



HISTORY 126: AFRICAN CIVILIZATIONS

Prof. Nathan Carpenter
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Comenius Hall 302
TR 11:45–1:45, or by appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class will introduce students to some of the major historical themes and events in Sub-Saharan African history, from Ancient Nubia to the present day. We will examine indigenous political history, the development of trade networks, religion, slavery and slave trades, colonialism, nationalism and independence, development and NGOs, and recent events. Three central themes will tie these diverse topics together: mobility, exchange, and human agency. Though focused on the African continent, this course will keep in its scope Africa's place in wider economic and cultural spheres. Students will also explore the sources and methods used by African historians and will have the opportunity to critically evaluate primary and secondary documents. As an introductory course, this class assumes no previous knowledge of African history and asks only that students come with an open mind and a willingness to be challenged—we will cover an extraordinary amount of material over the semester ending with some of the most pressing and interesting questions in Africa today!

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate and interpret historical texts. Students will read, analyze, and interpret a variety of primary sources.
- Identify major turning points in Sub-Saharan African history. Students will learn broad chronological periods in African history and will also be able to name specific turning points in the history of the continent.
- Acquire a basic understanding of African geography. Students will be able to identify major geographic features including bodies of water, mountain ranges, and temporal zones. They will also be able to identify the location of historical and present-day African states.
- Develop critical thinking skills. Students will develop critical thinking skills through the analysis of primary and secondary documents. Students will be able to identify, and make, evidence-based historical arguments.
- Improve writing. The class will help students hone their ability to make and support original arguments and express them clearly in written form.
- Better understand some of the historical roots of twenty-first century Africa. Students will be able to place contemporary events in historical context.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

The sections below outline the course requirements and policies. Additional materials can be found on Blackboard. This syllabus is subject to change.

Assignments and Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on two 4–6 page analytical essays, midterm and final exams, and three short reading responses. In addition, a portion of your grade will be based on in-class participation. The grade breakdown is as follows:

First Paper	15%
Second Paper	15%
Reading Responses (3)	15%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	25%
Participation	10%

Required Texts: The texts listed below are required reading for this course. Any additional readings will be posted on Blackboard or handed out in class.

Conrad, David C., ed. *Sunjata: A West African Epic of the Mande Peoples*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004.

Getz, Trevor and Liz Clarke. *Abina and the Important Men: A Graphic History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Hamdun, Said and Noel King, eds. *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005.

Shillington, Kevin. *History of Africa*. 3rd edition. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Sparks, Randy J. *The Two Princes of Calabar: An Eighteenth-Century Atlantic Odyssey*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Stearns, Jason K. *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*. New York: Public Affairs, 2011.

Preparing for Class: Students are expected to complete readings and assignments prior to the lecture for which they are assigned. Study questions to help guide readings will be posted on Blackboard. On average, students should expect to spend about eight hours per week preparing for class. The length of readings vary, some weeks will be longer, others shorter. Additionally, some weeks you will have to hand in papers or reading assignments, so plan ahead and budget your time.

Important information about this class will be distributed by email. Check your email regularly. If you are not receiving announcements from Blackboard please notify Professor Carpenter immediately.

Lectures: Lectures will complement the course readings. Material from the lectures will be essential for essays and exams. Some weeks lectures will be participatory—students will discuss and analyze sources, practice writing, work within smaller groups, etc.. It is important that you attend all lectures and come prepared having completed that week’s assignment.

Essays: Students will write two 4–6 page double-spaced papers. These will be evaluated on style and content. Detailed information about the specific essay assignments will be provided in class and on Blackboard. It is essential that students read Professor Carpenter’s “Writing Guidelines” posted on Blackboard; failure to adhere to the paper guidelines will adversely affect your grade.

Students who want to seek writing assistance from the writing center should know that the center is located in a building that is not accessible to persons with mobility impairments. If you would

like the services of the writing center but cannot access the center itself, please call 610-861-1392 or contact the professor to make alternative arrangements.

Exams: The mid-term and final exams will consist of a combination of IDs, short-answer essays and multiple choice questions. The final exam will be comprehensive.

Reading Responses: Students will complete three reading responses over the course of the semester. These are short writing assignments specifically aimed at analyzing a single text, or group of texts. Please refer to the “Reading Response Guidelines” posted on Blackboard. Specific instructions for each reading response will be posted online and discussed in class.

Attendance and Participation: Attendance and active participation in this class is mandatory. Every unexcused absence will result in an automatic 2% deduction from your final grade. In exceptional circumstances a student may need to miss class for a valid reason (e.g. official university business, sporting engagements, medical care etc.). In these circumstances absences may be excused provided I am informed in advance in writing by the appropriate authorities.

