

# **COURSE SYLLABUS**

## **AFRICAN HISTORY TO 1800**

**PROFESSOR JAMIE MONSON**  
**MACALESTER COLLEGE**  
**FALL SEMESTER, 2009**

**OLD MAIN 307**  
**OFFICE HOURS T TH 2-3:30**  
**PHONE EXT. 6597**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is a survey of the history of Africa from earliest times until the middle of the nineteenth century. The course is organized around themes of early human origins; migrations and settlements; state formation; exchange of technology and ideas; slavery and abolition; and European exploration and empire prior to the late nineteenth century "scramble for Africa."

In our course we will follow a specific set of historical questions that will focus on the significance of events and processes in the past; the way the past is remembered and retold over time; historical methods and interpretations of Africa before colonization; and the relevance of this material in contemporary Africa and the world. Therefore, our course materials will be quite diverse, including a textbook that situates Africa within a global historical context; primary materials drawn mainly from African but also from European sources and traditions; films, music and drama; and other items that will be brought in over the course of the semester. There will be multiple points of view presented, expressed in multiple voices, allowing us the opportunity to consider as fully as possible the important conversations about the past that have engaged Africa and Africa's historians over time.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

There are four assigned texts for this course. They are:

Erik Gilbert and Jonathan Reynolds, *Africa in World History: From Prehistory to the Present*  
Robert Collins, *Documents from the African Past*  
Ross E. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta*  
D.T. Niane, *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*

### **CLASS ASSIGNMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS**

The most important student responsibility in this course is to come to class prepared (this means having done the course readings on time and thought about them; and having completed any preparatory assignments for class discussion). In addition, there will be two examinations (one take-home midterm and an in-class final) and two short papers (3-5 pages each). The papers will be short essays that take up one of the historical questions that have been posed in class, using class texts and primary sources. A more detailed description of class assignments will be posted on the Moodle web site.

As part of class participation, each student will be required to participate in posting historical framing questions on the Moodle website during the term in preparation for Friday discussion and debate. In addition, students will be asked to write up concluding remarks following Friday sessions, in rotation. We will develop the schedule and sign-up sheets for this Moodle-based participation during the second week of the semester.

I expect students to attend each class session and to arrive in the classroom on time. I normally allow every student two absences per semester; any additional absences will affect your participation grade. I also expect assignments to be completed on time. If for some reason you are not able to meet a deadline, I will consider an extension provided that you contact me with at least 48 hours notice.

### **GRADING:**

Participation: 30%  
Midterm: 30%  
Final: 30%  
Papers: 20% each

### **SPECIAL NEEDS AND ACCOMMODATIONS**

If you have any special needs or require accommodations for a documented disability for this course, I would be happy to meet with you. Please make an appointment to see me as soon as possible in the semester so that we can make any necessary arrangements. Similarly, if you are involved in athletics or in another official campus activity that will require you to miss class or complete an assignment after the deadline, it is important to let me know as early as possible.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **PART ONE: INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN HISTORY BEFORE 1850**

#### **WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN HISTORY**

**September 9: Introductions and Framing Questions: What is African History? Why 1850? What is a Global Perspective?**

**September 11: Africa's Geography in Global Perspective**

READ: Gilbert and Reynolds, *Africa in World History*, chapter 2

Online reading for discussion: Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography*, pages 1-21 (Introduction)

Charles Obbo, "Africa: Hang up now if you know what African beauty is (opinion)"

## **PART TWO: AFRICA BEFORE 1500**

### **WEEK TWO: EARLY HISTORY OF AFRICA: ORIGINS AND MIGRATIONS**

#### **September 14: Human Origins: Was the “Garden of Eden” in Africa?**

READ: Gilbert, *Africa in World History*, chapter 2

Reading on Human Origins in Africa (coming soon!)

#### **September 16: Food Production and Technology**

READ: Gilbert and Reynolds, *Africa in World History*, chapter 3

#### **September 18: Foragers and Farmers; Past and Present**

READ: Online reading: for class discussion: Patricia Davison, “Museums and the Reshaping of Memory,” in Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, Oxford, 1998, pages 143-160.

Kairn Klieman, *The Pygmies Were Our Compass: Bantu and Batwa in the History of West Central Africa, Early Times to c. 1900 C.E.*, Heinemann, 2003, pages xv-xxxi (Introduction) and pages 20-26 (“The Problem of Bantu Expansion”)

### **WEEK THREE: NORTH AND NORTHEASTERN AFRICA THROUGH 1500**

#### **September 21: The Middle Nile: Nubia and Egypt**

READ: Gilbert and Reynolds, *Africa in World History*, chapter 4

Online readings: *Sudan Tribune*, “Archaeology Flourishes Before the Flood,” September 3, 2009; Fekri A. Hassan, “The Aswan High Dam and both the International Rescue Nubia Campaign,” *African Archaeology Review*, 2007, 24, pages 73–94.

