

African History to c. 1850
The Johns Hopkins University, AS 100.121
Fall 2010, Final Syllabus

Professor

Pier M. Larson
Office: 330G Gilman Hall
Office Hours: W @ 1-3
Contact: 410-516-5582; larson@jhu.edu
<http://plarson.info/>

Class Meeting Times

Lectures: M & W @ 10, Gilman Hall 17.
Discussion Section 1: W @ 11, Shaffer Hall, 300.
Discussion Section 2: W @ 3, Gilman Hall 377.

Teaching Assistant/Discussion Leader

Khalid Kurji
Office: 317 Gilman Hall (his office is in the corner of the computer room)
Office Hours: Thurs 10-12
Contact: kkurji1@jhu.edu

Scope and Purpose

This is the first semester of a two-semester introductory survey of African history. We will examine a vast place over a long span of time: all of Africa from human evolution to about the mid-nineteenth century. Because Africa is the cradle of humankind, it is unfathomably diverse in race, language, culture, and history, to name some of the most important. There is greater human genetic and linguistic variation in Africa, for example, than on any other continent. The same is true for cultural variation. In addition to such diversity among Africa's "indigenous" populations, the continent is also a modern place which, like other continents, has over the years received large numbers of immigrants (from east, west, and south Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, Europe, the Americas), many of whom have intermarried with the indigenous population and consider themselves to be Africans. Just as there are Asian, African, and European Americans, Africa has its Asian, European, and American Africans in addition to its indigenous peoples. In short, Africa has a long and complex human history, one that does not boil down to the history of any one racial, ethnic, or social group.

Studying (and teaching) such a vast and diverse continent can be challenging. Because no introductory course can claim to be fully comprehensive, this one will explore several themes in the history of Africa and its many peoples to about the mid-nineteenth century that the professor finds important and noteworthy. The readings and lectures will consider broad regions of the continent, including north, west, east, central, and south Africa. In US politics and popular culture, it is not Africa's diversity which is emphasized, but its unity. Africa is often considered as the homeland of black people, black people being considered as a racial and cultural unity without much internal

variation. These ideas are understandable but misinformed, and they are tied to the history of the enslavement of African people in the Americas and elsewhere and to a Euro-American legacy of racism. While challenging stereotypes about Africa, this course will emphasize both diversity and inventiveness in African history.

The goals of this course include both knowledge and enjoyment. You should come away from this class with a new appreciation for Africa and a general idea of its history to about 1850. Acquiring knowledge about a place few North Americans know well will require a good bit of effort and concentration on your part — “getting” the details of life along the ancient Middle Niger or in Great Zimbabwe or at the Cape of Good Hope can be as painstaking as mastering an organic chemistry textbook, lecture, and lab. But it is fun challenge! We will be reading some particularly interesting things, including a colorful oral history of the founding of the Mali empire (*Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*) and a fictionalized history of the rise and fall of Shaka, founder of the Zulu kingdom (*Chaka*). These enjoyable readings in African literature will help you to appreciate some of the culture and logic of African life as well as to experience the continent’s complex history.

Requirements for superior achievement in this course (a grade of A) include regular attendance at the lectures and your respective discussion sections with no absences left unexplained (*before* class), always completing the reading for each week before your assigned discussion section, turning in your informal papers on time each week, regular and vociferous participation in course discussions, and thoughtful and well-written exam papers turned in on time. *Anyone missing a class (either a lecture or a discussion section) should notify his or her discussion section leader by telephone or email BEFORE the said class meeting, not afterward.*

Requirements

1. Attendance, preparation, asking questions, and participation in class discussions, or, in other words, being responsible and engaged. This is what I expect from every student. Absences—especially unexplained ones—will adversely affect your grade in the final calculation because you will miss important lecture information that is essential to writing the take-home midterms and finals.

