

Africa: An Introductory Survey

Fall 2014

Welcome to Africa: An Introductory Survey. This course is designed to be a multi-disciplinary introduction to the cultures and history of Africa. It is available to students as African Languages and Literature 277, Afro-American Studies 277, Anthropology 277, Geography 277, History 277, Political Science 277, or Sociology 277. Because the continent 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. With this in mind, the course is divided into five broad thematic units: Africa and the World before the 19th Century; Colonialism; Postcolonial Politics and Economic Development; Health, Disease, and Healing; and Popular Culture and Everyday Life. I hope that you will take away from the course an understanding not just of *what* to think about the history and cultures of Africa but also *how* to think about this region of the world.

Instructor

Neil Kodesh

Department of History

Office: 5115 Humanities

Office hours: Tuesday, 11-1. Please e-mail to set up an appointment at another time.

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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 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 plenty of material to work with, including quite a bit of reading. 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 2:30-3:45 in 2650 Humanities. 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, ipods 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 exams. Our TAs are:

Upenyu Majee, Development Studies: majee@wisc.edu
Amy Porter, Educational Policy Studies: alporter@wisc.edu
Caitlin Tyler-Richards, History: tylerrichard@wisc.edu

Their office locations and hours will be announced.

Required Readings:

All students are required to buy the following books:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah*

Howard French, *China's Second Continent: How a Million Migrants are Building a New Empire in Africa*

Trevor Getz and Liz Clarke, *Abina and the Important Men: A Graphic History*

Julie Livingston, *Improvising Medicine: An African Oncology Ward in an Emerging Cancer Epidemic*

Also required is a set of additional readings that I have placed on the Learn@UW site. You are free to buy the books wherever you wish, but this semester I have placed my order with the University Bookstore.

Reading assignments are listed in the weekly schedule. You are expected to do all of the reading. You cannot properly participate in discussion sections and do well on exams unless you've read everything that's been assigned. Your reading assignments are pegged to corresponding lectures in a logical way, but rarely will the reading merely repeat what a lecture has covered. Lectures and readings are intended to be complementary.

I have tried to select books and other readings that will not only inform but also capture your curiosity and imagination. Please bring questions about the week's lectures and other readings 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 readings for any given week will generally be discussed in section the following week.**

Graded Work:

There will be two exams: a mid-term on Thursday, October 16th, in class; and a final exam scheduled for Thursday, December 18th at 10:05 A.M. If you have an unusual conflict or problem, please see me before the exam. Both exams will comprise a combination of short-

answer and essay questions. The final exam will draw on materials presented throughout the course, with extra weight given to subjects covered after the first exam.

Every student also will write a **five-page paper**, to be handed in at lecture on Thursday, November 20th. The paper assignment will be given out a minimum of a week in advance of the due date. Late papers will not be accepted.

Students affiliated with the McBurney Center are strongly encouraged to see Professor Kodesh as soon as possible if they will need alternate arrangements of any sort.

Grades:

Grades for the course will be weighted as follows:

Mid-term exam	20%
Paper	20%
Final exam	30%
Section grade	30%

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. The participation portion of your discussion section grade will be based on the quality of your contributions to discussions and section writing assignments and quizzes, notably a map quiz (about which your TA will say more). Quality of contribution is measured by the usefulness of your in-class statements and the evidence you employ to support them.

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 or me, but only under the following conditions: (1) No more than **two weeks** have elapsed since the exam or paper was returned to you (2) You are polite, respectful, and fully aware that inevitably there is some element of subjectivity in assessing written work.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Introduction

Week 1 (Sep. 2-5)

9/2 Knowing Africa: Preconceptions and Misconceptions

9/4 Geography (Jim Delehanty)

Reading: B. Wainaina, "How to Write about Africa"

Watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED Talk, "The danger of a single story" (available via link on Learn@UW)

Rafira Zakaria, "The White Tourist's Burden"

E. Gilbert and J. Reynolds, "Physical Context of African History: Geography and Environment," pp.15-23.

Discussion section: introductions

Part I: Africa and the World before the 19th Century

Week 2 (Sep. 8-12)

9/9 Ideals of Social Organization and Pathways to Political Complexity

9/11 The Archaeology of Sub-Saharan Urbanism

Reading: M. Grosz-Ngaté, "Social Relations: Family, Kinship, and Community"

E. Brizuela-Garcia and T. Getz, "Archaeological Evidence for the Development of African Cities"

Discussion section: Africa as an idea and ideas about Africa

Week 3 (Sep. 15-19)

9/16 Public Healing and Politics

9/18 The Spread of Islam

Reading: D. Robinson, "The Islamization of Africa" and "The Africanization of Islam"