#### **September 23: Aksum and the Early History of Ethiopia**

READ: Gilbert and Reynolds, *Africa in World History*, chapter 5

Primary Document collection, pages 1-4

Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta*, Chapter 6.

#### **September 25: Class Discussion: Corridors or Cul de Sacs?**

Texts for discussion: James Michael Brodie, 'Feel good history': scholars debate Afrocentrism,” *Black Issues in Higher Education* 13, 4 (April 18, 1996): page 9.

Videorecording: Black Athena;

Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, New York, 1974, selections.

### **WEEK FOUR: TRADE NETWORKS AND POLITICAL FORMATION IN WEST AFRICA**

#### **September 28: Across the Sahara: Carrying Goods, Ideas and Cultures**

READ: Erik Gilbert and Reynolds, *Africa in World History*, chapter 6

**September 30: Jenne-Jeno and The Inland Niger Delta: Archaeological Perspectives**

READ: Roderick and Susan Mc Intosh, "The Inland Niger Delta before the empire of Mali : evidence from Jenne-jeno", *Journal of African History*, 22,1,1981, pages 1-22.

**October 2: The Kingdoms of the Savannas: Documentary Perspectives**

Read: Ibn Battuta chapter 13 (pages 290-309)  
Primary source collection chapter 10 (pages 32-36)  
Begin to read the Sundiata epic

**WEEK FIVE: EPIC, PRAISE SONG AND POEM IN WEST AFRICAN HISTORICAL NARRATIVES**

**October 5: Oral Narrative in African Historical Studies Before 1800**

Read: Sundiata Epic, complete reading.  
Thomas Hale, "Job Description of a Griot," from *Griots and Griotte: Masters of Words and Music*, Indiana, 2007.

**October 7: Praise Poems and Living History in the Mande World**

Trevor Cope, "The Mande Hero"

**October 9:** FILM: Keita: The Heritage of the Griot

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**SHORT PAPER ASSIGNMENT DUE ON MOODLE: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9 AT 5 PM**  
**TOPIC: KINGDOMS OF THE SAVANNAH AND THEIR HISTORIANS**

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**WEEK SIX: THE SWAHILI COAST: LANGUAGE, CULTURE, CITY-STATES TO 1500**

**October 12: The Swahili and the Development of East African Coastal Culture**

READ: Gilbert and Reynolds, *Africa in World History*, chapter 7

**October 14: The East African Coast: Destination or Doorstep?**

READ: Documents from the African Past, pages 37-44; 89-92  
Mark Horton, "The Swahili Corridor," *Scientific American*, 1987 [requested from ILLiad]  
Recommended: James De Vere Allen, *Swahili Origins: Swahili Culture and the Shungwaya Phenomenon*, London, 1993; Mark Horton and John Middleton, *The Swahili: The Social Landscape of a Mercantile Society*, Oxford 2000.

**October 16: Issues and Debates in East African History to 1500**

READ: Felix Chami, "A Response to Christopher Ehret's "Bantu Expansions," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (2001), pp. 647- 651.  
Jonathan Glassman, " Sorting out the Tribes: The Creation of Racial Identities in Colonial Zanzibar's Newspaper Wars," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (2000), pp. 395-428.

Video: Gates, "Wonders of the African World"

## **WEEK SEVEN: SOUTHERN AFRICA TO 1500**

### **October 19: History of the Cape before 1500**

READ: Boonzaier et al., *The Cape Herders: A History of the Khoikhoi of Southern Africa*, Cape Town, 2000, pages 1-52.

### **October 21: The Plateau Region and Great Zimbabwe**

READ: Thomas Huffman, "Mapungubwe and the Origins of the Zimbabwe Culture," *Goodwin Series*, Vol. 8, *African Naissance: The Limpopo Valley 1000 Years Ago*, Dec., 2000), pp. 14-29.

Shadreck Chirikure and Innocent Pikirayi, "Inside and Outside the Dry Stone Walls: Revisiting the Material Culture of Great Zimbabwe," *Antiquity*, Dec2008, Vol. 82 Issue 318, p 976-993.

### **October 23: Debates in the History of Southern Africa**

READ: Daniel Tangri, "Popular Fiction and the Zimbabwe Controversy," *History in Africa*, Vol. 17, (1990), pp. 293-304.

*Documents from the African Past*, pages 109-115.

