

Tentative

History 075.401

HISTORY OF AFRICA TO 1850

Spring 2015, MW, 11-12

Instructor: Dr. Cheikh Babou, 306 G CH

Office hours: W: 12:00-2:00; F: 12:00-1:00

and by appointment

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TA: TBA

Room: TBA

Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with a broad understanding of the cultures, history, social structures, political organizations and economy of Africa before the arrival of Europeans on the continent. We will examine the dynamics of historical change and continuity in Africa and the contributions of Africa and Africans to world civilizations. The major geographic areas of the continent will be studied within a broader chronological and thematic framework, to allow for the examination of both similarities and diversities in the African experience. We will look at the emergence and development of the Ancient civilizations of the Nile Valley, religions and cultures, trade and processes of state building and transformation in the interior and along the Atlantic and Indian coasts, the Atlantic slave trade, and finally Southern Africa.

Objectives and Format

This course has three major aims: first, to introduce students to the rich and diverse civilizations that emerged in pre-colonial Africa; second, to analyze some of the historical processes which have shaped African societies before the European encounters of the nineteenth century; and third, to critically reflect on the ways in which scholars use archeology, linguistics, oral tradition and other disciplines to reconstruct historical knowledge about pre-colonial African societies. Format consists of two lectures per week and a one-hour recitation (REC) to discuss class material.

Requirements

Attendance and class participation: Regular attendance at lectures and participation in recitation sessions are essential. You are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the readings for each week and to participate actively in discussions. Assigned readings are indicated in the syllabus for each meeting. It is the student's responsibility to complete the required readings on schedule so as to participate fruitfully in the weekly discussions. Both

attendance and in-class participation will count towards your grade. **Late submission of an assignment will result in the loss of 1/3 of a full grade per day (e.g., A to A-; B+ to B). One absence does not carry penalty but any additional unexcused absence will negatively affect your final grade. If you have a legitimate reason to miss class, please let me and your teaching assistant know beforehand.**

Weekly assignment: The weekly assignment and participation in recitations will count for 20% of your grade. The weekly assignment consists of not longer than two paragraphs of response to the readings and video of the week. You are expected to summarize the main arguments raised in the material you have read, then to formulate two discussion questions for recitation meetings. These questions are not directed to you or to the instructor but to the students in the section. The weekly assignment is designed to help you keep up with and reflect on course materials as the semester goes along.

Exams: Each student will be evaluated on five pieces of work and on participation in recitations. There will be a map quiz, two essays, a mid term test and a final.

- Map quiz ---in sections (5%)
- Essay No. 1-----(15%)
- Mid-term test----- (20%)
- Essay No. 2----- (15%)
- Final----- (25%)
- Recitation and weekly assignment (20%)

Electronic resources: The syllabus for this class will be posted on Blackboard as well as a **required electronic bulk pack of supplementary readings** (ER) and some additional resources related to specific course topics. Students are invited to use the digital drop box and the forum on Blackboard to post the weekly assignment. Registered students with a Penn ID and an E-mail address are automatically listed on Blackboard. To access the course site point your browser to <https://courseweb.library.upenn.edu> and log in with your Penn ID and password.

Academic integrity: Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity and plagiarism policies on all assignments. Plagiarism consists of using other people's ideas without proper acknowledgment. Students who violate the university's academic integrity policies risk failing the course. (For more on academic integrity see the relevant link on Blackboard.)

Required Readings

Books

The following books are available for purchase at the Penn Book Center 34th St. and Sansom near the bank and also at the Rosengarten Reserve Desk at the Van Pelt library.

In addition, an electronic bulk pack of required supplementary readings is available on the course documents section of Blackboard.

Diop, Cheikh Anta. *The African Origin of civilization*. Lawrence Hill Books, 1974.

Ehret, Christopher. *The Civilizations of Africa: a history to 1800*. Charlottesville: The University of Virginia, 2002.

Niane, D. T. *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*. Essex, England: Longman, 1994.

Electronic Reserve on Blackboard

Martin Bernal, *Black Athena*, vol. I, 1-39

Stanley Burstein, ed., *Ancient African Civilizations: Kush and Axum* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2nd ed. 2009): 49-64; 97-114

Julian Cobbing, "The Mfecane as Alibi," *Journal of African History*, 29(1988): 487-519

Elizabeth, Eldredge, "The Mfecane" Reconsidered, *Journal of African History*, 33 (1992):1-35

Christopher Fyfe, "The Abolition of the Slave Trade," in *History of West Africa* vol. 2, ed M. Crowder, chapter 2

Timothy Insoll, *The Archaeology of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 2003): 206-263

Vincent B. Khapoya, *The African Experience* (Longman, 3rd ed. 2010): 21-49; 56-61

Mary Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa*, xi-52

Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: a History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-22

Daniel McCall, 'Introduction' in J. E. Philips ed., *Writing African History* (University of Rochester Press, 2006), 1-21.

Roland Oliver, *The African Experience*, chapter 7

David Robinson and Douglass Smith, *Sources of the African Past*, chapters 1 and 5

Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, chapter 3 and 4

Edith R. Sanders, "The Hamitic Hypothesis" in Robert O. Collins ed., *Problems in African History: The Pre-colonial Centuries*, pp. 9-19

Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, chapter 2

Worger and Al, *Africa and the West*, pp1 -67

Recommended and reference books

These texts are not required but they constitute important additional resources for course readings and for your writing assignments. Excerpts from these books will be used to supplement required material. All recommended books are available at the Library reserve.

Bernal, Martin. *Black Athena: the Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, volume I: the Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1987.