D. Conrad, "Oral Tradition and Perceptions of History from the Manding Peoples of West Africa"

Watch: "Keita: The Heritage of a Griot"

Discussion section: social organization, urbanism, and political complexity

Week 4 (Sep. 22-26)

9/23 The Atlantic Slave Trade

9/25 Slavery and the African Diaspora (Jim Sweet)

Reading: Transatlantic Slave Trade Database: "A Brief Overview of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade." Read all sections from "Introduction"

through "The Middle Passage"

Watch "*The Slave Kingdoms*"

L. Kaba, "The Atlantic Slave Trade Was Not a Black-on-Black Holocaust"

Discussion section: Islam and oral traditions in West Africa/map quiz

Part 2: Colonialism in Africa

Week 5 (Sep. 29-Oct. 3)

9/30 Abolition, Legitimate Trade, and the Scramble for Africa

10/2 Colonialism: what it was and how it worked

Reading: T. Getz, *Abina and the Important Men*, pp. 1-137.

Discussion section: discussing and debating the Atlantic slave trade

Week 6 (Oct. 6-10)

10/7 Case Study in Colonialism, part 1 (Florence Bernault)

10/9 Case Study in Colonialism, part 2

Reading: C. Achebe, "The Education of a British-Protected Child"

W. Rodney, "The Supposed Benefits of Colonialism in Africa"

N. Mandela, "Statement from the Dock"

S. Biko, "White Racism and Black Consciousness"

Watch "Come Back, Africa"

Discussion section: *Abina and the Important Men*

Week 7 (Oct. 13-17)

10/14 How Colonialism Ended

10/16 In-class Mid-term Exam

Reading: L.S. Senghor, "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century"

F. Fanon, "On National Culture"

Discussion section: no discussion section meetings this week, but your TA will have extra office hours and/or review sessions before the mid-term exam

Part 3: Postcolonial Politics and Economic Development

Week 8 (Oct. 20-24)

10/21 Political Trends Since Independence, 1960-2013 (Michael Schatzberg)

10/23 The Politics of Violence in Postcolonial Africa (Scott Straus)

Reading: H. French, *China's Second Continent*, Introduction and chapters 1-5.

S. Straus, "Wars do End! Changing Patterns of Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa"

Discussion sections: African intellectuals and the end of colonial rule

Week 9 (Oct. 27-Oct. 31)

10/28 Postcolonial Economies: the idea and practice of development

10/30 Complicating development: education and its cost (Nancy Kendall)

Reading: H. French, *China's Second Continent*, chapters 6-10 and Epilogue.

T. Cole, "The White-Savior Industrial Complex"

Discussion Sections: politics and violence in postcolonial Africa

Part 4: Health, Disease and Healing

Week 10 (Nov. 3-7)

11/4 Disease and Authority in Colonial Africa

11/6 Public Health and Global Health in Africa

Reading: J. Livingston, *Improvising Medicine*, chapters 1-3.

L. Garrett, "The Challenge of Global Health"

Discussion sections: debating development in Africa

Week 11 (Nov. 10-14)

11/11 HIV/AIDS in Africa

11/13 Biomedicine in Africa (Claire Wendland)

Reading: J. Livingston, *Improvising Medicine*, chapters 4-6 and Epilogue.

M. Hunter, "The Changing Political Economy of Sex in South Africa: The Significance of Unemployment and Inequalities to the Scale of the AIDS Pandemic"

Discussion Sections: colonial medicine and global health in Africa

Part 5: Popular Culture and Everyday Life

Week 12 (Nov. 17-21)

11/18 African Cinema (Matthew Brown)

11/20 Popular Music in Africa (John Nimis)

Reading: Begin reading C.N. Adiche, *Americanah*

Discussion Sections: HIV/AIDS and biomedicine

Week 13 (Nov. 24-28)

11/25 TBA

11/27 Thanksgiving

Reading: Finish reading C.N. Adiche, *Americanah*

Discussion Sections: no sections this week

Week 14 (Dec. 1-5)

12/2 Swahili Pulp Literature (Emily Callaci)

12/4 Language, Gender, and Sexuality in Swahili (Katrina Thompson)

Reading: B. Larkin and B. Meyer, "Pentecostalism, Islam, and Culture: New Religious Movements in West Africa"

Watch "Call Me Kuchu"

Watch Binyavanga Wainaina, "We Must Free Our Imaginations" Parts 1-6

Discussion Sections: C.N. Adiche, *Americanah*

Week 15 (Dec. 8-12)

12/9 The Culture Wars and the War on Terror in Africa

12/11 Final Thoughts

Discussion Sections: review for final exam