

Africa: An Introductory Survey

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Spring 2020

TTH 8:00-9:15

Social Sciences 5206

Welcome to Africa: An Introductory Survey. This course is designed to be a multi-disciplinary introduction to the history, cultures, and politics of Africa. It is available to students as African Cultural Studies 277, Afro-American Studies 277, Anthropology 277, Geography 277, History 277, Political Science 277, or Sociology 277. Because Africa contains a remarkable array of languages, societies, and peoples, we cannot hope for exhaustive coverage. However, we will visit almost every major region of the continent at least once during the semester while we will explore a variety of themes and topics. I hope that you will take away from the course an understanding not just of *what* to think about the history, cultures, and politics of Africa but also *how* to think about this part of the world.

Instructor

Jim Sweet

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Teaching Assistants

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Course Objectives

- Develop familiarity with the study of Africa from different disciplinary perspectives
- Develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of historical and contemporary Africa
- Critically engage a variety of media about Africa, including scholarly studies, journalism, and film
- Learn to read difficult works of scholarship with an eye for identifying the argument
- Analyze sources and employ these sources to develop arguments
- Develop academic writing skills

Required Text:

Dorothy L. Hodgson and Judith A. Byfield (eds.), *Global Africa: Into the Twenty-First Century*

You are free to buy this book wherever you wish, but this semester I have placed my order with the University Bookstore. *Global Africa* is also available as an eBook and you are welcome to purchase it in this format.

Also required is a set of additional readings, videos, lectures, and podcasts that I have placed on the course website.

ASSIGNMENTS, REQUIREMENTS, and EXPECTATIONS

This 4-credit course meets as a group for 4 hours per week (according to UW-Madison's credit hour policy, each lecture counts as 1.5 hours and each discussion counts as an hour). The course also carries the expectation that you will spend an average of at least 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of at least 8 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and/or studying for quizzes and exams for this course.

Lectures

Since one goal of this course is to introduce you to Africa from a variety of different disciplinary perspectives, the course incorporates some guest lectures – both live and recorded – from other Wisconsin faculty members engaged in the study of Africa. The format allows for greater breadth and variety in the subject matters covered. However, it also requires you to think more actively and creatively about how all of the different orientations, styles, and perspectives presented might be reconciled...or not. You will have a variety of material to work with, including readings, podcasts, and films. Your teaching assistant and I will help you. Ultimately, however, it is up to you to draw a coherent understanding of Africa out of the material presented. When listening to a lecture or reading an assignment, concentrate on the subject at hand, but think at the same time about how the ideas being presented connect with earlier lectures or readings, support them, or perhaps contradict them. Compare and contrast readings, lectures, discussions and films with each other. Your sources will not always agree. Nor should they always agree. Remember throughout that the second goal of the course is for each of you to come away with a deeper understanding of the complexities of historical and contemporary Africa.

I expect faithful attendance at lectures. We meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00-9:15 in 5206 Social Sciences. Please note that to facilitate a comfortable learning environment for all, recording devices of any sort will be permitted only with the instructor's consent. All cell phones and other devices should also be turned off during class sessions. Students wishing to use laptop computers to take notes may do so, but please stay focused on the course.

Discussion Sections

In addition to twice-weekly lectures, all students will attend a weekly discussion section. You must be enrolled formally in one of the scheduled discussion sections and attend **that** section every week. If you are not enrolled in a discussion section, you are not enrolled in the course. A teaching assistant will lead each discussion section. The TAs are advanced Ph.D. students who have had considerable life experience in Africa and are carrying out Africa-related research. In discussion section your TA will help you review and sort out ideas presented in lectures, lead conversation and debate, help you analyze your readings, administer a quiz or two, and help you prepare for written assignments.

Reading assignments and other learning materials are listed in the weekly schedule. You are expected to read, watch, and listen to everything that's been assigned. The learning materials are

pegged to corresponding lectures in a logical way, but rarely will they merely repeat what a lecture has covered. Lectures and learning materials are intended to be complementary.

I have tried to select learning materials that will not only inform but also capture your curiosity and imagination. Please bring questions about the week's lectures and learning materials to discussion. If you are having trouble understanding something, other students probably are as well. So don't be shy about asking questions. **Please be aware that the assigned learning materials for any given week will generally be discussed in section the following week.**

Graded Work

There will be three take-home assignments. Each take home-assignment will require you to produce between 5 and 7 pages of writing, typed and double-spaced:

- 1) The first take-home assignment will cover lectures, reading, and discussion from weeks 1-5. You will receive detailed instructions in class on February 18. The assignment will be due in lecture on February 25.
- 2) The second-take home assignment will cover lectures, reading, and discussion from weeks 6-10. You will receive detailed instructions in class on March 31. The assignment will be due on April 7.
- 3) The third take-home assignment will ask you to reflect on materials presented throughout the course, with extra weight given to subjects covered in weeks 11-15. You will receive detailed instructions on April 23 and the assignment will be due by 10 a.m. on May 5.