2. Informal weekly reaction/thought papers. These are informal (grammar, spelling, organization and the like are not expected to be perfect) but the papers must be typed, not handwritten. One page, single spaced, is entirely adequate. You are *not* encouraged to write more. The paper should record your informal reaction to the week’s assigned reading, a sort of journal of your thoughts. Strive to answer questions such as: What was the argument of the assigned readings? What did you find interesting about them? New? Provocative? Questionable? Each paper should also raise two or more questions or issues for the class to deliberate, and you should raise these verbally during your discussion section. The questions should be thought-provoking ones for your fellow students to consider, not simple informational questions for the instructor to answer. The purpose of the weekly papers is for the instructors to get a sense of how you are thinking critically about the readings and to help you prepare for your oral participation in each

discussion section. Weekly papers are due each week in discussion section. Ten points will be subtracted from your final grade for each reaction paper not turned in *on time* or excused *before class*. You must turn in *your own* reaction paper and it is a violation of academic honesty to have another person turn it in for you or for you to turn in someone else's paper. If you notify your discussion leader of an upcoming absence from class before the class takes place, you *may be able to* make arrangements to get the informal paper to him or her by some other conveyance.

3. Two map quizzes: one of African geographical features and the other of modern African country names. These will be administered at the beginning of discussion section on September 22 and October 6, respectively.

4. A take-home mid-term examination. This will consist of two 5-page essay answers to two general questions relating to the required readings, professor's lectures, and course discussions through Week 7 (a total of 10 pages). Exam questions will be available at the end of lecture on Wednesday, October 13 and are due in class—at the *beginning* of class—on Monday, October 18. *The conception and writing of these answers must be entirely your own; working with another person on the exam in any way will be interpreted as academic dishonesty.*

5. A take-home final examination. Like the mid-term, this will consist of two 5-page essay answers to two general questions relating to the required readings, professor's lectures, and course discussions from Week 9 (inclusive) to the end of the semester (a total of 10 pages). Exam questions will be distributed as hard copy at the end of class on Wednesday, December 1 and essays are due December 14 by 5 pm. *The conception and writing of these answers must be entirely your own; working with another person on the exam in any way will be interpreted as academic dishonesty.*

Grading

A portion of your grade will depend on attendance and participation. Weekly Papers do not add to your grade but detract from it if you fail to turn them in on time. Unexplained absences (not informing the professor *before* lecture or section leader *before* discussion section) will definitely count against you if your grade is otherwise on the fence between two grades. By experience, I know that absences from class will lower the quality of your midterm and final, in turn lowering your course grade. If you need to make adjustments in the way you write your weekly papers, you will hear from us. If you do not hear from the instructors about your weekly papers, please assume that they are of satisfactory quality. Grades will be calculated on the following point system; individuals near a border line at the end of the semester will be bumped to the higher grade if they have been clear participants in discussions and prompt in their attendance and with their informal papers.

Participation	100 points
Map Quiz I	100 points
Map Quiz II	100 points
Midterm	350 points
Final	350 points
Weekly papers not turned in	-10 points each

Required Texts (First four available at the Johns Hopkins Bookstore)

John Parker and Richard Rathbone, *African History: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). ISBN 978-0192802484

Ian Shaw, *Ancient Egypt: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). ISBN 978-0192854193

Graham Connah, *African Civilizations: An Archaeological Perspective* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). ISBN 978-0521596909

D. T. Niane, ed. *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*. Revised ed. (London: Longman, 2006). ISBN: 978-1405849425

Thomas Mofolo, *Chaka*. Translated by Daniel P. Kunene. (London: Heinemann, 1981). ISBN 978-0435902292. [Purchase online (www.bookdepository.com) recommended, free shipping takes only about one week) or use the electronic version available through the MSEL online catalog: search book author, title, or “African Writers Series” under title]

MSEL Electronic Reserve Password: LAR121

Course Schedule

Week 1: (Aug 30 & Sep 1) The Continent & Human Evolution

- Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, 1-47.
- Sarah A. Tishkoff, et. al., “The Genetic Structure and History of Africans and African Americans,” *Science Express*, 30 April 2009. [MSEL electronic reserve; read the article as best you can—and carefully—and examine the maps and graphs]
- Graham Connah, *Forgotten Africa: An Introduction to its Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2004), 1-19. [Blackboard]
- Pier M. Larson, “Myths about Africa, Africans, and African History” [MSEL electronic reserve].