You will not receive a letter grade for participation. Rather, if you do not have any unexcused absences your in-class participation may move your final grade up or down by a maximum of five percentage points, though in most cases less. So, for example, if you make adequate contributions in class your final course grade will not be affected; if you make more than adequate contributions, your final course grade may rise a little; similarly, your grade may drop for less than adequate contributions. Please note that absences, in addition to the above-mentioned automatic deductions, will also affect your participation grade.

Late and Incomplete Work: Incompletes, paper extensions, or makeup exams will only be granted in exceptional circumstances (e.g. serious illness, testified by a physician’s letter), and the professor must be contacted beforehand. All written assignments, unless otherwise noted, are to be handed in at the beginning of class on the day they are due and also submitted online. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day late (including weekends). No work will be accepted that is more than five days late (including weekends). No papers will be accepted by email unless specifically authorized in advance.

Academic Honesty: It is the student’s responsibility to read and understand Moravian’s Policy on Academic Honesty, which can be found in the Student Handbook. In accordance with this policy:

- Know what plagiarism is and take steps to avoid it. Whenever you use the words or ideas of others, even if you are paraphrasing, you must cite that work. If you are unsure, ask.
- All work that you submit must be your own, original work.
- Students may not submit work in this class that has been, in whole or part, submitted as work in another class.
- Understand the consequences of academic dishonesty. Instances of plagiarism will result in, at minimum, a zero for that assignment and may also result in failure of the course.

Disability Support: Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should immediately contact the instructor and the Office of Academic Support Services (<http://home.moravian.edu/public/stusvc/learning/>). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

Important Dates: Essay 1: Sept. 19; Midterm: Oct. 10; Essay 2: Nov. 05; Final Exam: Dec. 13

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1. Introduction.

08/27: Introduction

08/29: Birth on the Nile

Readings: Shillington [Hereafter SH]: 22–42; Narmer Palette [Online]; Radiolab segment on Oxyrhynchus [Online]

Week 2. Early Exchanges.

9/3: Technological Innovations to 1000 CE

Readings: SH, 43–65; “The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea” [Online]

9/5: Africa and Christianity

Readings: SH, 69–83, 114–126

Week 3. State and Society in West Africa.

09/10: Centralized and Decentralized Societies

Readings: *Sunjata*, Introduction, Episode 1–27

09/12: West African Statecraft; Reading Response for *Sunjata*

Readings: Finish *Sunjata*

Week 4. Africa and the World to 1500.

9/17: Africa and Islam

Readings: SH, 120–135; *Ibn Battuta*, Forward, Introduction, The East African Journey

9/19: Long-Distance Trade Networks; 1st Paper Due

Readings: SH, 85–93, 100–113; *Ibn Battuta*, The West African Journey

Week 5. Transformations on the Atlantic Littoral.

09/24: New Atlantic Networks and the Rise of the Atlantic Slave Trade

Readings: SH, 176–186

09/26: An Atlantic World Emerges

Readings: Review www.slavevoyages.org, including essays; Begin reading Sparks

Week 6. In the Wake of the Atlantic Slave Trade.

10/01: Abolition and the Decline of the Atlantic Slave Trade; Reading Response for Sparks

Readings: *Two Princes of Calabar*

10/03: Cultural and Economic Conversion: *Jihad* and “Legitimate Commerce”

Readings: SH, 230–246

Week 7. Central and Eastern Africa in the Nineteenth Century.

10/08: War and Trade in Central and Eastern Africa

Readings: SH, 247–262

10/10: Midterm Exam

Week 8. Southern Africa, 1650–1860.

10/15: NO CLASS

10/17: From the Cape Colony to the Xhosa Cattle Killing

Readings: SH, 218–229, 263–279

Week 9. **Abina.**

10/22: West Africa in the Nineteenth Century

Readings: *Abina and the Important Men*, Part I

10/24: Finding History, Writing History—Discussion of *Abina*

Readings: *Abina and the Important Men*, Part II–IV, reread Part I

Week 10. **Colonial Occupation and Administration.**

10/29: Colonial Occupation

Readings: SH, 296–327

10/31: Colonial Rule

Readings: SH, 343–360

Week 11. **Slaves and Soldiers: Colonial Labor.**

11/05: Export Economies and African Labor; Second Paper Due

Readings: SH, 328–342

11/07: Africa and the Two World Wars

Readings: SH, 361–388

Week 12. **Independence.**

11/12: Decolonization

Readings: SH, 389–396

11/14: Entrenched Colonies and Liberation Wars

Readings: 402–432

Week 13. **In the Wake of Decolonization.**

11/19: Legacies of Colonial Rule

Readings: SH, 433–443; *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*, Pt I

11/21: The Rwandan Genocide and the Beginnings of Africa's Great War

Readings: *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*, Pt II

Week 14. **Africa and the World in the 21st Century.**

11/26: NO CLASS

Readings: *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*, Pt III–IV

11/28: NO CLASS

Week 15. **Mobility, Exchange, and Agency in Africa Today.**

12/03: Pirogues and Portables; Reading Response for Stearns

12/05: The African Century?