In addition to the three take-home assignments, you must also pass the map quiz on the Canvas site prior to discussion section during week 3 (Feb. 4-6). The maps to study for the quiz are located at the end of the "Modules" section of the Canvas site. We will provide further guidance for the quiz in discussion sections during week 2.

Evaluation:

Grades for the course will be weighted as follows:

First Take-home assignment	20%
Second Take-home assignment	25%
Third Take-home assignment	30%
Section grade	25%

Discussion section points will be based on attendance and participation. **Perfect attendance will work best for you, but for grading purposes you will be allowed to miss one discussion section for any reason without penalty. Each subsequent absence will be penalized.** So save your one excused absence. You might need it. Your TAs will provide detailed guidelines about expectations and grading for discussion sections.

We take grading seriously and rarely make egregious mistakes. If you believe we have made an error in the grade we have given you for an assignment, please see your TA, but only under the following conditions: (1) No more than **two weeks** have elapsed since the assignment was returned to you (2) You are polite, respectful, and fully aware that inevitably there is some element of subjectivity in assessing written work. Your TAs will provide further information.

Academic Integrity:

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/>

Knowing how or when to cite can be confusing; if you are having trouble, rather than living in fear of inadvertent plagiarism please come discuss it with either of us during office hours, or seek advice from the writing center. You may also find the following link helpful: <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

McBurney Disability Resource Center syllabus statement: "The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA." <http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php>

Diversity and Inclusion

Institutional statement on diversity: "Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world." <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>

The History Lab

The History Lab is a resource center where PhD students will assist you with your history papers. No matter your stage in the writing process — choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, revising your drafts — the History Lab staff can help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. Schedule a one-on-one consultation at <http://go.wisc.edu/hlab> or drop by Humanities 4255.

**SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS, READING ASSIGNMENTS, and DISCUSSION
SECTIONS**

INTRODUCTION

Week 1 (Jan 21-23)

1/21 Knowing Africa: Preconceptions and Misconceptions

1/23 African Geographies

Learning

Materials: B. Wainaina, “How to Write about Africa”

Robert J. Gordon, “Introduction,” *Picturing Bushmen*, 1-15.

Watch “Let’s Save Africa”

Watch “The Legend of Big John”

Discussion

Section: no discussion sections this week

PART 1: THEMES IN EARLY AFRICAN HISTORY, c. 500-1500

Week 2 (Jan 28-30)

1/28 A Working Vocabulary of Social Ideals

1/30 Bantu Expansions and the Art of Living in the Inner Congo Basin

Learning

Materials: C. Fourshey et al., “Reconstructing Bantu Expansions,” pp. 1-5 and 25-40

K. Klieman, “(Re)Constructing Histories: Central African Societies and the Burden of Myth,” pp. 1-20

**Complete map quiz prior to discussion section next week

Discussion

Section: Introductions/Africa as an idea and ideas about Africa

Week 3 (Feb 4-6)

2/4 Archaeology of Swahili Coast, Indian Ocean Trade

2/6 Empire and Islam in the West African Sahel

Learning

Materials: Watch “Kilwa Kisiwani, Tanzania” up to minute 4:20

Global Africa, chapter 1.2

S. Patel, “Stone Towns of the Swahili Coast”

Anonymous, “An Arabic History of Kilwa Kisiwani, c. 1520”

S. Hamdun and N. King, *Ibn Batuta in Black Africa*, pp.44-59

Discussion

Section: In the absence of writing, how do we know about the early history of Africa? Discuss methods and approaches employed by scholars of early Africa. Which approaches are most/least convincing? Why? Why not?

**Complete map quiz prior to discussion section

PART 2: AFRICA IN THE AGE OF GLOBAL CAPITALISM, c. 1500-1800

Week 4 (Feb 11-13)

2/11 The Atlantic Slave Trade: An Overview

2/13 Case Studies in the History of Diaspora

Learning

Materials: Watch *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross*, Episode 1: “The Black Atlantic (1500-1800)”

Global Africa, chapters 1.4 and 1.5

Explore the Atlantic Slave Trade Database

Colin Palmer, “Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora,” *Perspectives* (September 1998)

Discussion

Section: Urban life and Islam in early Africa

Week 5 (Feb 18-20)

2/18 European Expansion in South Africa

2/20 No class: work on take-home

assignment Learning

Materials: Mark Mathabane, Kaffir Boy

Discussion

Section: The Atlantic slave trade and the African diaspora

PART 3: THE LONG 19TH CENTURY

Week 6 (Feb 25-27)

2/25 Abolition, Legitimate Trade, and African Partition

2/27 Colonialism: what it was and how it worked

Learning

Materials: Michel Rolph Trouillot, “An Unthinkable History”

Sweet, “New Perspectives on Kongo in Revolutionary Haiti”

Watch Neil Kodesh’s lecture: “Indian Ocean Slave Trade and the Emergence of Plantation Slavery in East Africa.”

