wynne-Jones, “Creating Urban Communities at Kilwa Kisiwani, Tanzania, AD 800-1300,” *Antiquity* 81 (2007): 368-80.
- W 6 Feb** **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. (C)
 Manuel de Faria e Souza, “The Kingdom of the Monomotapa, 1666.” (Collins)

Part IV: Travelers Unbidden, c.1400-1700 (weeks 6-7)

- M 11 Feb** **The Rise of Afro-European Oceanic Commerce: West and Central Africa**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapters 13 & 14 (191-97, 203-7).
 John Thornton, *Africa and Africans ...* (1998), 43-71. (C)
 Antonius Malfante, “Tawat and the Western Sudan Trade, 1447.” (Collins)
- W 13 Feb** **New Factors in Northeast Africa and the Indian Ocean Network**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 9 (137-43).
 John Laband, “Ravaging the Swahili Coast,” in *Bringers of War: The Portuguese in Africa ...* (2013), 36-70. (C)
 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)
 (Revisit the latter part of the Marcus reading from week 4 for Ethiopia.)
- M 18 Feb** **Transformations in Atlantic Africa**
 Reading: Rui de Aguiar, “King Affonso I, 1516.” (Collins)
 Alvare II and Alvare III, “Relations between the Kingdom of Kongo and the Papacy, 1613.” (Collins)
 John Barbot, “Benin, 1680.” (Collins)

Part V: Slavery, the Slave Trades, and the African Atlantic (weeks 7-9)

- W 20 Feb** **Enslavement, Slave Trades, and Slave Systems in Africa**
 Reading: John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World* (1998), 72-97 (C).
- R 21 Feb** **PAPER #2 DUE VIA CANVAS BEFORE MIDNIGHT**
- M 25 Feb** **The Atlantic Slave Trade and the Rise of Industrialized Brutality**
PAPER TOPIC #3 DISTRIBUTED
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 12 (176-86).
 John Thornton, "The African Background," in *A Cultural History of the Atlantic World 1250-1820* (2012), 60-99. (C)
 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. (C)
 Recommended: P. C. Emmer, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Economy, 1580-1880* (1998), 11-37.
 Emmer's text is provided for those interested in the Dutch company factor, which is often downplayed in general histories. It is a dense piece of text for a survey-level course, so I do not require it.
- W 27 Feb** **African Effects of the Export Slave Trades: Change and Resistance**
 Reading: Thierno Mouctar Bah, "Slave-Raiding and Defensive Systems South of Lake Chad from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century," in *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*, ed. Sylviane Diouf (2003), 15-30 (C).
 Anne C. Bailey, "The Social and Political Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on the Old Slave Coast," in *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Boston: Beacon, 2005), 153-86.
 William Snelgrave, "The Slaves' Mutiny, 1730." (Collins)
 [Response to] Mercator Honestus, "A Defense of the African Slave Trade, 1740." (Collins)
- M 4 Mar** **Abolition, "Legitimate Commerce," and Their Complications**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 16 (237-46, 251-62).
 Theodore Canot, "Slaving in Liberia, 1850." (Collins)
 Charles Livingstone, "The Prazeros, 1859." (Collins)

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

- W 6 Mar** **Southern Africa: Colonies, Kingdoms, and Treks**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapters 15 & 18 (218-29; 263-79).
 Anna Elizabeth Steenkamp, "The Great Trek, 1835." (Collins)
- R 7 Mar** **PAPER #3 DUE VIA CANVAS BY 3:00PM**
- M 11 Mar** **North Africa: The Cases of Egypt and Algeria**
 Reading: Shillington, Chapter 19 (280-90).
 David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French* (1990), 62-93. (C)

- W 13 Mar** **The Rise of Mass Islam and Jihad in West Africa**
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) These provide views of Sokoto.
- T 19 Mar** **CUMULATIVE FINAL EXAM, 112 LILLIS, 10:15am-12:15pm**
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Recapitulation of Deadlines and Key Dates:

Monday, 14 January 2019, in class: Map Quiz (at start of class)
Thursday, 31 January, before midnight: Paper 1 (Canvas)
Thursday, 21 February 2019, before midnight: Paper 2 (Canvas)
[*Sunday, 24 February 2019, before midnight: Final deadline to change grade option / withdraw]
Thursday, 7 March 2019, before midnight: Paper 3 (Canvas)
Tuesday, 19 March 2019, 10:15am-12:15pm: Final exam, 112 Lillis

Map Quiz Study Guide, HIST 325 Precolonial Africa, for Tuesday 14 Jan 2019

On the quiz I will give you **twelve** names, with letters A-M (omitting I) next to each; you must use the letters to indicate the location of **ten, and only ten**, on the blank map that we will provide. Excess answers will be disregarded randomly, right or wrong. 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?" Provided that what you're getting at is the correct answer, you're OK, so "close" sometimes counts. If you (say) circle two islands and only one of them is correct, or you've got part of the right rivercourse but part of the wrong one too, you may receive partial credit for that answer. **Please note: The Niger Inland Delta is far upriver from the other Niger Delta; know both!**

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
 "Gold Coast"
 "Ivory Coast"
 Canary Islands
 Comoros Islands
 São Tomé
 Fernando Pó / Bioko
 Zanzibar
 Pemba
 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 river-courses 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 us if you have any difficulty or questions. The simple process of making a study map will actually do a great deal to assure success!

