

AS 100.121
History of Africa to 1800
Syllabus, Fall 2000

Time: Tuesday, 2-5
Place: Bloomberg 172
Professor: Pier M. Larson
Office: 404 Gilman
Office Hours: M 11-12 and by appointment
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Scope and Purpose

AS 100.121 is the first in a two-semester survey of African history offered by the History Department. The course considers the early period of African history, to about 1800. Because there is so much to learn about Africa and Africans in this period, we cannot strive for exhaustive coverage. Rather, through the course readings, lectures, and discussion we will explore several important themes in the history of the continent and its peoples.

The course will consist of lectures, discussions, and some audiovisual, the intermixture of which will vary according to the reading schedule and other considerations. Requirements for superior achievement in the course (i.e. an A) include regular attendance with no unexplained absences, always completing the reading for each week before our Tuesday meeting, regular and vociferous participation in course discussions, and thoughtful and well-written papers. Anyone missing a course should notify the professor by telephone or email BEFORE the said course, not afterward, please.

Required Coursework

1. Attendance, preparation, asking questions during lectures, and participation in class discussions, or, in other words, being responsible and engaged. I expect responsibility and engagement from every single class participant. Absences can adversely affect your grade.

2. Weekly reaction/thought papers. These should be at least one page in length, single spaced, but you may write more if you wish. The paper should record your reaction to the week's assigned reading, a sort of journal of your thoughts. Each paper should also raise two or more questions or issues for the class to deliberate. The purpose of the papers is for the professor and the assistant to get a sense of how you are thinking critically about the readings and to help you

prepare for your participation in the class discussions. Weekly papers are due each week in class.

3. Two map quizzes: one of African geographical features and the other of contemporary African country names. These will be administered in class on September 26 and October 3 (see the schedule).
4. A 7-10 page book review. This must be typed, double-spaced, 12-point font. Take approximately half of your review to summarize the argument of the book and the evidence on which it is based. In the second half of your review, you should critically assess and analyze the contents of the book and discuss their significance. What contribution do you feel the book makes to African history, how does it do so, and by what methodology? What are the author's outstanding contributions? What are the shortfalls of the book? In order to write complete and competent reviews, you may need to conduct extra research/reading. You are strongly advised to meet with the professor and/or the assistant to discuss your book review well before the midterm; those who wait until the last couple of weeks before the due date rarely do well on this assignment. Book reviews are due in class on November 21.
5. A take-home mid-term examination. This will consist of essay answers to general questions relating to the required readings, professor's lectures, and course discussions through Meeting 7. Questions will be made available on the web (at the professor's web site, see above url, then click "syllabi") Friday, October 27 and are due in the professor's history department mailbox on Friday, November 3.
6. A take-home final examination. This will consist of essay answers to general questions relating to the required readings, professor's lectures, and course discussions for Meetings 8-13. Questions distributed in class on December 5; due in the professor's history mail box by 5pm December 12.

READINGS

Most readings are available in MSEL Print or Electronic Reserves.

Course books available in the Homewood Bookstore:

Joyce Tyldesley, Daughters of Isis: Women of Ancient Egypt (New York: Penguin Books, 1995).

Timothy Kendall, Kerma and the Kingdom of Kush, 2500-1500 B.C.: The Archaeological Discovery of an Ancient Nubian Empire (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1997).

D.T. Niane, Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali (London: Longman, 1995).

Derek Nurse and Thomas Spear, The Swahili: Reconstructing the History and Language of an African Society, 800-1500 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

Reading Materials available by other means:

Roderick McIntosh, The Peoples of the Middle Niger: The Island of Gold (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), pp. 131-286.

Peter Garlake, Life at Great Zimbabwe (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1983).

Robert Harms, River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: The Central Zaire Basin in the Era of the Slave and Ivory Trade, 1500-1891 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

Richard Elphick, Kraal and Castle: Khoikoi and Founding of White South Africa (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

Meeting Schedule**Meeting 1: September 12**

Lecture, Human Origins

No Reading

Meeting 2: September 19

Lecture, Language, Colonization, Agriculture

Reading:

A. Pier M. Larson, "Ten Myths about Africa"

[<http://jhunix.hcf.jhu.edu/~plarson/myths.html>]

B. Paul Bohannon and Philip Curtin, Africa & Africans 4th edition (Prospect Heights, Ill: Waveland Press, 1995), 6-45. [MSEL Print Reserve, DT 20 .B6 1995]

C. Kevin Shillington, History of Africa, rev. edition (New York: St. Martins Press, 1995), 1-35. [MSEL Electronic Reserve]

D. James L. Newman, "Chapter 4: The Agricultural Transformation," in James L. Newman, The Peopling of Africa: A Geographic Interpretation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 40-59. [MSEL Electronic Reserve]

Meeting 3: September 26

Lecture: The Lower Nile: Ancient Egypt

Reading, Tyldesley, Daughters of Isis, 1-145 [Bookstore, MSEL Print Reserve, PT 1489 .T9 1994]

Geography Map Quiz

Meeting 4: October 3

Lecture: The Lower Nile: Egyptian Culture, Art

Reading: Tyldesley, Daughters of Isis, 146-275 [Bookstore; MSEL Print Reserve, PT 1489 .T9 1994]

African Countries Map Quiz

Meeting 5: October 10

Lecture: The Upper Nile: Nubia & Aksum

Reading: Timothy Kendall, Kerma and the Kingdom of Kush, entire book [Bookstore only]

Meeting 6: October 17

Lecture: Urbanism along the Middle Niger River

Reading: Roderick McIntosh, The Peoples of the Middle Niger, 131-286 [MSEL Print Reserve, GN652.M25 M35 1998; for individual availability ask professor, assistant].

Meeting 7: October 24

Lecture: Trade, Islam & West African Kingdoms

Reading, Niane, Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali, entire book [Bookstore, MSEL Print Reserve, DT532.2 .N513 1965].

Meeting 8: October 31

Lecture: East Africa, Swahili History

Reading: Nurse & Spear, The Swahili [Bookstore; MSEL Print Reserve, DT365.45.S93 N871 1985]

Meeting 9: November 7

Lecture: East Africa, Great Zimbabwe

Reading: Garlake, Life at Great Zimbabwe [MSEL Electronic or Print Reserve].

Meeting 10: November 14

Lecture: European Expansion & The Slave Trade

Reading: Harms, River of Wealth, River of Sorrow, 1-108 [MSEL Print Reserve, HF3914 .H371 1981; for individual availability ask professor, assistant]

Meeting 11: November 21

Lecture: Central Africa

Reading: Harms, River of Wealth, River of Sorrow, 111-236 [MSEL Print Reserve, HF3914 .H371 1981; for individual availability ask professor, assistant]
Book Reviews Due

Meeting 12: November 28

Lecture: South Africa, Early Settlement/Peoples

Reading: Elphick, Kraal and Castle, xv-116 [MSEL Print Reserve, D6 .Y2 v.116; for individual availability ask professor, assistant]

Meeting 13: December 5

Lecture: South Africa, European Expansion

Reading: Elphick, Kraal and Castle, 117-239 [MSEL Print Reserve; D6 .Y2 v.116; for individual availability ask professor, assistant]