

**African History to 1850**  
**Johns Hopkins University, AS 100.121**  
**Fall 2009, Final Syllabus**

**Professor**

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**Class Meeting Times**

Lectures: M & W @ 10: Barton 117  
Discussion Section 1: W @ 11: Latrobe 107  
Discussion Section 2: W @ 3: Kriger 304

**Teaching Assistant/Discussion Leader**

Norah Andrews  
Office Hours: W 4-5, and by appointment  
Meeting Place: Café Q  
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**Scope and Purpose**

This is the first of a two-semester introductory survey of African history. In this course 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 almost unfathomably diverse in race, language, culture, and history, to name some of the most important (human genes, language, and culture tend to diverge rather than to converge over time). 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 other regions (east, west, and southern Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, Europe, the Americas), many of whom have intermarried with the indigenous population and consider themselves to be Africans. Just as we have Asian, African, and European Americans, Africa has its Asian, European, and American Africans. In short, Africa has a long and complex human history.

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 important themes in the history of Africa and its many peoples to about the mid-nineteenth century, considering broad regions including north, west, east, central, and south Africa. In the United States Africa is often stereotypically considered as the homeland of "black people" conceptualized from places like Baltimore and New York as a sort of racial and cultural unity without much internal variation—or, frankly, much history of interest. These unfortunate ideas are much tied to a history of enslavement of

African people in the Americas and elsewhere and to a Euro-American legacy of racism. In challenging the aforementioned 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 really know will require a good bit of effort and concentration on your part — “getting” the details of life along the ancient Middle Niger or Great Zimbabwe or the Cape of Good Hope can be as painstaking as mastering an organic chemistry textbook, lecture, and lab. But it is fun, too! 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 novel about race relations in nineteenth-century South Africa (*Fiel's Child*). 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. We expect each of these from every class participant. Absences—particularly unexplained ones—will adversely affect your grade in the final calculation, especially if you fall in the border between two grades.
2. Informal weekly reaction/thought papers. These are informal (grammar, spelling, organization and the like are not checked) but they 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*. 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 23 and October 7, 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 8 (a total of 10 pages). Exam questions will be available at the end of lecture on Wednesday, October 21 and are due in class—at the *beginning* of class—on Monday, October 26. *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 and reported.*

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 in class on Monday, December 7 and essays are due December 15 by 5 pm at MSEL Café Q (the professor or TA will be at Café Q between 4:45 and 5:15 to personally receive the exams; otherwise they may be placed in the professor's mail box in 1501 Dell House any time *before* 4:00 p.m. on December 15). *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 and reported.*

### **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. 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 to Purchase (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* 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

Dalene Matthee, *Fiela's Child* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). ISBN 978-0226510835

**MSEL Electronic Reserve Password: LAR121****Course Schedule****Week 1: (Sep 2) Introduction & Myths**

- Pier M. Larson, "Myths about Africa, Africans, and African History" [MSEL electronic reserve]. Read this short document before coming to your discussion session; it may also be discussed in your week 2 discussion section so make sure to read it again for Sep 9.

**Week 2: (Sep 9) 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 carefully and examine the maps and graphs]
- 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 14 & 16) Human Evolution & Early Agricultural Systems**

- Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, 48-69.
- John Reader, *Africa: A Biography of the Continent* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 115-179. [MSEL electronic reserve]

**Week 4: (Sep 21 & 23) Ancient Egypt**

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

**Week 5: (Sep 28 & 30) Nubia**

- Connah, *African Civilizations*, 18-65 (examine the chronology on p. 16).
- Stuart Tyson Smith, "Nubia and Egypt: Interaction, Acculturation and Secondary State Formation from the Third to First Millennium BC," in *Studies in Culture Contact: Interaction, Culture Change, and Archaeology*, edited by James G.

Cusick (Carbondale: Center for Archaeological Investigations, Southern Illinois University, 1998), 256-287. [MSEL electronic reserve]

**Week 6: (Oct 5 & 7) Early Urbanization in West Africa: The Middle Niger River**

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

**Week 7: (Oct 12 & 14) The Classical West African Kingdoms**

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

**Week 8: (Oct 19 & 21) 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 26 & 28) 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. 2 & 4) 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, 223-248. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. [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 9 & 11) 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 16 & 18) Surveying North Africa: Morocco, Algeria & Egypt**

- Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa —revised 2<sup>nd</sup> 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, *African History: From Earliest Times to Independence* Second ed. (New York: Longman, 1995), 297-324.

**Week 13: (Nov 23) South Africa**

- Matthee, *Fiela's Child*, 1-175

**Week 14: (Nov 30 & Dec 2) South Africa**

- Matthee, *Fiela's Child*, 176-350.

**Week 15: (Dec 7, the last day of class) Colonization & Independence**

- Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, 91-149.
- The final exam will be available in hard copy for you to pick up at the end of class. You must pick up your own copy!