

## MODERN AFRICA FROM THE SAHARA TO THE ZAMBEZI

History 262-01 & -02, Fall 2009

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Fall office hours: Mon 1:15-4:05; Wed & Fri 9:00-10:50; & by appointment

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 endemic patterns of “tribal” rivalry, industrial and agricultural underdevelopment, and ideological backwardness. Other journalists and intellectuals understand Africans’ current social, economic, and political difficulties as products of a relatively recent experience of conquest and foreign rule, but tend to treat the post-colonial experience as a static and irreversible legacy of failed experiments of modernization. This class seeks to move beyond these assumptions and representations, by investigating some of the complex, dynamic, and diverse trajectories of West, Central, and East Africans’ historical experience.

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; colonial power and contestation; class, gender, and ethnic identities; agricultural and technological development; national independence movements; post-colonial politics; 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: 30%

Although class days will also include lecture and group work, the vast majority of our time together will be devoted to collective discussion. History happens in dialogue; therefore, I really do evaluate class participation. If you do not participate regularly and substantively, you will receive a significantly lower grade for the course. For each day of discussion, you may earn four potential points: one for being there, two for voicing your opinions, and three or four for engaging meaningfully with the texts under consideration in a way that helps advance the discussion. Note that this mode of evaluation assigns more worth to the quality than the quantity of your participation each day; offering one thoughtful, helpful, and well-substantiated comment will earn you more points than dominating the discussion with unfounded or tangential observations. Absences will be excused for personal issues, health issues, or extracurricular commitments only when accompanied by documentation from the appropriate office. An excused absence counts for one point. Late arrivals, early departures, and leaving the room during class time are disruptive and will be duly noted when calculating your participation grade.

To prepare for discussion, you should engage in two levels of inquiry with the reading. The first is to understand what the texts are saying. To that end, you should come to class prepared to address the following questions about each assigned text. (Put your answers in writing and keep a running record – it will make your exam preparations and paper writing A LOT more efficient.)

I. For primary sources (texts produced during the period under investigation, i.e. pieces of the historical record):

- 1) What was the writer's (or filmmaker's, or artist's) intent in creating that text?
- 2) Who or what is the subject of the piece? Whom does the author claim to represent or speak for?
- 3) Who was the intended audience? How does the author attempt to connect with that audience?
- 4) What kind of story is the author trying to tell, and how does he/she structure that narrative? What argument does the author seek to advance? Which passage best exemplifies the underlying point of the piece?
- 5) What rationale or evidence does the author employ to make his/her case? Which elements of the story are factual, and which are subject to interpretation?
- 6) What was the larger historical context in which the author was working?
- 7) What kind of background or bias shaped the author's message?

*(Note: if any of above questions cannot be answered by the text itself, or if any textual references are unclear, do a little outside digging!)*

II. For secondary sources (historians' analyses of the past):

- 1) What question is the writer (or filmmaker) posing?
- 2) How does the author answer that question? Which sentence(s) best state the writer's overall argument?
- 3) What other interpretation(s) does the author appear to be arguing against?
- 4) How does the author develop the argument throughout the piece? What are the sub-arguments that bolster the main argument? What kind of story is the author trying to tell?
- 5) How does the author use evidence to prove the argument? (Note: you need to read footnotes in order to answer that question!)

You may be called upon to provide answers to any/all questions that apply on a given day, and to support your answers with specific points in the text.

The second level of inquiry in preparing for discussion involves extrapolating larger sets of implications from the readings and grappling with their significance. To that end, you are also responsible for crafting and addressing larger interpretive questions about the reading. Ask yourself how the texts for the day relate to one another and to the larger themes and other readings you have encountered in the course – do they reinforce or complicate a particular angle of interpretation? What overlaps or discrepancies emerge when you hold up these texts next to each other? What kind of story do they tell about continuity and change over time?

On the days marked “discussion questions” on the syllabus, groups of two or three of you will put together discussion prompts and email them to the class by 6:00 p.m. the night before class. Please plan to meet with me beforehand to discuss your questions. These questions will be evaluated on their success in generating discussion and will be factored into your overall participation grade. Each of you will do two sets of questions in the course of the semester. What makes for a successful discussion question? 1) It should have multiple credible answers 2) It should provoke debate 3) It should stay within the common frame of reference – i.e., it should be answerable through the course material. On days when students are not responsible for discussion questions, I will provide the prompts.

I do understand that speaking up in class is difficult for many people. As in honing any critical skill, contribution to group discussions requires strategy, practice, and feedback. The above requirements are designed to help you become more adept and more comfortable with posing and answering questions and responding to others' ideas. I will provide mid-semester participation grades and comments to give you a sense of how your participation is developing.

Two five-page papers, due Sept 25 & Nov 20: 30%

These essays will require you to engage critically with a specific historical issue or problem. I will post the topics and instructions on P-web about two weeks before each deadline. General paper expectations and guidelines are also posted on P-web. All work must be typed and double-spaced, using 12-pt font and 1-inch margins. Citations must be in footnotes or endnotes using Chicago or Turabian

Style. You have the option of revising one of these two papers (your choice) based on my comments. Your new grade will then replace the old. If you choose to revise the first paper, it must be submitted before the deadline for the second paper.

