

MODERN AFRICA FROM THE SAHARA TO THE ZAMBEZI

History 262, Fall 2008

T/Th 12:45-2:05, ARH 315

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Fall office hours: Tues & Thurs, 2:15-4:05; Wed, 9:00-11:00

At the start of the New Year in 2008, the disputed presidential elections in Kenya between Kibaki and Odinga sparked violent reactions across the country and national and international charges of voter fraud. For the media and the international community, these events reinforced a longstanding image of a continent which seems forever poised on the verge of both progress and primitivism. Indeed, popular discourse often attributes the obstacles facing Africans today to innate and irreversible patterns of “tribal” rivalry, industrial and agricultural underdevelopment, and ideological backwardness. Yet many historians and journalists have also highlighted how Africans’ current social, economic, and political difficulties can also be traced to their more recent colonial past. This class seeks to move beyond common perceptions and representations by investigating more carefully the complex trajectory of historical experience in West, Central, and East Africa.

It would be impossible to cover the history of a subcontinent in any comprehensive fashion. We also need to take seriously the limitations of treating “Africa” as a uniform historical, geographical, or cultural unit. Therefore, in this course we will integrate synthetic overviews with case studies in order to explore the historical dynamics of trade; forced labor, the spread of Islam and Christianity; colonialism and resistance; class, gender, and ethnic identities; agricultural and technological development; national independence movements; post-colonial conflict; and globalization. In discussing these processes of transformation, we will consider how human agency and creative adaptability have addressed structural change on a local, regional, and global level.

Course Requirements:

Contribution to class discussions: 25%

Class time provides our main opportunity to grapple with the complexities of African history in dialogue with one another. Therefore, I really do evaluate class participation: if you do not participate regularly, you will receive a lower grade for the course. For each day of discussion, you may earn three potential points: one for being there, two for voicing an opinion, and three for engaging meaningfully in the discussion in a way that draws upon the reading. (An excused absence counts for one point.) Please contact me if a personal or health issue is interfering with your class attendance, and have the relevant office (Health Services or Student Affairs) do the same.

Each week, a list of prompts will be distributed ahead of time; you should use these to direct your reading and prepare for discussion. On Oct 30, Nov 18, and Dec 2, you are also required to write a response to the questions listed on the syllabus below; please bring to class a typed, paragraph-long response and be ready to turn it in. These paragraphs count toward your participation grade and cannot be turned in late except in cases of excused absence.

Two short papers (3-5 pages each), due Sept 23 & Nov 21: 30%

These essays will require you to engage critically with a specific historical issue or problem by analyzing a set of primary documents and secondary scholarship. I will post the topics on Pioneer Web

about two weeks before each deadline. You need not be confined to these prompts, however, so just talk to me ahead of time if you would like to explore an alternative question. All work must be typed and employ proper citations in Chicago Manual of Style format.

You have the option of revising one of these two papers (your choice) based on my comments. If you choose to revise the first paper, it must be turned in by Oct 17; if you decide to revise the second, it must be turned in by Dec 12. Your new grade will then replace the old.

Two take-home exams (6-7 pages each), due Oct 9 & Dec 17: 40%

The exams will be in essay format and, like the papers, will require you to draw upon both primary and secondary source material to construct an argument. However, the topics for these essays will be more synthetic and will encompass a larger chronological span and thematic/geographical scope. I will distribute the essay questions one week before each deadline. The final exam will mainly cover material since the midterm. All work must be typed and employ proper citations in Chicago Manual of Style format.

Map quizzes (Sept 4 & 11): 5%

Policy on late assignments:

Each of you may take a two-day (48-hour) extension on one paper or take-home exam of your choice during the semester—no questions asked. For all other assignments, late submissions will receive a deduction of one letter grade per day. (Note, however, that absolutely NO final exams will be accepted after Friday, December 19, at 5:00. The college requires that ALL coursework be submitted by the end of exam week unless you are taking an incomplete in the class.) Paragraph responses are intended to stimulate discussion and may not be turned in late, except in cases of excused absence.

