

**AS100.122**  
**Modern African History, c. 1850 to Present**  
**The Johns Hopkins University**  
**Spring 2014**

**Professor**

Pier M. Larson

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Office Hours: By appointment (please email)

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**Class Meeting Times**

Lectures: M & W @ 10, Maryland Hall 110, Professor Larson

Discussion Sections: F @ 9, 10, & 11: please see ISIS for meeting places.

**Teaching Assistants**

- Misha Mintz-Roth. Office Hours: Th 8:30-10:30 am, Mudd Hall Commons, [mmintzroth@gmail.com](mailto:mmintzroth@gmail.com), 917-974-5005.
- Mimi Stewart. Office Hours: Th 10-12 am Gilman Atrium, [sstewa35@jhu.edu](mailto:sstewa35@jhu.edu), 917-587-2503.

**Scope and Purpose**

This is the second semester of a two-semester introductory survey of African history. Students who have not taken the first semester of the introductory sequence are welcome in this (second) semester; there are no prerequisites. The class examines modern African history between about 1850 and the present. A fundamental premise of this course is the diversity of Africa and Africans. Because modern humans have been living in Africa for longer than anywhere else (at least 200,000 years), Africans are remarkably diverse in race, language, culture, and history. There is greater “indigenous” genetic and linguistic variation in Africa, for example, than on any other continent. The same is true of cultural variation. In addition to the diversity among its “indigenous” populations, Africa is also a modern place. As have other continents, Africa has over the years received large numbers of immigrants from East, West, and South Asia, from the Arabian Peninsula, from Europe, and from the Americas. Many—though not all—of Africa’s more recent immigrants have intermarried with “indigenous” people and come to consider themselves Africans, hyphenated-Africans, or alternately African and non-African, depending on the context. Just as there are Asian, African, and European Americans, then, Africa has its Asian, European, and American Africans. 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. To be African designates belonging to or identifying with a particular continent, not a racial identity nor a specific phenotype.

African diversity and the various forms of African modernity lend a richness and fascinating quality to African history. They also pose many practical and difficult challenges to modern Africans – as they do elsewhere. Over its 200,000 years of existence, the homo sapiens species has tended to sort itself out into cultural, linguistic, political, and identity groups that internally stratify and compete with each other over resources and for sociopolitical dominance. As a continent of remarkable human diversity, Africa today and in the past struggles with how to manage its many human differences. Managing these differences has been made even more difficult by the relationship of Africa and Africans to other parts of the world over the last several centuries.

Studying (and teaching) such a vast and diverse continent can be challenging. Because by definition no introductory course can be comprehensive, this one will explore several themes in the history of Africa from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. The readings and lectures consider various regions of the continent, including North, West, East, Central, and South Africa.

The goals of this course include both knowledge and enjoyment. You should come away from the class with a new appreciation for Africa and a general idea of its modern history. Acquiring knowledge about a place few Americans know will require a good bit of effort and concentration—“getting” the details of slavery in Africa, types of European colonialism, nationalist intellectual programs, and postcolonial experiments and conflicts straight can be as painstaking as understanding an organic chemistry textbook or mastering physics lab. But African history is often a pleasing challenge! Together with the textbook, we will be reading some fascinating historical novels throughout the course. These enjoyable readings in Africa’s literature which will bring you into some of the nitty gritty of African experiences and interactions. They will help you to appreciate some of the culture and logic of African life and conflict as well as to more viscerally (in addition to intellectually) 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 your informal papers in 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 essential to

writing the take-home midterms and finals, and you will not turn in your informal papers.

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. Also 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 engaging with and 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 February 7 (geography) and February 14 (countries).

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, March 12 and are due in class—at the *beginning* of class—on Monday, March 24. You must also upload your essay to Turnitin.com. *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 8 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, April 30 and essays are due, as hard copies, Monday, May 12 by noon in the professor's department mail box (301 Gilman Hall). You may complete and turn your exam in at any time before the due date. You must also upload your essay to Turnitin.com. *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 entire 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 Textbook**

- Richard J. Reid: *A History of Modern Africa: 1800 to the Present*. **Second edition**. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). ISBN: 978-0470658987

### **Required African Fiction**

(You may read any version of these novels, including electronic)

- Abdulrazak Gurnah *Paradise* ISBN: 978-1565841635
- Dalene Matthee *Fiela's Child* ISBN: 978-0226510835
- Chinua Achebe *Things Fall Apart* ISBN: 978-0385474542
- Buchi Emecheta *The Joys of Motherhood* ISBN: 978-0807616239
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o *Weep Not, Child* ISBN: 978-0143106692
- Hisham Matar *In the Country of Men* ISBN: 978-0385340434

## Course Schedule

Week One (Jan. 27, 29 & 31): Introduction, Diversity

- Textbook: pages 1-21.
- Sarah A. Tishkoff, et. al., "The Genetic Structure and History of Africans and African Americans," *Science Express*, 30 April 2009. [MSEL electronic reserve; difficult reading, but work hard at assimilating the major conclusions.]

Week Two (Feb. 3, 5 & 7): Atlantic Africa

- Textbook: chapters 2 & 6.
- Gurnah, *Paradise*: first half of the novel, including all 6 parts of the chapter titled "The Journey to the Interior."

Week Three (Feb. 10, 12 & 14): Indian Ocean Africa

- Textbook: chapters 3 & 7.
- Gurnah, *Paradise*: second half of the novel, from the chapter titled "The Gates of Flame" through the end of the book.

Week Four (Feb. 17, 19 & 21): South Africa, the Mineral Revolution, and Union

- Textbook: chapter 4.
- Matthee, *Fiela's Child*: chapters 1-15.

Week Five (Feb. 24, 26 & 28): Important North African Developments

- Textbook: chapter 5.
- Matthee, *Fiela's Child*: chapters 16-32.

Week Six (Mar. 3, 5 & 7): The New European Imperialism and African Conquest

- Textbook: chapters 8-9.
- Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*: chapters 1-11.

Week Seven (Mar. 10, 12 & 14): Early Colonialism to WWI: The *mise en valeur*

- Textbook: chapter 10.
- Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*: chapters 12-25.

Week Eight (Mar. 24, 26 & 28): Interwar Economic and Social Transformations

- Textbook: chapters 11-12.
- Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*: chapters 1-9.

Week Nine (Mar. 31, Apr. 2 & 4): WWII, Developmentalism & the Great Political Opening

- Textbook: chapters 13-14.
- Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*: chapters 10-18.

Week Ten (Apr. 7, 9 & 11): Political and Social Visions for the Future: Nationalisms

- Textbook: chapter 15.
- Ngugi, *Weep Not, Child*: chapters 1-7.
- Frantz Fanon, chapter titled “The Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness,” in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, of which there are many editions. [MSEL Electronic reserve: from Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* Translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2005), pp. 97-144.]

Week Eleven (Apr. 14, 16 & 18): Types of Independence & the Great Political Closing

- Textbook: chapters 16-17.
- Ngugi, *Weep Not, Child*: chapters 8-18.

Week Twelve (Apr. 21, 23 & 25): Political Experiments, Global Challenges & Deep Conflicts

- Textbook: chapter 18.
- Matar, *In the Country of Men*: chapters 1-9.

Week Thirteen (Apr. 28, 30 & May 2): The Achievements and Challenges of the Present

- Textbook: chapter 19.
- Matar, *In the Country of Men*: chapters 13-25.