Mid-semester exam (Oct 12): 10%

This exam will consist of two sections: 1) IDs, and 2) a short documentary analysis. More specifics about the format will be circulated one week before the exam.

Final exam (May 15 & 16): 30%

This exam will consist of two parts: 1) in-class IDs and documentary analysis (same format as the midterm) which will cover material from the second half of the course, and 2) a take-home essay (about 7 pages) which will be cumulative. This will be a synthetic essay, requiring you to draw upon primary and secondary sources we have used throughout the course and to develop a specific argument out of a general prompt. I will distribute the essay questions on the penultimate day of class (i.e., one week before the exam), and it is due at 4:30 on Wednesday, December 16. Your essay must be typed and double-spaced, using standard font size and margins and employing proper citations in Chicago/Turabian style.

Policy on late assignments:

Each of you may take a 48-hour extension on one writing assignment of your choice during the semester (i.e. one of the papers or the final take-home essay). If choosing this option, you must notify me of your intent to take the extension no later than 24 hours before the deadline. (Please remember that if you take an extension, you are still responsible for preparing the requisite reading or other class assignments that may coincide with your revised paper deadline.) For all other assignments, late submissions will receive a deduction of one full letter grade per day (e.g. an A- becomes a B-). Exceptions may be made for serious health or personal issues, but only if accompanied by documentation from the appropriate office (Health Services or Student Affairs).

Note: absolutely NO written work will be accepted after Friday, May 15, 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.

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:

- John Parker & Richard Rathbone, *African History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford)
- Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940* (Cambridge)
- Donald R. Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa* (M.E. Sharpe, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)
- Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (Houghton Mifflin)
- Ousmane Sembene, *God's Bits of Wood* (Heinemann)

Shorter readings will be available online, on P-web, on E-reserve, or as handouts (as noted below). Several assignments include films, and screening times will be announced in advance.

***Schedule of Meetings and Assignments:***

**Weeks 1 & 2: Contextualizing “Africa”**

**Fri, Aug 28: Introduction**

- Kenyan election coverage by the *New York Times*, BBC, and *Daily Nation*, Dec 31, 2007 (P-web)

**Mon, Aug 31: Narratives, landscapes, and peoples**

- Parker & Rathbone, ch. 1&2
- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, Ch. 1

**Wed, Sept 2: Sources and methods**

- Parker & Rathbone, ch. 3
- Toyin Falola, “Mission and Colonial Documents,” in John Edward Philips, ed., *Writing African History* (Rochester, 2005), 266-83 – P-web
- Paul du Chaillu, “Trade in Gabon,” in Robert O. Collins, ed., *Documents from the African Past* (Markus Wiener, 2001), 242-7 – P-web

**Fri, Sept 4: Africa and the world**

- Parker & Rathbone, ch. 4
- Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa*, ch. 4

**Week 3: Religion, Trade, and Power in the Nineteenth Century**

**Mon, Sept 7: Commerce and society on the Swahili Coast**

- Steven Feierman, “A Century of Ironies in East Africa,” from P. Curtin, S. Feierman, L. Thompson, & J. Vansina, *African History: From Earliest Times to Independence* (Longman, 1995), 352-75 – P-web
- Introduction to D. A. Low, ed., *The Mind of Buganda: Documents in the Modern History of an African Kingdom* (University of California, 1971) – handout

**Wed, Sept 9: The case of Buganda**

- Low, *Mind of Buganda*, documents # 1-14

**Fri, Sept 11: The case of Niumi**

- Wright, ch. 5

Discussion questions

**Weeks 4&5: European Conquest and Colonial Rule**

**Mon, Sept 14: Contextualizing the colonial period**

- Parker & Rathbone, ch. 5

**Wed, Sept 16: The “Scramble for Africa”**

- Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, ch. 1-6
- Bruce Fetter, ed., *Colonial Rule in Africa: Readings from Primary Sources* (University of Wisconsin, 1979), documents # 2-4, 27-29 – handout

- Charter of the Royal Niger Company, in Barbara Harlow & Mia Carter, eds., *Archives of Empire*, vol. II (Duke, 2003), 372-9 – handout

Discussion questions

**Fri, Sept 18: Leopold's Congo**

- Hochschild, ch. 7-15

Discussion questions

**Mon, Sept 21: Colonial economies & labor: West Africa**

- Wright, pp. 157-200
- Fetter docs # 39-41

Discussion questions

**Wed, Sept 23: Colonial economies & labor: Central & East Africa**

- Fetter docs # 32-33, 43, 45-46
- Low docs # 20-21, 32, 39

Discussion questions

**Fri, Sept 25: Colonial education**

- Fetter docs # 47-49
- Low docs # 30, 33, 38

*Paper due in Mears by 4:30 p.m.*

**Weeks 6&7: Negotiating and Contesting Colonial Rule**

**Mon, Sept 28: Invented traditions**

- John Iliffe, "The Creation of Tribes," from *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, 1979), 318-41 – E-reserve
- Thomas Spear, "Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa," *Journal of African History* 44:1 (2003), 3-27 — <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4100380>