Disabilities:

If you have specific physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Associate Dean and Director of Academic Advising, Joyce Stern, whose office is located in the Student Affairs office at the Rosenfield Center (x3702).

Course Texts:

The following required texts are available both at the college bookstore and on reserve in Burling Library:

- Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940* (Cambridge)
- Ousmane Sembene, *God's Bits of Wood* (Heinemann)
- Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (Houghton Mifflin)
- Donald R. Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa* (M.E. Sharpe, 2nd ed.)

Shorter readings will be available online, on Blackboard, on E-reserve, or as handouts (as noted below).

Several assignments include films, and screening times will be announced well in advance.

Schedule of Meetings and Assignments:

Week 1: Putting “African” Identities in Context

Thurs, Aug 29: Introduction

- Coverage of Kenyan elections by the *New York Times*, BBC, and *Daily Nation*, Dec 31, 2007 – Blackboard
- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, Ch. 1

Week 2: Religion and State-building in the Nineteenth Century

Tues, Sept 2: Christian revolutions

- Toyin Falola, “Mission and Colonial Documents,” in John Edward Philips, ed., *Writing African History* (Rochester, 2005), 266-83 – Blackboard
- Documents 1-10 from D. A. Low, ed., *The Mind of Buganda: Documents in the Modern History of an African Kingdom* (University of California, 1971) – Blackboard
- Selections from “The Life of Ham Mukasa,” in J. D. Mullins, *The Wonderful Story of Uganda* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1904) – Blackboard

Thurs Sept 4: Islamic revolutions

- Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa*, pp. 125-48
- Map quiz: West Africa

Week 3: European Contact and Conquest

Tues, Sept 9: Proto-colonialism?

- Documents 45 & 48 from Robert O. Collins, ed., *Documents from the African Past* (Markus Wiener, 2001) – Blackboard
- Documents 11-14 from Low, ed., *Mind of Buganda* – Blackboard
- Wright, pp. 148-56
- Film: *Le Malentendu Colonial* – screening TBA

Thurs, Sept 11: The “Scramble for Africa”

- Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, chapters 1-6
- Map quiz: Central and East Africa

Weeks 4&5: Colonial Rule

Tues, Sept 16: Leopold’s Congo

Hochschild, ch. 7-15

Thurs, Sept 18: British West Africa

Wright, pp. 157-200

Tues, Sept 23: “Native Policy” between the wars

Paper due in class

Thurs, Sept 25: The invention of tribes

- John Iliffe, “The Creation of Tribes,” from *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, 1979), 318-41 – E-reserve
- James C. Scott, “Normal Exploitation, Normal Resistance,” from *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale, 1985), 28-47 – E-reserve

Weeks 6, 7, & 8

Colonial Society: Negotiation and Resistance

Tues, Sept 30: Colonial bodies

- Luise White, “Domestic Labor in a Colonial City: Prostitution in Nairobi, 1900-1952,” in Sharon B. Sticher & Jane L. Parpart, eds., *Patriarchy and Class: African Women in the Home and the Workforce* (Boulder: Westview, 1988), 139-60 – E-reserve
- Tabitha Kanogo, “Becoming Kavirondo: Clitoridectomy, Ethnicity, & Womanhood,” from *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900-1950* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 73-103 – E-reserve

Thurs, Oct 2: The “Women’s War”

- Margery Perham, “The Aba Market Women’s Riot in Nigeria, 1929,” in Wilfred Carey and Martin Kilson, eds., *The Africa Reader, vol. 1* (New York, 1970) – Blackboard
- Judith van Allen, “‘Sitting on a Man’: Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1972), 165-181 – JSTOR link: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0008-3968%281972%296%3A2%3C165%3A%22OAMCA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-3>

Mid-semester exam distributed in class

Tues, Oct 7: Workers, peasants, and intellectuals

Cooper, ch. 2

Thurs, Oct 9:

No class

Mid-semester exam due by 2:00 p.m.

