AAAS 115A
INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN HISTORY

“Funeral and a Crescent” (Ibrahim El-Salahi, 1963)

Instructor Information
Prof. Carina Ray
Mandel 207
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Office Hours: T/Th 2:00-3:15

Course Location and Meeting Time
T/Th @ 3:30-4:50PM
TBA

Course Description
This course will introduce you to major themes in Africa’s long, diverse, and complex history. Areas to be covered include early human origins; religion; trade networks; state building; slavery and the slave trade; colonialism; and liberation struggles. We will also address a different set of theoretical and methodological questions that focus on Africa as an idea and a field of study, paying specific attention to the major debates and issues that have shaped the discipline of African history. This course will equip you with a working knowledge of African history, but more importantly it will provide you with the skills necessary to continue learning and thinking about Africa after the semester has ended.

Course readings will be complemented by lectures and class discussions that bring together the major themes under consideration and that provide different ways of thinking about and interpreting the issues at hand.

Learning Goals
*To introduce you to Africa’s incredibly long, complex, and diverse history.
*To provide you with the analytical skills necessary to filter information so that you are able to construct your own critical framework for thinking about Africa and its history.
*To provide a solid foundation for future learning in African Studies.
Course Readings
You are expected to complete all readings and assignments on time as indicated on the course schedule. Bring all assigned readings with you to class and have them accessible before class begins.

Required Books
Trevor Getz and Liz Clarke, Abina and the Important Men (2nd Edition)
Trevor Getz, Cosmopolitan Africa
Kwesi Konadu, Transatlantic Africa
Dennis Laumann, Colonial Africa
Ousmane Sembène, God’s Bits of Wood
Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, The River Between

Course Reader
All other assigned readings will be contained in our course reader, which will be available for purchase from the AAAS department.

Grading Structure

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Map Quiz
A map quiz which requires you to identify each African country will take place on Tuesday, September 19th. You can prepare for the quiz by using these apps: http://online.seterra.net/en/ygp/3034 and http://www.ilike2learn.com/ilike2learn/africa.html. The map quiz counts for 15% of your course grade.

Africa in the News
Working in pairs, you will present a current event news story that links up with the course readings for the day of your presentation. This presentation counts for 15% of your course grade. Please see assignment sheet for further details.

Keyword Quizzes
Rather than test your ability to memorize particular facts and figures or regurgitate lectures and reading materials, I am interested in equipping you with ways of thinking about and knowing Africa’s history. To this end, over the course of the semester you will take 6 keyword quizzes, each of which will count for 5% of your total grade for a grand total of 30% of your course grade. Each quiz will feature a list of previously discussed keywords and you will select several of them to write about. The strength of your analytical engagement with the concepts and your ability to place them in historical context will determine your grade.

Final Exam
Comprising 30% of your course grade, the final in-class exam will require you to draw on the keywords we’ve covered throughout the semester to craft an interpretive essay about Africa’s history.

Class Participation
Engaged learning is a key to success in this course. Your thoughtful contributions and questions about the readings and lectures are both welcomed and expected. 10% of your course grade is based on your class participation.

Course Expectations
Weekly Time Commitment
This is a Four-Credit Course (with 2.5 hours of class-time per week). Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings and preparation for quizzes, presentations, and exams, etc.).
Attendance
Attendance is absolutely mandatory. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. The presence of every student is valued and unexcused absences risk disrupting the cohesion of the class. Repeated absences are disrespectful to me, as your professor, as well as to your fellow classmates. If you plan to miss a class, you must have a valid excuse (i.e. sickness or injury, family emergency) and inform me ahead of time. More than two unexcused absences will result in an automatic 1/3 reduction of your final grade.

Classroom Conduct
Your classroom conduct will be a factor in your participation grade. You are expected to arrive to class on time, be attentive (no falling asleep), and focused (no cellphone use). Please use the restroom BEFORE you come to class.

You are expected to maintain the highest standards of collegiality with your classmates. Discussions of the course materials and content must be conducted with awareness that we all bring differing levels of knowledge, experience and perspective to the subject matter. Acts of disrespect will not be tolerated. Repeated disruptive behavior will result in your failure of the course.

Academic Integrity
You are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity as stated in Section 4 of the Rights and Responsibilities handbook. http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srcs/rr/

Plagiarism and evidence of cheating on exams will not be tolerated and will result in an automatic failing grade.
You may refer to the International Center for Academic Integrity for additional information: http://www.academicintegrity.org/icai/home.php

Disability Policy
If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations, you should contact Beth Rodgers-Kay in Academic Services (x63470 or brodgers@brandeis.edu.)

Letters of accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

Computer Policy
Computers and other electronic devices, including iPads and other tablets, are not allowed in class. Please ensure that you bring you books and/or course reader to class with you.