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**TAKE HOME MIDTERM DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS AND ON MOODLE ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23**

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## **PART THREE: AFRICA FROM 1500 TO 1850: SLAVERY AND ABOLITION**

### **WEEK EIGHT: SLAVERY, THE SLAVE TRADE AND THE ATLANTIC WORLD**

#### **October 26: Slavery in the Atlantic World**

READ: Gilbert and Reynolds, chapters 8-9, selected sections

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**TAKE HOME MIDTERM DUE ON MOODLE ON TUESDAY OCTOBER 27 AT 5 PM**

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#### **October 28: Narratives of Slavery and the Slave Trade in West Africa**

READ: The Life of Olaudah Equiano, Part One, selected sections (before freedom)  
*Documents from the African Past*, pages 128-136

#### **October 30: FALL BREAK**

### **WEEK NINE: SLAVERY AND THE SLAVE TRADE IN EAST AFRICA**

#### **November 2: The Slave Trade in East Africa: The Indian Ocean World**

READ: Gilbert and Reynolds, chapter 11

#### **November 4: Caravans, Plantations and Island Economies**

READ: Abdul Sherif, Caravans and the History of the Dhow Cultures (coming soon!)

**November 6: Narrative and Experience in the East African Slave Trade**

READ: E.A. Alpers, "The Story of Swema," in Klein and Robertson, *Women and Slavery in Africa*

**WEEK TEN: FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE? RESISTANCE AND ABOLITION IN AFRICAN HISTORY**

**November 9: Slave Resistance and Abolitionist Movements**

READ: *Documents from the African Past*, pages 228-235

**November 11: What Comes Next? The Meaning of Freedom**

REVIEW: Olaudah Equiano, selected pages from Part Two

**November 13: Debates Over the End of Slavery**

READ: Current news articles on slave reparations movement; slavery and enslavement in Africa today  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/424984.stm>

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**SHORT PAPER ASSIGNMENT DUE ON MOODLE: MONDAY NOVEMBER 16 AT 5 PM**  
**TOPIC: SLAVERY, SLAVE NARRATIVES AND ABOLITION**

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**PART FOUR: AFRICA FROM 1500 TO 1850: NEW MIGRATIONS AND DIASPORAS**

**WEEK ELEVEN: SOUTHERN AFRICAN ENCOUNTERS AND SETTLEMENTS**

**November 16: The Portuguese and Dutch East India Companies**

READ: Gilbert and Reynolds, Chapter 12  
*Documents from the African Past*, pages 96-115

**November 18: British Colonial Rule at the Cape of Good Hope**

READ: *Documents from the African Past*, pages 216-223

**November 20: Narrative and Memory of Dutch Settlement and Expansion in South African History**

READ: Selections, *Apartheid's Festival*; Selection from Nuttal and Coetzee

**WEEK TWELVE: STATE FORMATION, THE ZULU NATION, AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY**

**November 23: The Rise of the Zulu Kingdom**

READ: *Documents from the African Past*, pages 202-208

**November 25: Remembering Shaka and the Zulu Diaspora**

READ: Trevor Cope, *Izibongo*; Liz Gunner, *Musho! Popular Zulu Praises*; Other readings on contemporary significance of Shaka and Zulu identity; *What does it mean to be Zulu in contemporary South Africa?*

**November 26: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**

## **WEEK THIRTEEN: NINETEENTH CENTURY TRANSFORMATIONS IN WEST AND EASTERN AFRICA**

### **November 30: The Hausa Diaspora and Islamic Jihad in 19<sup>th</sup> Century West Africa**

READ: Gilbert and Reynolds, Chapter 10

### **December 2: Nineteenth Century Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa**

Allen Isaacman on "Transfrontiersmen"

### **December 4: Ethnic Origins, Religion and Identity in African History**

REVIEW: Glassman, "Sorting out the Tribes: The Creation of Racial Identities in Colonial Zanzibar's Newspaper Wars; REVIEW: Stephen Rockel, "A Nation of Porters;"

## **PART FIVE: IMPERIALISM AND COLONIZATION BEFORE 1850**

### **WEEK FOURTEEN: EMPIRE AND COLONY BEFORE THE BERLIN CONFERENCE**

#### **December 7: Legitimate Trade? King Leopold and the Congo**

READ: *King Leopold's Ghost*, extracts; paintings collected by Fabian

#### **December 9: Explorers and Expeditions: Out of Their Minds?**

READ: Johannes Fabian, *Out of Their Minds*, extracts; Primary documents from British East Africa Company

#### **December 11: Review Session**

#### **December 14: Final Examination**