

Tentative: subject to change

History 0300-401

HISTORY OF AFRICA TO 1850

Spring 2023 MW, 10:15-11:15

Instructor: Dr. Cheikh Babou, 306 G CH

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

Room:

TA: TBA

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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). Absences are excused for health emergency only. 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 35% 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 four pieces of work and on participation in recitations. There will be a map quiz, one take-home essay, a mid-term test and a final.

Map quiz ---in sections (5%)
Essay No. 1----- (15%)
Mid-term test----- (20%)
Final----- (25%)
Recitation and weekly assignment (35%)

Electronic resources: The syllabus for this class will be posted on Canvas as well as a **required electronic bulk pack of supplementary readings** (CV) and some additional resources related to specific course topics. Students are invited to use the digital drop box and the forum on Canvas to post the weekly assignment. Registered students with a Penn ID and an E-mail address are automatically listed on Canvas.

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. The Code of Academic Integrity can be found here:

<http://provost.upenn.edu/policies/pennbook/2013/02/13/code-of-academic-integrity> (Links to an external site.)

Recorded material

To ensure equitable access to this course, for the two first weeks of class, I plan to record the sessions and make the recordings available to all members of the class. Your use of these recordings is limited to this class, meaning you should not share these recordings with anyone outside the class or otherwise reproduce their content. This policy exists to ensure the confidentiality of our classroom discussion and thereby facilitate the free exchange of ideas. It also honors the creativity and labor that I invested in creating course content.

Required Readings

Books

The following books are available for purchase at the Penn Book Store on Walnut and 36 Street and at the Van Pelt library.

In addition, an electronic bulk pack of required supplementary readings is available on Canvas.

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. Accessible here:

<http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017.12/490757>

Getz, Trevor and Liz Clarke, *Abina and the Important Men: A Graphic History* (Oxford University Press, 2014., second edition)

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

Electronic Reserve on Canvas

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

Seymour Drescher, 'Emperors of the World: British Abolitionists and Imperialism' in Derek Peterson, ed. *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic* (Ohio U. Press, 2010)129-146

Michael Gomez, *African Dominion: a New History of Empire in Early and Medieval West Africa* (Princeton University Press, 2018) 92-143; 219-258,

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

Toby Green, *A Fistful of Shells* (March 2019), chapter 1, 31-67.

Boyd Hilton, '1807 and all that: why Britain Outlawed her Slave Trade' in Derek Peterson, ed. *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic* (Ohio U. press, 2010), 63-79.

Joseph Inikori, 'Slaves or Serfs? A Comparative Study of Slavery and Serfdom in Europe and Africa' in Isidore Okpewo, Carol Boyce Davies and Ali A. Mazrui eds, *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities* (Indiana U. Press, 2001), 49-76.

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

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

Patrick Manning, "Contours of Slavery and Social Change in Africa," *American Historical Review*, 88, 4 (1983): 835-857.

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

Ghislaine Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails* (Cambridge 2009), 49-106.

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

Benjamin C. Ray, *African Religions: Symbol, Ritual and Community* (Pentice Hall, NJ, 2000)

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

Carl Zimmer, The New York Times:
http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/22/science/ancient-dna-human-history.html?emc=eta1&_r=0

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 Hall, 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: 11 (Monday schedule): **Introduction and overview**
REC Introduction

The Land and the People

Week 2:

January 16: MLK Day: No classes
January 18: Issues in African History
Sanders in Collins CV, 9-19; Ogot CV
Zeleza CV (recommended).
The Journal of African History, Vol. 52, No. 2 (2011), pp. 135-155
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23017673>.

REC: The writing of African History + preparation for map quiz in sections

Week: 3 (*In person starts*)

January 23: Geography and Peopling of Africa
January 25: Film: *Different but Equal*
Map quiz in sections
Ehret; 59-100;
<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/22/science/ancient-dna-human-history.html?emc=eta1&r=0>
REC: Geography, ecology, and population movement

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

Week 4:

January 30: Bantu migration
February 1: Social and political institutions
Khapoya CV, 21-49; 56-61; Ehret 107-109 CV
REC: The roots of social structures

Week 5:

February 6: Ancient Egypt
February 8: Kush (Ancient Nubia)
Ehret, 200- 208; 208-215; Diop xvii-170; Diop, 230-235; Burstein CV, 49-64; 97-114.
REC: Who were the ancient Egyptians?

Week 6

February 13: Axum (Aksum) (Ancient Ethiopia): Guest lecture
February 15: Film: *Black Athena*
Bernal, ER; Lefkowitz, CV.; Bohannon and Curtin CV, 115-123
REC: *The Black Athena* Debate

Religion, Culture and Trade

Week 7:

February 20: African Traditional Religions: Guest lecture
Essay No 1 due
February 22: Christianity in Africa
Ray, 1-45, Oliver CV, 86-101;
REC: The meanings of religious beliefs

Week 8

February 27: The coming of Islam
March 1: Islam and state building
Gomez: 92-143; 219-258 CV
REC: Islam and the transformation of West Africa
Film: *Empires of Gold* (Gates and PBS series; ep. 3: DVD 030 195) or *Caravans of Gold* (YouTube) **screen at home**

Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10:

March 13: The internal African trade before 1800
March 15: The Swahili civilization
Ehret, 248-251; 377-379; Green CV, 31-68
REC: Pre-colonial Economic Exchanges

Culture, ethnicity, and state building in West and West central Africa

Week 11:

March 20: The Sundiata Epic
March 22: The Yoruba states: Ife, Oyo and Benin
Ehret, 314-318; Bohannon and Curtin, CV 54-57;
Niane, *the Epic of Sundiata*
REC: The Sundiata Epic: myth or history

Week 12

March 27: Ashanti

March 29: mid-term exam

Robinson and Smith ch 5, CV

REC: The rise and fall of Ashanti

The Atlantic Slave Trade

Week 13

April 3: The Kingdom of Kongo (Guest lecturer)

April 5: Film: *Shackles of Memory: The Atlantic Slave Trade*

Vansina CV, 37-69; Thornton, CV.

REC: The challenges of cultural encounters

Week 14

April 10: Origins and growth of the Atlantic Slave Trade

April 12: The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade

Lovejoy, CV 1-22; Inikori, 49-76, CV

Getz and al, *Abina*

REC: Dynamics of the Atlantic Slave Trade

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

Week 15

April 17: The Impact of the Atlantic Trade on Africa and Africans

April 19: Film the *Neo-African Americans*

Manning, CV; Rodney, CV

REC: Legacies of the Atlantic Slave Trade

Week 16

April 24: The *mfecane*: Shaka and the Zulu Kingdom

Robinson and Smith ch 1 CV, Cobbing and Eldridge, CV

REC: Shaka in the history of Africa and South Africa

Shaka Zulu, ep.1 **screen at home**.

April 26: Wrap up and evaluation

Final exam: TBA

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. 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 in approximately five pages.

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