Key Schedule Dates
September 21: No Class—Rosh Hashanah
October 3: Brandeis Thursday
October 5: No Class—Sukkot
October 11: Brandeis Thursday
October 12: No Class—Shmini Atzeret
November 6: Special Monday Class
November 7: No Class
November 9: No Class—Individual Film Screening
November 16: No Class—Individual Film Screening
November 23: No Class—Thanksgiving Holiday
COURSE SCHEDULE

**Week #1**
August 31: Africa in the Glocal Imagination
*Preliminary Map Quiz

**Week #2**
September 5: Inventing Africa
*Reading: Binyavanga Wainaina, “How to Write About Africa” (Course Reader, hereafter CR)
*Reading: Gilbert and Reynolds, “Notions of Africa” (CR)

**Week #3**
September 7: African Studies: A Field in Crisis?

**Week #4**
September 12: African History: Methodologies, Contributions, and Consequences
*Reading: Steven Feierman, “African Histories and the Dissolution of World History” (CR)

**Week #5**
September 14: The Trouble with Tribe and other Misconceptions
*Reading: J. Gettleman, “Disputed Vote Plunges Kenya Into Bloodshed” (CR)
*Reading: APIC, “Talking about ‘Tribe’: Moving from Stereotypes to Analysis” (CR)

**Week #6**
September 19: Early Human Origins: Out of Africa? **MAP QUIZ**
*John Relethford, “Modern Human Origins: The Out of Africa Debate” (CR)

**Week #7**
September 26: Claiming Egypt/Contesting Africa
*Reading: Basil Davidson, “The Ancient World and Africa: Whose Roots?” (CR)

September 28: Mansa Musa and Sunjata: State Building in Medieval Africa
*Reading: Alice Willard, “Gold, Islam and Camels: The Transformative Effects of Trade and Ideology” (CR)
*Reading: Seydou Camara, “The Epic of Sunjata: Structure: Preservation, and Transmission” (CR)
*Reading: Steven Salm, “Written and Oral Literature” (CR)

**Week #8**
October 3: ‘Indigenous’ African Religions | ‘World’ Religions
*Reading: Robert Baum, “Indigenous African Religions” (CR)
*Reading: TBA on Yoruba Trans-Atlantic Cosmologies (CR)

**Week #9**
October 10: Globalizing Africa: The Swahili
*Reading: Thomas Gensheimer, “Globalization and the Medieval Swahili City” (CR)

October 11: Africa and Slavery: On the Precipice of the Transatlantic Slave Trade
*Reading: Kwasi Konadu, Transatlantic Africa: 1440-1888 (pp. xvii-55)

**Week #10**
October 17: African Understandings of the Transatlantic Slave Trade
*Reading: Kwasi Konadu, Transatlantic Africa: 1440-1888 (pp. 56-139)

October 19: African Responses to a Rapidly Changing World
*Reading: Trevor Getz, Cosmopolitan Africa: 1700-1875, (pp. xii-66)
*Reading: Wendy Belcher, “Same Sex Intimacies in the Early African Text Gadla Walatta Petros (1672): Queer Reading an Ethiopian Woman Saint”
**Week #9**
October 24: *Industries and Intellects on the Cusp of Colonialism*
*Reading: Trevor Getz, *Cosmopolitan Africa: 1700-1875* (pp. 67-101)

October 26: *Colonialism and its False Promises*
*Reading: Dennis Laumann, *Colonial Africa: 1884-1994* (pp. xi-21)
*Reading: Trevor Getz and Liz Clarke, *Abina and the Important Men* (pp. xv-xvi; xix; 1-84)

**Week #10**
October 31: *Claiming Freedom/Contesting Slavery*
*Reading: Trevor Getz and Liz Clarke, *Abina and the Important Men* (pp. 85-184)

November 2: *Colonialism: Imperatives, Methods, Responses*
*Reading: Dennis Laumann, *Colonial Africa* (pp. 22-61)
*Reading: Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, *The River Between* (Ch. 1-13)

**Week #11**
November 6: *Colonial Encounters **SPECIAL MONDAY CLASS***
*Reading: Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, *The River Between* (Ch. 13-26)

November 9: *No Class: Individual Film Screening and Response*
*Reading: Dennis Laumann, *Colonial Africa: 1884-1994* (Ch. 3)

**Week #12**
November 14: *Resisting and Responding to Colonialism*

November 16: *No Class: Individual Film Screening and Response*
*Reading: Ousmane Sembène, *God’s Bits of Wood* (pp. 1-127)

**Week #13**
November 21: *Labor and Decolonization*
*Reading: Ousmane Sembène, *God’s Bits of Wood* (pp. 128-249)

**Week #14**
November 28: *Liberation Struggles*
*Reading: Dennis Laumann, *Colonial Africa: 1884-1994* (Ch. 4)
*Reading: Amilcar Cabral, *National Liberation and Culture* (CR)

November 30: *On Neo-Colonialism, Apartheid and the Frontline States*
*Reading: Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (Excerpts, CR)
*Reading: Douglas Anglin, “Southern Africa Under Siege: Options for the Frontline States” (CR)

**Week #15**
December 5: *Burkina Faso Case Study*
*Reading: Thomas Sankara, *Thomas Sankara Speaks* (Selected speeches, CR)

December 7: *Final Exam Preparation*