



HISTORY 126: AFRICAN CIVILIZATIONS

Prof. Nathan Carpenter
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Comenius Hall 302
TR 4:00–5:00, 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.
- 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 will be posted 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, an author interview, 6 historical thinking papers, and map quizzes. In addition, a portion of your grade will be based on in-class participation. The grade breakdown is as follows:

Map Quizzes	5%
Author interview	10%
HTPs	15%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	15%
Papers (2)	40%

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.

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.

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.

Map Quizzes. Map quizzes will be given on Thursdays. New material that may be included on the map quiz will be posted on Blackboard. Material is cumulative. So, for example, material listed under week 2 may also show up on a map quiz in week 5.

Author Interview and HTPs: Information concerning the author interview and HTPs will be discussed in class and posted online.

Attendance and Participation: Attendance and active participation in this class is mandatory. Every unexcused absence may result in an automatic 1% 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, your in-class participation may move your final grade up by a maximum of two 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.

Late and Incomplete Work: Incompletes, paper extensions, or makeup quizzes or 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 assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day late (including weekends). No assignments 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.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1. **Introduction.**

01/14: Introduction

01/16: Birth on the Nile; Read: Shillington [hereafter SH] 30–54, “Narmer Palette”; Radiolab, “Oxyrhynchus”

Week 2. **Culture and Commerce in Eastern Africa.**

01/21: The Red Sea World and the Ethiopian Highlands; Read: “The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea”; SH 76–79, 114–118; HTP due

01/23: The Indian Ocean Littoral; Read: Hamdun and King, ix–26; SH 128–137

Week 3. **Sudanic Empires.**

01/28: Sudanic Empires; Read: SH 85–93

01/30: Ruling the Shores of the Sahel; Read: Hamdun and King, 27–75; Author interview due

Week 4. Long-Distance Trade and European Contact.

02/04: Europeans along the African Coast; Read: SH 137–143; Francisco Alvarez, “The Land of Prester John”; Nzinga Mbemba, “Appeal to the King of Portugal”; HTP due
02/06: Europeans and Southern African Society; Read: SH 154–160, 211–212; 218–224;

Week 5. The Atlantic Slave Trade.

02/11: An overview of Atlantic Slave Trade; Read: SH 176–186; www.slavevoyages.org
02/13: Economy and Culture of the Atlantic Slave Trade; Read: Sparks, 1–32

Week 6. Effects and Abolition of Atlantic Slavery.

02/18: West African societies in the era of the slave trade; Read: Sparks, 33–89; SH 197–202; HTP due
02/20: Abolition and the slow decline of Atlantic slavery; Read: Sparks, 90–147; SH 237–240

Week 7. Social Change in the Nineteenth Century.

02/25: Social transformation in nineteenth-century; Read: SH 230–236, 256–262, 263–279; First paper due
02/27: Midterm exam

Week 8. Spring Break NO CLASS.

Week 9. European Explorers and Missionaries in Africa.

03/11: European Explorers; Read: SH 303–310; Mungo Park, “The Niger at Segu”; René Caillié, “The Trans-Saharan Caravan”; HTP due
03/13: Missionaries; Read: SH 296–303; Chinua Achebe, from *Things Fall Apart*

Week 10. Early Imperial Interests in Africa.

03/18: European enclaves; Read: *Abina*, Part I, II
03/20: Finding history, writing history; Read: *Abina*, Part III, IV

Week 11. European Conquest and Occupation.

03/25: The Scramble for Africa; Read: SH 311–322, 328–340, 343–347
03/27: Congo and the violence of colonization; Read: Mark Twain, *King Leopold’s Soliloquy*; HTP due

Week 12. Colonial Rule.

04/01: Colonial States and Economies; Read: SH 361–376; Lord Lugard, “Indirect Rule”
04/03: Africa and the Two World Wars; Watch: René Vautier, *Afrique 50*; Read: SH 384–388

Week 13. Decolonization.

04/08: Decolonization; Read: SH 389–396, 416–422; “Sékou Touré and General de Gaulle”; Selections from *Songs that Won the Liberation War*
04/10: South Africa; Read: SH 340–342, 376–378, 425–432; “Freedom Charter”; Second paper due

Week 14. Violent Legacies of Colonial Rule.

04/15: Rwanda and the Congo War; Read: SH 407–413; 475–477; Watch: *Mobutu*
04/17: Sudan; Read: SH 283–291, 472–474

Week 15. The African Century?

04/22: Forging communities: national, regional, global; HTP due
04/24: Pirogues and portables: mobility in the twenty-first century