

University of Wisconsin, Madison
Professor: Emily Callaci
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Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:30-4:30, online
Course Time: Tuesday, 8:50-10:45am
Class Location: Online, using BBCollaborate
Course Credit: 3 credits
Course Designation: This is a graduate level course

HIST 861: African Intellectual History

DESCRIPTION

This course invites students to explore histories of knowledge, ideas and intellectuals in Africa. We will take a capacious definition of intellectual, exploring the lives and work not only of writers and scholars, but also healers, spiritual leaders, scientists, revolutionaries and artists. Though the works that we will read will vary widely in terms of region and time period, several core questions will sustain our inquiry from week to week. Who is an intellectual? What is knowledge, and how is it generated and transmitted? How have some African intellectual traditions endured over time, even when faced with suppression and violence? How do ideas transform as they move from one context to another? What is the relationship between the material world and the world of ideas? Each week, we will explore how African thinkers have understood and created knowledge about a range of issues, including the natural world, health and healing, the slave trade, colonialism, God, technology, capitalism and beauty. Finally, this course will also consider methodological questions; for example, how do historians track the history of ideas in the absence of written texts? How do historians uncover African perspectives in archives created by colonizers? How can historians assess the influence and reach of African intellectual traditions both within the continent and beyond?

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify key themes and methodological approaches to African intellectual history
- Demonstrate a deeper familiarity of the themes and debates within at least one more specialized subfield within African intellectual history
- Improve their skills in academic writing and textual analysis
- Apply the approaches of African intellectual history to their own area of research expertise

COURSE CREDIT

The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), dedicated online time, reading, writing, field trips, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

COURSE FORMAT

Online, using BBCollaborate

REQUIREMENTS

1. Students are required to write a response paper each week. Ideally, response papers should succinctly summarize the key arguments of the book, but then move on to analyze key themes and questions raised by the text. Response papers should end with a discussion question for the group to consider. These response papers are due by 7pm on Monday evening. They should be between 1.5 and 2 single-spaced pages long.
2. Each student will lead discussion once during the semester. On the week that the student leads discussion, they will be responsible for discussing both the required text and briefly presenting a summary of the supplemental readings and how they relate to one another.
3. On the week that the student leads discussion, their response paper will be longer than usual, around 4-5 double-spaced pages. This will serve as a first draft of the final paper.
4. For the final paper, students will write a historiographic essay about one of the weekly topics on the syllabus. This paper will discuss both the required text and all the supplemental readings for that week. That paper should be 10-15 pages long.

EVALUATION

Participation: 25%

Response papers: 25%

Leading Discussion: 15%

First Draft of Historiography Essay: 10%

Final Paper: 25%

REQUIRED TEXTS

The following books have been ordered at the university bookstore. They can also be ordered through various online vendors and most of them are currently available for free online through the University of Wisconsin Library website.

- Joel Cabrita, *The People's Zion: Southern Africa, the United States and a Transatlantic Faith-Healing Movement*, (Harvard University Press, 2018)
- Kathryn M. de Luna, *Collecting Food, Cultivating People: Subsistence and Society in Central Africa*, (Yale University Press, 2016)
- Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019)
- Ousmane Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa*, (Harvard University Press, 2016)
- Clapperton Mahvunga, *Transient Workspaces: Technologies of Everyday Innovation in Zimbabwe*, (MIT Press, 2014).
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- Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, (Duke University Press, 2017)
- Stephanie Newell, *The Power to Name: A History of Anonymity in Colonial West Africa*, (Ohio University Press, 2013)
- Chika Okeke-Agulu, *Postcolonial Modernism: Art and Decolonization in Twentieth Century Nigeria*, (Duke University Press, 2015)
- Monica Popescu, *At Penpoint: African Literatures, Postcolonial Studies and the Cold War*, (Duke University Press, 2020)
- James Sweet, *Domingos Alvares, African Healing and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*, (UNC Press 2013)
- Rudolph Ware, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge and History in West Africa*, (UNC Press, 2014)

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES 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. (See: [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#))

SCHEDULE

September 8, Week 1: Introductions, Course Expectations and “Knowledge”

Read:

Jane Guyer and Samuel Eno Belinga, “Wealth in People as Wealth in Knowledge: Accumulation and Composition in Equatorial Africa,” *Journal of African History*, 1995.

September 15, Week 2: Experts, Knowledge and Community Composition in Early African History

Read:

Kathryn M. de Luna, *Collecting Food, Cultivating People: Subsistence and Society in Central Africa*, (Yale, 2016)

Supplemental Reading:

Neil Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze: Clanship and Public Healing in Buganda*, (University of Virginia Press, 2010).

Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*, (University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

Kairn Kleiman, *The Pygmies Were Our Compass: Bantu and Batwa in the History of West Central Africa, Early Times to c. 1900*, (Heinemann, 2003).

David Schoenbrun, “Conjuring the Modern in Africa: Durability and Rupture in Histories of Public Healing Between the Great Lakes of East Africa,” *American Historical Review* 111, 5 (2006), 1403-1439).

September 22, Week 3: *Longue Durée* Intellectual Histories of the Sahel

Read:

Ousmane Oumar Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa*, (Harvard 2016)

Supplemental Reading:

Michael Gomez, *African Dominion: A New History of Empire in Early and Medieval West Africa*, (Princeton 2018).