Tues, Oct 14: Urbanization, class, and gender

Ousmane Sembene, *God’s Bits of Wood*, pp. 1-108 (up to “Dakar: Mame Sofi”)

Thurs, Oct 16: Labor militancy

Sembene, pp. 109-248 (from “Dakar: Mame Sofi” to the end)

FALL BREAK

Weeks 9 & 10: Liberation Struggles and Decolonization

Tues, Oct 28: The postwar moment

- Cooper, ch. 3
- Wright, pp. 200-6

Thurs, Oct 30: Conceptualizing resistance, identity, and culture

- Selections by Cesaire, Senghor, Diop, Fanon, Nkrumah, UGTAN – handout
- (Review Cooper, chapter 2)

Paragraph response: Which set of ideologies offered a more effective means of challenging colonialism and imagining an independent Africa: nationalism, or supra-nationalist identities like pan-Africanism and trade unionism?

Tues, Nov 4: Mau Mau

Wambui Waiyaki Otieno, *Mau Mau's Daughter: A Life History* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998), pp. 11-101 – Blackboard

Thurs, Nov 6: The road(s) to independence

Cooper, ch. 4

Weeks 11 & 12: Challenges of Independent Nationhood

Tues, Nov 11: The wrong dream?

- Michael Crowder, “Whose dream was it anyway? Twenty-five years of African independence,” *African Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 342 (Jan 1987) – JSTOR link: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0001-9909%28198701%2986%3A342%3C7%3AWDWIAT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-K>
- Cooper, Interlude (pp. 85-90)
- Julius Nyerere, “The African and Democracy” (selections) – Blackboard

Thurs, Nov 13: Postcolonial expectations and disappointments

Film: *Mandabi* (Ousmane Sembene) – screening TBA

Tues, Nov 18: Development

- Cooper, ch. 5
- Wright, pp. 207-33

Paragraph response: Has African “development” been successful?

Thurs, Nov 20: The gatekeeper state

Cooper, ch. 7

Friday, Nov 21:

Paper due by 5:00

Weeks 13 & 14: Identity, Ethnicity, and the State

Tues, Nov 25: Civil war and displacement

Robert Collins, “Civil Wars in the Sudan,” *History Compass*, vol. 5 (Sept, 2007) – Blackboard

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Tues, Dec 2: Historicizing ethnicity

- David Newbury, "Understanding Genocide," *African Studies Review*, vol. 41, no. 1 (Apr. 1998) – JSTOR link: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0002-0206%28199804%2941%3A1%3C73%3AUG%3E2.0.CO%3B2-N>
- Robert Melson, "Modern Genocide in Rwanda," in Robert Gellately & Ben Kiernan, eds., *The Specter of Genocide* (Cambridge, 2003) – E-reserve
- Robert Doyle, "Kenya Stokes Tribalism Debate," BBC, Jan 4, 2008 – Blackboard
- (Review Cooper, ch. 1)

Paragraph response: Was Rwanda's genocide a unique event, or should it be treated as part of a larger regional and global story of ethnic conflict in the 20th century?

Thurs, Dec 4: The politics of (non)intervention

Film: *Ghosts of Rwanda* (Frontline) – screening TBA

Week 15: Reckoning with the Past, Looking to the Future**Tues, Dec 9: History and memory in Central Africa**

- Donatien Dibwe dia Mwembu, "History and Memory," in Philips, ed., *Writing African History*, 439-64 – E-reserve
- Hochschild, epilogue
- Film: *Sometimes in April* – screening TBA

Thurs, Dec 11: Globalization

- Wright, ch. 8
- Cooper, ch. 8

Final exam distributed in class

Exam Week**Wed, Dec 17**

Final exam due by 5:00 p.m.