Introduction to African History – Fall Semester, 2015, Brandeis University

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Friday, 10am to 11 am, in Mandel 207
Lecture: Tuesday and Friday, 11:00am–12:20pm in Olin-Sang 212

Introduction

Hello, and welcome to the fall semester and your Introduction to African History! This semester, we will cover a wealth of topics concerning the history of the African continent, from antiquity to the present era. The course materials will emphasize the African experience as the peoples built and transformed politically, economically, and culturally across these eras. After completing the course, students will be able connect the themes covered in class to a greater understanding of global history and societies, which they can carry to all their areas of study.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Identify major African kingdoms and empires in history
- Describe the development of early African civilizations in the areas of trade, culture, and political organization
- Connect African trade networks to global networks of trade
- Describe the evolving relationships of African states upon the increasing presence of European trade
- Describe the persistence and resistance of African societies during the colonial era
- Describe emerging independence movements in 20th century Africa, and their blueprints for new African nations
- Identify the contemporary political states of Africa
- Demonstrate understanding of post-colonial African societies, and challenges they face
- Understand the impact of race and racism on previous histories of Africa and conceptualization of African peoples

Beyond class, students should use an additional 7 hours per week reading and studying course materials, for approximately 9.5 hours of work per week in total.

Materials

- Text: Readings will be available in PDF format on your LATTE online course supplement; I will be preparing a printed version of readings to hand out in class
- Other: One notebook or binder with loose-leaf paper, to be used as a journal; the journal will be turned in twice during the course, so I ask that you either have a notebook with pages that can be removed or use a binder with loose-leaf paper.
Class Rules

- We will be covering a number of potentially sensitive or controversial topics, and in some cases we will be discussing them with one another. It is important to respect one another’s opinion, and avoid racist, homophobic, and sexist language in this setting. Anyone disrespectful of others will be asked to leave the class.
- Please remember to silence phones during class. If you must receive a call, sit next to the door so that you can receive it outside the classroom.
- Your course texts and journal will be incredibly important for your success in this course. Bring both to every class, without exception.

Class Structure

- Classes will frequently follow a similar structure, with time devoted to discussion, lecture, and journal entry:
  - Announcements, Current Event(s)
  - Small Group and Class Discussion
  - Lecture
  - Journal Entry

Graded Assignments

- **Map Quiz** (10 points)
  - Students have two map quizzes during the semester: one on the major African kingdoms and empires (**September 18th**), and the second on the contemporary political states in Africa (**November 3rd**). Both maps are provided in LATTE; the contemporary political map is left blank for you to fill out in preparation. Students are expected to learn the locations of all of the major African kingdoms and empires (22 in total). The second quiz will test their knowledge of 25 of the contemporary African political states, selected by the instructor.

- **Journal** (10 points)
  - One class period a week, students will be given approximately 10 minutes to answer a journal question given by the instructor and, if they choose, the opportunity to write any other reactions they have had to the materials, film, and discussion. **Students will be expected to write at least five sentences per entry.** Journals will be submitted at the mid-term exam (**October 20th**), returned, and a second collection of journal entries will be submitted in the second-to-last week of classes (**December 1st**) and graded and returned before the final exam. The student’s score will be composed of 5 points for the first half of the semester’s entries, and 5 points for the second half. Journal entries will have a close relationship with attendance and participation grades, so each entry must have a date and that day’s question included at the top of the page. Please be sure to keep
the handwriting neat; if I cannot read it, I cannot give a student credit for it. Extra credit may be given at the discretion of the instructor.

- **Mid-Term & Final Exams** (30 points each)
  - Each exam will be in short essay format, and students will choose to answer 3 of 5 possible short essay questions. Questions will be derived from lecture material and journal and response questions from the preceding half-semester – the final exam will not be cumulative. The exams will be done in blue books provided by the instructor, and each response must cover at least 1 ½ pages in the blue book to receive full credit. The mid-term is scheduled for **October 20th**, and the final will be between **December 11th and December 18th** (final exam dates are not announced by the university till October).

- **Attendance & Participation** (10 points each)
  - Attendance is required, and will be taken daily. Excused absences will only be granted in times of ill health or death in the family, and there must be documentation for both (a doctor’s note for ill health, and an obituary or notice of death in the paper for death in the family). Students are allowed two unexcused absences – with only two class sessions per week, there are no unimportant sessions. If there is a major health issue that will involve absences beyond a week, please discuss this with me as soon as possible (rather than upon return). Students are responsible for all work missed in their absence.
  - Participation is graded based on two activities: contributing in discussion, and responding to topic questions on LATTE. For each class that there is an assigned reading or listening activity, there will be a short response question on LATTE focused on the materials. Students are expected to answer the question to the best of their ability before the class for which the reading or listening was assigned. Students will not be graded on whether they are “correct,” but whether I feel the student has made an honest attempt to answer the question (using examples from the reading helps!). I recommend recording your answer in your notes, as we will be discussing them in class.