Lamin Sanneh, *Beyond Jihad: The Pacifist Tradition in West African Islam*, (OUP 2016)

Bruce Hall, *A History of Race in the Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960*, (Cambridge 2011)

Roderick McIntosh, *Ancient Middle Niger: Urbanism and the Self-Organizing Landscape*, (Cambridge, 2005)

September 29, Week 4: Education, Sufism and Way of Knowing in Modern West Africa

Read:

Rudolph Ware, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge and History in West Africa*, (UNC Press, 2014)

Supplemental Reading:

Sean Hanretta, *Islam and Social Change in French West Africa: History of an Emancipatory Community*, (Cambridge 2009)

Cheikh Anta Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadu Bamba and the Founding of the Murridiyya of Senegal, 1853-2013*, (Ohio University Press, 2007)

Ousmane Oumar Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa*, (Harvard 2016)

Louis Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society*, (Indiana University Press, 2001)

October 6, Week 5: African Intellectual History and the Atlantic World

Read:

James Sweet, *Domingos Alvares, African Healing and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*, (UNC Press, 2013)

Supplemental reading:

Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil in the Era of the Slave Trade*, (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*, (UNC Press, 2000).

Jessica A. Krug, *Fugitive Modernities: Kisama and the Politics of Freedom*, (Duke University Press, 2018).

Pablo F. Gómez, *The Experiential Caribbean: Creating Knowledge and Healing in the Early Modern Atlantic*, (UNC Press, 2017).

October 13, Week 6: Utopian Christian Imaginaries

Read:

Joel Cabrita, *The People's Zion: Southern Africa, the United States and a Transatlantic Faith-Healing Movement*, (Harvard University Press, 2018).

Explore:

Photography exhibit by Sabelo Mlangeni: <https://www.thesouthafrican.com/lifestyle/art-artists/photography-exhibition-features-south-africas-zionist-churches/>

Supplemental readings:

Derek Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent, c. 1935-1972*, (Cambridge, 2012)

Paul Landau, *The Realm of the Word: Language, Gender and Christianity in a Southern African Kingdom*, (Heinemann: 1995)

Karen Fields, *Revival and Rebellion in Colonial Central Africa*, (Princeton, 1985)

David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement*, (Ohio University Press, 2007)

October 20, Week 7: Print Culture and the Public Sphere in Colonial Africa

Read:

Stephanie Newell, *The Power to Name: A History of Anonymity in Colonial West Africa*, (Ohio University Press, 2013)

Supplemental readings:

Emily Callaci, *Street Archives and City Life: Popular Intellectuals in Postcolonial Tanzania*, (Duke University Press, 2018).

Karin Barber, *Print Culture and the First Yoruba Novel*, (Brill, 2012).

Derek Peterson, *Creative Writing: Translation, Bookkeeping and the Work of Imagination in Colonial Kenya*, (Heinemann, 2004).

Isabel Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of A Pilgrim's Progress*, (Princeton University Press, 2004).

October 27, Week 8: The Artist and the African Postcolony

Read:

Chika Okeke-Agulu, *Postcolonial Modernism: Art and Decolonization in Twentieth Century Nigeria*, (Duke University Press, 2015).

Supplemental readings:

Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics and the Avant Garde in Senegal* (Duke University Press, 2004)

Daniel Magaziner, *The Art of Life in South Africa*, (Ohio University Press, 2016).

Sarah van Beurden, *Authentically African: Art and the Transnational Politics of Congolese Culture*, (Ohio University Press, 2015)

Elizabeth Giorgis, *Modernist Art in Ethiopia*, (Ohio University Press, 2019)

November 3, Week 9: Technology, Knowledge and Power

Read:

Clapperton Mahvunga, *Transient Workspaces: Technologies of Everyday Innovation in Zimbabwe*, (MIT Press, 2014).

Supplemental readings:

Nancy Jacobs, *Birders of Africa: History of a Network*, (Yale University Press, 2016)

Abena Dove-Assare, *Bitter Roots: The Search for Healing Plants in Africa*, (University of Chicago Press, 2014)

Gabrielle Hecht, *Being Nuclear: Africans and the Global Uranium Trade*, (MIT Press, 2012)

Robyn D'Avignon, "Shelf Projects: The Political Life of Exploration Geology in Senegal," *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society* 4 (2018), 111-130

Robyn D'Avignon, "Primitive Techniques: From 'Customary' to 'Artisanal' Mining in French West Africa," *Journal of African History* 59, 2 (2018), 179-197.

November 10, Week 10: Postcolonial Worldmaking

Read:

Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, (Princeton University Press, 2019).

Supplemental readings:

Priya Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World*, (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Jeffrey Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism: Nation, State and Pan-Africanism in Ghana*, (Ohio University Press, 2017).

Mike McGovern, *Unmasking the State: Making Guinea Modern*, (Chicago University Press, 2012)

Andrew Apter, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria*, (Chicago University Press, 2005).

November 17, Week 11: African Writers and the Cold War

Read:

Monica Popescu, *At Penpoint: African Literatures, Postcolonial Studies and the Cold War*, (Duke, 2020)

November 24, Week 12: Historicizing Blackness

Read:

Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, (Duke University Press, 2017).

THANKSGIVING

Weeks 13-14: work on your final papers, meet with professor individually

FINAL PAPER DUE: DECEMBER 11, 2020, 5pm