

AS 100.122
Fall 1998 Course Syllabus
Modern African History

Professor: Pier M. Larson

Meeting Place: ?

Meeting Time: 10:30-12:00 ThF

Professor's Office: 404 Gilman

Professor's Office Hours: Friday, 2-4.

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Description and Objectives

Modern African History is the second course of a two-semester sequence survey of African History (AS 100.121/122). The period covered in this course is roughly 1800 to the present, the modern period of African history. Enrollment in AS 100.121 prior to this course is desirable but not necessary. If you have not taken AS 100.121, you are encouraged to do so in the future. Although these courses are not offered every semester, at least one is normally offered each year.

One purpose of this course is to provide students with a basic understanding of the cultures and peoples of Africa and of their most important historical experiences during the modern era. The principal readings are historical studies of particular times and places. Two novels by African authors help to provide the flavor of individual experience and the texture of everyday life. In addition to the primary reading, we will be exploring a variety of historical documents. Historical documents are examples of the pieces of evidence historians employ to reconstruct past experiences. The documents will provide you with an opportunity to test your skills as an historian, to make judgments on your own, and to fashion your own arguments from the raw materials of the historian's craft.

Another goal of the course is to encourage critical reading, thinking, writing, and speaking skills. Whatever your intended profession, these skills will be important for you. The key word here is "critical," for neither the assigned readings nor the lectures are perfect in their own right nor the final word on a particular area of African history. They are meant to encourage you to consider Africa and African experiences from a variety of perspectives. At the end of this course you should be able to think in a more critical fashion about news reports and popular ideas about Africa commonly circulating in North America.

Course requirements include short weekly informal papers reacting to the assigned reading; two examinations, two map quizzes, and attendance and participation in weekly discussions. The reaction papers will provide the professor feedback about what you think of the reading and serve as the basis for your participation in class discussions. The map quizzes are designed to enable you to locate Africa's primary geographical features and member countries. The two examinations are designed to encourage you to think creatively about history as an unfolding set of relationships among people. In the examinations, both of which are take-home essay exams, you will be expected to integrate material from the lectures, the readings, and the documents. Attendance and participation in class discussions are very basic requirements.

The course will consist of a mixture of lectures and discussions. Usually, one day each week will be devoted to a lecture and the other day to a discussion. This pattern will vary, however, and we may conduct both lectures and discussions on the same day.

The Required Texts

- Robert Harms, *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow*
- Charles van Onselen, *Chibaro*
- Cheikh Hamidou Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure*
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Weep not Child*
- Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*
- Susan Geiger, *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1997).
- [Documents](#)

All of these texts are, or will be, available at the JHU Bookstore in Gilman. *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow* is a study of trade along the Congo River of central Africa during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Chibaro* is a history of Africans doing mine labor in southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) during the early colonial era. *Ambiguous Adventure* is an autobiographical novel about the experiences of a Senegalese Muslim boy in the context of French colonialism and colonial Christianity. *Weep Not, Child*, written by one of Africa's most prolific and great novelists, is an historical novel about a boy's experiences during the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya (1950s). *Women of Phokeng* is an edited collection of life histories of South African women during the twentieth century. *TANU Women*, also based on women's life histories, is a study of the role of women in TANU, the nationalist party that led Tanzania to independence from Britain.

The Required Course Work

1. Informal weekly reaction papers. Reaction papers should be typed but need not be as polished as your other writing (the take-home exams). They should be at least one page in length but you may write more if you wish. The writing should record your reaction to the reading, a sort of journal of your thoughts. Each reaction paper should also raise a couple or more questions or issues for the class to deliberate. The purpose of the reaction paper is for the professor 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. Reaction papers are due on Friday meetings, and should relate to both the primary reading and the documents. To help you write about the documents, I have provided "Review Questions" for each assigned document. See the course web site, under "[Documents](#)." Informal reaction papers will be collected at the end of class. No late reaction papers will be accepted.

2. Mid-term examination. The mid-term examination will be a take-home examination of essay questions covering all lectures, readings and discussions through October 16. The questions will be available to you at the course web site beginning Friday, October 9. The finished exams are due at the beginning of class on October 22. Specific instructions will accompany the actual questions, but be sure to guard yourself against [plagiarism](#).

3. Map Quizzes. There are two of these. The first, a [geography map](#), requires you to identify Africa's primary geographical features. The second, a [modern political map of all 54 African countries](#). These two maps are precisely the ones you will receive for the quizzes, accompanied

by a numbered sheet. You will write the name of the appropriate geographical feature or country by its corresponding number on the numbered sheet (you will not receive a list of features or countries along with the quiz). The quizzes will be administered in separate classes, the geography map first. Quizzes will be announced in class a full week or more before they are administered. You should be prepared to do the quizzes beginning in October.

5. End of semester examination. Like the mid-term, the end of semester examination will be a take home essay exam. It will cover all lectures, readings and discussions from October 22, inclusive (in other words, it is not a comprehensive exam covering the whole semester). The exam will become available ten days before it is due. It will be due at the scheduled final examination time for this course. Specific instructions will accompany the actual questions, but be sure to guard yourself against [plagiarism](#).

Calculation of Grades

Grades will be calculated using a point system. The maximum number of points is 1000. Points will be awarded as follows:

Geography Map Quiz, 50
Political Map Quiz, 50
Mid-Term Exam, 300
Final Exam, 300
Informal Reaction Papers, 150
Participation in Class Discussions, 150

90% range: As
80% range: Bs
70% range: Cs
60% range: Ds
50% range and less: F

Academic Dishonesty:

Academic dishonesty is a very serious matter for which I have **ZERO** tolerance. In plain words academic dishonesty refers to plagiarism (copying sets of words or paraphrasing sets of words from books or anything else and passing it off as your own work by failing to identify it as a quotation or a paraphrase **and** failing to cite it), cheating in any form, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, submitting the work of another person or work you previously used for another assignment without informing the instructor, and tampering with the academic work of other students. Because a key principle of the academic world is the assurance that the work you represent as your own is indeed your own exclusively, there are severe penalties for the breach of academic propriety. If you have been guilty of ONE act of academic dishonesty I will automatically assign you a grade of F for the entire class.

Attendance

This is not a distance education course. I expect you to attend class. Students who don't attend class don't do very well in this course, they miss important announcements, and they tend to get themselves into trouble. Lectures are not recapitulations of the reading material. You are responsible for being present, participating in discussions, and handing in your reaction papers on Fridays. The essay questions on the examinations will require a thorough knowledge of both lectures and readings; these are best acquired and processed by attending the class yourself.

Have Fun, Work Hard, and Learn a Lot!