

*Tentative: subject to change*

History 0300-401

## **HISTORY OF AFRICA TO 1850**

Fall 2023 TR, 9:00-9:59

Instructor: Dr. Cheikh Babou, 306 G CH

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

Room: TBA

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 ----- (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, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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:

August 29: **Introduction and overview**

August 31: 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 2:**

Sept. 5: Geography and peopling of Africa

Sept. 7: 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 3:**

Sept. 12: Bantu migration

Sept. 14: Social and political institutions

Khapoya CV, 21-49; 56-61; Ehret 107-109 CV

REC: The roots of social structures

**Week 4:**

Sept. 19: Ancient Egypt

Sept. 21: 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 5:**

Sept. 26: Axum (Aksum) (Ancient Ethiopia): Guest lecture

Sept. 28: Film: *Black Athena*

Bernal, ER; Lefkowitz, CV.; Bohannon and Curtin CV, 115-123

REC: *The Black Athena* Debate

**Religion, Culture and Trade**

**Week 6:**

Oct. 3: African Traditional Religions: Guest lecture

**Essay No 1 due**

Oct. 5: Christianity in Africa

Ray, 1-45, Ngong CV

REC: The meanings of religious beliefs

Week 7

Oct. 10: The coming of Islam

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*

**Oct. 12: Fall break**

**Week 8: Fall Break**

**Week 9:**

Oct. 17: Islam and state building

Oct. 19: The internal African trade before 1800

Gomez: 92-143; 219-258 CV: Green CV, 31-68

REC: Pre-colonial Economic Exchanges

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

Week 10:

Oct. 24: The Swahili civilization

Oct. 26: The Sundiata Epic Niane, *the Epic of Sundiata*

REC: The Sundiata Epic: myth or history

Ehret, 248-251; 377-379

Week 11

Oct. 31: The Yoruba states: Ife, Oyo and Benin

Nov. 2: **mid-term exam**

Bohannon and Curtin, CV 54-57;

REC: Birth of Yoruba identity

Week 12

Nov.7 Ashanti

Nov.9: The Kingdom of Kongo

Robinson and Smith ch 5, CV.

Vansina CV, 37-69; Thornton, CV.

REC: The challenges of cultural encounters

## **The Atlantic Slave Trade**

### **Week 13**

Nov. 14 Film: *Shackles of Memory: The Atlantic Slave Trade*

Nov. 16 Origins and growth of the Atlantic Slave Trade

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

REC: Dynamics of the Atlantic Slave Trade

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

### **Week 14**

Nov. 21: The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade

**Nov. 23: Thanksgivings**

Getz and al, *Abina*

### **Week 15**

Nov. 28: The Impact of the Atlantic Trade on Africa and Africans

Nov. 30: Film the *Neo-African Americans*

Manning, CV; Rodney, CV

REC: Legacies of the Atlantic Slave Trade

### **Week 16**

Dec. 5: 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**.

Dec. 7: 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