Watch “Trevor Noah – Great Britain is not so great”

Discussion

Section: no discussion sections this week – TAs will announce extended office hours

PART 4: AFRICA IN THE AGE OF COLONIALISM, c. 1880-1960

Week 7 (Mar 3-5)

3/3 Case Studies in Colonialism, Congo

3/5 Case Studies: Kenya

Learning

Materials: Jean Rahier, “Métis/Mulâtre, Mulato, Mulatto, Negro, Moreno, Mundele, Kaki, Black...The Wanderings and Meanderings of Identities”

Listen to *Radiolab* podcast on “Mau Mau”

J. Kenyatta, "Speech at the Kenya African Union Meeting at Nyeri, 1952"

K. Njama, "The Mau Mau Oath, 1952"

"Kenya Lies Under the Sword," *Life Magazine*, May 4, 1953, pp.143-150

"The Mau Mau," *The New York Times*, September 18, 1952, p.28

Marc Parry, "Uncovering the brutal truth about the British empire." *The Guardian* 18 (2016)

Discussion

Section: Abolition and Colonialism

Week 8 (Mar 10-12)

3/10 How Colonialism Ended

3/12 Country Study: Rwanda

Learning

Materials: *Global Africa*, chapters 2.2 and 2.3

Selections from *The Political Thought of African Independence*

Samantha Power, "Bystanders to Genocide"

Discussion

Section: Mau Mau and its aftermath

***PART 4: POSTCOLONIAL POLITICS
and THE POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT***

Week 9 (Mar 24-26)

3/24 Political Trends since Independence

3/26 Postcolonial Economies: the idea and practice of development

Learning

Materials: *Global Africa*, chapters 2.1, 2.4, 2.7, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2

Crawford Young, "A Half Century of African Independence"

Discussion

Section: The end of colonialism and its aftermath

Week 10 (Mar 31-Apr 2)

3/31 Complicating Development: Self-Devouring Growth

4/2 No class: work on take-home assignment

Learning

Materials: Julie Livingston, *Self-Devouring Growth*, “In the Time of Beef”

Discussion

Section: Postcolonial political economies and debating development in Africa

PART 5: HEALTH, SCIENCE, and CONSERVATION

Week 11 (Apr 7-9)

4/7 Health, Healing, and Religion

4/9 “A Reasonable Man” continued

Learning

Materials: Peruse Pew Forum: Sub-Saharan Africa Religion Database

Watch Lisa Naughton’s lecture on “Living with Elephants: A View from Kibale National Park, Uganda.”

Watch “Elephants, Crops, and People: Kibale National Park”

S. Paige et. al, "Uncovering zoonoses awareness in an emerging disease ‘hotspot’"

Discussion

Section: No discussion sections this week - TAs will announce extended office hours

Week 12 (Apr 14-16)

4/14 Disease & Authority in Colonial Africa

4/16 HIV/AIDS

Learning

Materials: *Global Africa*, chapters 4.1 and 4.2

Jonny Steinberg, Sizwe’s Test

Julie Livingston, Creating and Embedding Cancer in Botswana’s Oncology Ward

Watch “Donka: X-Ray of an African Hospital”

Watch “Saving Soweto: 24 Hours of Trauma” parts 1 and 2

Discussion

Section: Science, Religion, Health, and Healing

PART 6: POPULAR AND YOUTH CULTURE

Week 13 (Apr 21-23)

4/21 Youth, Youth Culture, and Social Change in Africa

4/23 Gender and Sexuality

Learning

Materials: Watch Emily Callaci’s Lecture on “Youth Culture and African Socialism in Tanzania”

Ariel Levy, “Either/Or,” *The New Yorker* (November 30, 2009): 46-59

Sean Jacobs, “Why you’ve got to love the way the tabloid Daily Sun reported Caster Semenya’s marriage:”

Discussion

Section: Biomedicine and disease in Africa

Week 14 (Apr 28-30)

4/28 The Art of Dying in Africa (Jacqueline Mougoue)

4/30 Africa in the 21st Century

Learning

Materials: Watch Matt Brown’s lecture on “Nigeria’s ‘Nollywood’”

Watch Adichie, The Danger of the Single Story

Global Africa, chapters 3.5, 5.4, 6.6

Discussion

Section: Youth Culture and Africa’s Future