Collins, Robert O. *Problems in African History*. New York: Markus Wiener Press, 1993.

Connah, Graham. *African Civilizations: Precolonial Cities and States in Tropical Africa: an Archeological Perspective*. Cambridge (England): Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Davidson, Basil. *The African Slave Trade*. Boston: Little Brown, 1980.

Elphick, Richard. *Kraal and Castle: Khoi Khoi and the Founding of White South Africa*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.

Khapoya, Vincent. *The African Experience: an Introduction*. Prentice Hill, 1998.

Philips, John Edward, *Writing African History*. University of Rochester Press,,2006

Poh-Kwamena and al. *African History in Maps*. New York and London: Longman, 1982.

UNESCO General History of Africa, Volume 1: Methodology and African Pre-History, ed. J. Ki-Zerbo

UNESCO General History of Africa, Volume 2: Ancient Civilizations of Africa, ed. G. Mokhtar.

UNESCO General History of Africa, Volume 3: Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century, ed. I. Hrbek.

UNESCO General History of Africa, Volume 4: Africa from the twelfth to the sixteenth, century ed. D. T. Niane.

UNESCO General History of Africa, Volume 5: Africa from the sixteenth to the Eighteenth century, ed. B.A. Ogot.

Schedule of meetings and assignments

Introduction and overview

Week 1:

January: 14: Introduction
REC Introduction

The Land and the People

Week 2:

January 19 MLK day no classes:
January 21: Issues in African History
Bohannon & Curtin ER, 6-15; Sanders in Collins ER, 9-19; Ogot ER
McCall ER, 1-21
REC: The writing of African History + preparation of map quiz

Week: 3

January 26: No classes .
January 28: Social and political institutions
Map quiz in sections
Ehret; 59-100; Khapoya ER, 21-49; 56-61;
REC: The roots of social structures

Reconstructing the ancient African civilizations and cultures of the Nile Valley: history, race, and ideology.

Week 4:

February 2: Film: *Different but Equal*
February 4: Ancient Egypt
Diop xvii-170
REC: Who were the ancient Egyptians?

Week 5:

February 9: Kush (Ancient Nubia)
February 11 Axum (Ancient Ethiopia)

Ehret, 200- 208; 208-215; Diop, 230-235; Burstein ER, 49-64; 97-114
REC: trade, culture, and politics in the Nile Valley

Week 6

February 16: Film: *Black Athena*

February 18: African Traditional Religions

Bernal, ER and Lefkovitz, ER.; Bohannon and Curtin ER, 115-123

REC: *The Black Athena* Debate

Christianity and Islam in Africa

Week 7:

February 23: Christianity in Africa

Essay No 1 due

February 25: The coming of Islam

Oliver ER, 86-101

REC: Christianity and Islam in Africa

Islam, Trade, and State Building in West Africa

Week 8:

March 2: Film: *Caravans of Gold*

March 4: The trans-Saharan trade and state building

Lydon, ER, 49-106.

REC: Islam, State, and Society in Medieval West Africa

Week 9

March 9: The Sundiata Epic

March 11: The Swahili civilization

Niane, *the Epic of Sundiata*; Ehret, 248-251; 377-379

REC: The Sundiata Epic: myth or history

Kingdoms of the Forest: religion, ethnicity and state building in West and West central Africa

Week 10:

March 16: The Yoruba states: Ife, Oyo and Benin

March 18: Ashanti

Ehret, 314-318; Bohannon and Curtin, 54-57; Robinson and Smith ch 5, ER

REC: The Yoruba and Ashanti states

Week 11

March 23: mid-term exam

March 25: The Kingdom of Kongo

Vansina ER, 37-69; Thornton, ER.

REC: Kongo and Christianity
Topics for essay No 2 distributed

The Atlantic Slave Trade

Week 12

April 6: Film: *Dark Passages*
April 8: Origins and growth of the Atlantic Slave Trade
Lovejoy, 1-22; Bohannan and Curtin, 180-188; Worger et Al..ER
REC: Origins and expansion of the Atlantic Slave Trade

Week 13

April 13: The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade
Essay No II due
April 15: The Impact of the Atlantic Trade on Africa
Rodney, ER; Fyfe, ER
REC: Consequences of the Atlantic Slave Trade in Africa

Southern Africa: contested African histories in the era of white domination

Week 14

April 20: Great Zimbabwe
April 22: The *mfecane*: Shaka and the Zulu Kingdom
Robinson and Smith ch 1 ER, Cobbing and Eldridge, ER
REC: Shaka in the history of South Africa

Week 15

April 27: Review session

Final exam:

Essay papers

Your papers should be about 5 pages double-spaced. Make sure that you have a beginning, in which you pose the question and suggest how you will go about answering it; a middle, in which you organize your evidence around an argument; and an end, where you respond to the question on the basis of the evidence and the argument you have developed. Your essays should be well thought-out, clearly organized and carefully proofread and they should be based on information from all the assigned readings and lectures prior to the due date. You may agree or disagree with the authors or the lecturer, but your essays should demonstrate that you have read and thought carefully about the course materials in light of your own views.

Essay No. I

Answer one of these two questions.

1-What are Diop's main arguments for the "African Origins of civilization"? In your view, does he make a plausible case? Assess the validity of his arguments and those of his critics by paying particular attention to the nature of their sources and the contemporary relevance of the debate.

2-How, when, and why did great civilizations emerge in Africa? Explain with reference to the geographical, technological, cultural, and economic factors that underpinned the development of these civilizations. Give specific evidence from the examples of Egypt, Kush and Aksum.