**Late Work & Cheating**

Late journals will lose half-credit (or 5 points); after one week of being late, all credit will be lost. Cheating in on an exam will lead to a zero grade on the student’s exam.

**Students with Disabilities**

Any students with a documented disability should contact me immediately so we can arrange your accommodations.
Class Schedule

First listed is the subject for the day, followed by the reading and/or listening exercise (if a reading is due), followed by any other things that might be done that day (such as watching a film, or taking a quiz). Readings are due on the date listed – be prepared to discuss and engage the readings.

Friday, 8/28
- Introduction to Course & Syllabus

Tuesday, 9/1
- African Continent Geography & the Dawn of Humanity

Friday, 9/4
- Early Human Civilizations: Origins

Tuesday, 9/8
- Early Human Civilizations: African Religions & Spirituality
- *Film (short): The Fractals at the Heart of African Designs* (http://www.ted.com/talks/ron_eglash_on_african_fractals)

Friday, 9/11
- Early Human Civilizations: Development & Technology
- Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, p. 48-68
- *Journal: First Journal entry*

Tuesday, 9/15
- Rosh Hashanah, no class

Friday, 9/18
- Early Human Civilizations: Trade Networks
- *Quiz: Map of African Kingdoms & Empires*

Tuesday, 9/22
- Emergence of Atlantic Slave Trade

Friday, 9/25
- Atlantic Slave Trade Intensifies
- Quobna Ottobah Cugoano18th, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery*, p. 12-17
- Olaudah Equiano, “The Early Travels of Olaudah Equiano,” in *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade*, p. 84-92
- Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, p. 75-81
Tuesday, 9/29
• Brandeis Monday Scheduling, no class

Friday, 10/2
• African Empires & Foreign Incursions
• Otumfuo, Nana Agyeman Prempeh I, ‘*The History of Ashanti Kings and the whole country itself*’ and *Other Writings*, p. 105-110.

Tuesday, 10/6
• Imperialism & African Resistance

Friday, 10/9
• Colonial Africa
• Ham Mukasa, “The Story of Ham Mukasa, As Told by Himself,” p. 201-208
• Samuel Attoh-Ahum, “Colony or Protectorate?”, p. 311-326

Tuesday, 10/13
• Near Independence

Friday, 10/16
• Review for Mid-Term

Tuesday, 10/20
• *Exam: Mid-Term Exam*
• *Journal: Turn in Mid-Semester Journal*

Friday, 10/23
• Pan-Africanism

Tuesday, 10/27
• Revolutions
• Frantz Fanon, “Algeria Unveiled,” in *The New Left Reader*, p. 172-185
• Patrice Lumumba, “Speech at the Ceremony of the Proclamation of Congo’s Independence,” 1960

Friday, 10/30
• Independence
• Film: *Lumumba*
Tuesday, 11/3
- Building New Nations
- *Quiz: Map of Contemporary African States*

Friday, 11/6
- The Cold War & “Neo-colonialism”
  - Amilcar Cabral, excerpts from “The Weapon of Theory,” Speech before the Tricontinental Conference of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, 1966

Tuesday, 11/10
- Post-colonial Identities: Literature from Ayi Kwei Armah, Ama Ata Aidoo, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Bessie Head

Friday, 11/13
- Post-colonial Identities: African migrants
  - Film: *Black Girl*

Tuesday, 11/17
- Post-colonial Identities: Music and messages
  - Albums: Fela Kuti’s *Zombie*, Miriam Makeba’s *Miriam Makeba*, & Various Artists in *Ghana Electric Highlife: Sessions from the Bokoor Studios*

Friday, 11/20
- Contemporary Challenges: Militarism
  - John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, p. 128-137
  - Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p. 49-53

Tuesday, 11/24
- Contemporary Challenges: Global Economic Relationships
  - Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*, excerpts from p. 99-131

Friday, 11/27
- Thanksgiving, no class

Tuesday, 12/1
- Contemporary Challenges: Racism and Racist Legacy
  - Anne C. Bailey, *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame*, excerpts from p. 57-93
- *Journal: Turn in Final Journal*
Friday, 12/4
- Contemporary Challenges: Health Care

Tuesday, 12/8
- Review for final exam
- Journal: Returned with grade

December 11th – 18th
- *Final Exam*

Grading Scale - The total of all the graded assignments above is 100 points:
A   = 94-100
A-  = 90-93
B+  = 87-89
B   = 84-86
B-  = 80-83
C+  = 77-79
C   = 74-76
C-  = 70-73
D+  = 67-69
D   = 64-66
D-  = 60-63
F   = 59 and below