**Wed, Sept 30: The colonial state between the wars**

- Fetter docs # 68, 34-37
- Low docs # 15-18, 22-29

Discussion questions

**Fri, 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) – P-web
- 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—  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/484197>

Discussion questions

**Mon, Oct 5: Colonizing bodies?**

- Tabitha Kanogo, "Becoming Kavirondo: Clitoridectomy, Ethnicity, & Womanhood," from *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900-1950* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 73-103 – E-reserve

Discussion questions

**Wed, Oct 7: Women in the colonial marketplace**

- 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

Discussion questions

**Fri, Oct 9: Workers, peasants, and intellectuals**

- Cooper, ch. 2

**Week 8: Colonialism in Crisis?**

**Mon, Oct 12:**

*Mid-semester exam*

**Wed, Oct 14: The postwar moment**

- Cooper, ch. 3
- Wright, pp. 200-6
- Fetter docs, #67

**Fri, Oct 16: Contextualizing decolonization**

- Parker & Rathbone, ch. 6

*FALL BREAK*

**Weeks 9 & 10: Liberation Struggles**

**Mon, Oct 26: Urbanization, class, and gender in West Africa**

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

**Wed, Oct 28: Labor militancy and early nationalism**

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

Discussion questions

**Fri, Oct 30: Displacement and dissent in East Africa**

- Low docs #36, 41-45
- Fetter docs #74
- Wambui Waiyaki Otieno, *Mau Mau's Daughter: A Life History* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998), ch. 1 – P-web

Discussion questions

**Mon, Nov 2: Mau Mau**

- Wambui, *Mau Mau's Daughter*, ch. 2-6
- Fetter docs, #75

Discussion questions

**Wed, Nov 4: Conceptualizing resistance and solidarity**

- Selections by Senghor & Fanon – handout

Discussion questions

**Fri, Nov 6: Which road(s) to independence?**

- Cooper, ch. 4
- Selections by Cesaire, Nkrumah, & UGTAN – handout

Discussion questions

**Weeks 11 & 12: Challenges of Independent Nationhood**

**Mon, Nov 9**

No class (I will be at a conference)

**Wed, 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) – <http://www.jstor.org/stable/722863>
- Cooper, Interlude (pp. 85-90)
- Julius Nyerere, “The African and Democracy” (excerpt) – P-web

Discussion questions

**Fri, Nov 13: Postcolonial expectations and disappointments**

- Discuss film: *Mandabi* (Ousmane Sembene, 1968)

**Mon, Nov 16: Development**

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

Discussion questions

**Wed, Nov 18: The gatekeeper state**

- Cooper, ch. 7

**Fri, Nov 20: Rewriting culture**

- Ngugi wa Thiong’o, “Decolonizing the mind” – P-web

*Paper due in Mears by 4:30 p.m.*

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

**Mon, Nov 23: Civil Wars in Sudan**

- Francis M. Deng, “Sudan: An African Dilemma,” in Ricardo Rene Laremont, ed., *The Causes of War and the Consequences of Peacekeeping in Africa* (Heinemann, 2002) – E-reserve

Discussion questions

**Wed: Nov 24: Civil Wars in Sudan**

- Selections from John Garang, *The Call for Democracy in Sudan* (Kegan Paul International, 1992) – P-web

THANKSGIVING

**Mon, Nov 30: The politics of “tradition”**

- Wambui, *Mau Mau’s Daughter*, remainder

**Wed, Dec 2: Historicizing ethnicity**

- David Newbury, “Understanding Genocide,” *African Studies Review*, vol. 41, no. 1 (Apr. 1998) – <http://www.jstor.org/stable/524682>
- Robert Melson, “Modern Genocide in Rwanda,” in Robert Gellately & Ben Kiernan, eds., *The Specter of Genocide* (Cambridge, 2003) – E-reserve
- (Review Cooper, ch. 1)

Discussion questions

**Fri, Dec 4: The politics of (non)intervention**

- Discuss film: *Ghosts of Rwanda* (Frontline)

**Week 15: Reckoning with the Past, Looking to the Future**

**Mon, Dec 7: History and accountability**

- Parker & Rathbone, ch. 7
- Hochschild, epilogue
- Mukoma Wa Ngugi, “Britain should pay for its colonialism,” *LA Times*, November 3, 2007 – P-web

**Wed, Dec 9: Narrative and memory**

- Discuss film: *Sometimes in April*

Discussion questions

*Take-home (essay) portion of final exam distributed in class*

**Fri, Dec 11: Globalization and international peacekeeping**

- Wright, ch. 8
- Cooper, ch. 8
- Mahmood Mamdani, “The Politics of Naming: Genocide, Civil War, Insurgency,” *London Review of Books* 29:5 (8 March 2007) – P-web

**Exam Week**

**Tues, Dec 15, 2:00 p.m. In-class portion of final exam for section -02 (8:00 MWF)**

**Wed, Dec 16, 9:00 a.m. In-class portion of final exam for section -01 (11:00 MWF)**

**Wed, Dec 16, 4:30 p.m. Take-home (essay) portion of final exam due for both sections**