Week 2: (Sep 8) Early Sources, Language, & Out of Africa

- Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, 48-69.
- Connah, *Forgotten Africa*, 20-38. [Blackboard]
- Christopher Ehret, "Language and History," in Bernd Heine and Derek Nurse, eds., *African Languages: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 272-297. [MSEL electronic reserve]
- Patrick Manning, "*Homo Sapiens* Populates the Earth: A Provisional Synthesis, Privileging Linguistic Evidence," *Journal of World History* 17,2 (2006), 115-158. [MSEL electronic reserve]

Week 3: (Sep 13 & 15) Early Economies & Food Production

- Connah, *Forgotten Africa*, 39-56 [Blackboard].
- Fiona Marshall and Elisabeth Hildebrand. "Cattle before Crops: The Beginnings of Food Production in Africa," *Journal of World Prehistory* 16,2 (2002), 99-143.
- Lawrence Barham and Peter Mitchell, *The First Africans: African Archaeology from the Earliest Toolmakers to Most Recent Foragers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 400-442.

Week 4: (Sep 20 & 22) Ancient Egypt

- Shaw, *Ancient Egypt*, 1-136 (read the last chapter if you have time and interest).

Week 5: (Sep 27 & 29) Nubia

- Connah, *African Civilizations*, 18-65 (examine the chronology on p. 16).
- Derek A. Welsby, *The Kingdom of Kush: The Napatan and Meroitic Empires* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), 11-56.

Week 6: (Oct 4 & 6) Early Urbanization in West Africa: The Middle Niger River

- Reread Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, 16-24.
- Connah, *African Civilizations*, 108-180 (examine the chronology on p. 16).

Week 7: (Oct 12 & 13) The Classical West African Kingdoms

- D. T. Niane, *Sundiata*, entire book.

Week 8: (Oct 18 & 20) East Africa, Madagascar, and the Indian Ocean

- Connah, *African Civilizations*, 181-222 (examine the chronology on p. 16).
- Solofo Randrianja and Stephen Ellis, *Madagascar: A Short History* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), 17-75. [MSEL electronic reserve]

Week 9: (Oct 25 & 27) Aksum-Ethiopia & Great Zimbabwe

- Connah, *African Civilizations*, 66-107 & 223-262 (examine the chronology on p. 16).
- Peter Garlake, *Life at Great Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1982). [MSEL print reserve; please make your own photocopy of this pamphlet from the print copy on reserve.]

Week 10: (Nov. 1 & 3) European Expansion and the Slave Trade

- Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, 70-90.
- Philip D. Morgan, “Africa and the Atlantic, C. 1450 to C. 1820,” in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, edited by Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 223-248. [MSEL electronic reserve]
- Pier M. Larson, “African Diasporas and the Atlantic,” in *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500-2000*, edited by Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Eric R. Seeman, (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2007), pp. 129-147. [MSEL electronic reserve]
- Enslavement Narratives: Joseph Wright & Petro Chilekwa. [MSEL electronic reserve]

Week 11: (Nov 8 & 10) East Africa & Governance in the Kingdom of Buganda

- Connah, *African Civilizations*, 263-290 (examine the chronology on p. 16).
- Holly Elisabeth Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003), 25-91. [MSEL electronic reserve]

Week 12: (Nov 15 & 17) North Africa: Morocco, Algeria & Egypt

- Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa* —revised 2nd ed.— (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 61-76, 156-168, 273-287. [MSEL electronic reserve]
- “North Africa in the Shadow of Europe (c. 1780-1880),” in Philip Curtin, Steven Feierman, Leonard Thompson, and Jan Vansina, eds. *African History: From Earliest Times to Independence* 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1995), 297-324.
- Elena Bosch, et. al. “Genetic Structure of North-West Africa Revealed by STR Analysis,” *European Journal of Human Genetics* 8 (2000), 360-366.

Week 13: (Nov 22) South Africa & Early European Colonization

- Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa*. 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 31-109. [MSEL electronic reserve]
- Mofolo, Chaka, 1-34. [available for purchase (bookdepository.com) and electronically through MSEL online catalog]

Week 14: (Nov 29 & Dec 1) The Zulu Kingdom

- Mofolo, *Chaka*, 34-168. [available for purchase (bookdepository.com) and electronically through MSEL online catalog]