

Professor: Emily Callaci
ejcallaci@wisc.edu
Course Time: Mondays 1:20-3:25
Class Location: Humanities 5245
Office Hours: Tuesday, 1-3
Office: 5125 Mosse Humanities Building or on Zoom

HISTORY 861: Decolonization and African Worldmaking

DESCRIPTION:

Conventionally, historians have understood African decolonization as the transfer of political sovereignty from European colonizers to independent African nations. Yet even as formal decolonization was unfolding, African activists and intellectuals contested the value of “flag independence,” and many expressed deeper and more ambitious visions of what decolonization could mean. For example, some argued that decolonization required the overthrow global capitalism and the creation a more just economic order. For others, it called for the dissolving of colonial boundaries to create a pan-African community. In some places, decolonization offered a political language to challenge gendered hierarchies, while in others, it became a justification for entrenching patriarchy. For some, decolonization was about liberating the mind, while some argued that the real target of decolonization was land. Following on the work of African intellectuals and activists, scholars have asked: what was colonialism? What are its legacies? And, following from that, what is decolonization? This course takes up some of the latest scholarship on decolonization in Africa, with particular attention to what scholar Adom Getachew has called African “world-making.”

COURSE FORMAT:

This course will take shape in two parts. For the first eight weeks of the semester, we will meet as a class to discuss a shared set of texts. For the final six weeks of the semester, students will develop their own reading list on a specific topic and work on an independent basis with the professor on a project of their choice. This requirement is designed particularly for students who are working on a Prelims field. Students who are not working on Prelims may chose to write a review essay, research article, dissertation chapter or grant proposal.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

As an historian, I recognize that our academic discipline has privileged certain people and excluded others—both in terms of the people who have occupied tenured positions in History Departments, and in terms of the perspectives and experiences that have been deemed worthy of historical inquiry. Indeed, until very recently, the walls of Curti Lounge in Mosse Humanities where we hold department meetings were adorned with the portraits of former department chairs,

all of whom (until very recently) were white men. We also acknowledge that the University of Wisconsin-Madison itself occupies the ancestral lands of the Ho-Chunk, a place their nation has called Teejop. In an 1832 treaty, the Ho-Chunk were forced to cede this territory. While we cannot undo all forms of historical injustice in a single seminar, we recognize our ongoing obligation to foster a more just and inclusive discipline of History.

In this seminar, my intention is to create a safe learning environment where all students can participate in open and honest dialogue with one another. We expect all members of the seminar to contribute to a learning atmosphere that is respectful and inclusive, and which recognizes the dignity of each member. We welcome disagreement and varying viewpoints as a productive and necessary part of intellectual inquiry, and we expect seminar members to express disagreement in a respectful way.

ACCESSIBILITY:

Everyone is welcome in this seminar, and I am happy to make accommodations, adjustments, alternatives, or whatever we can do to support your engagement. The McBurney Center provides useful documentation and support related to disabilities, but I do not require McBurney documentation to make the course more accessible to you.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- To comprehend and interpret recent scholarship on decolonization in African history
- To contemplate what it means to study historical processes that are ongoing
- To think critically about the field of African history as it relates to ongoing processes of decolonization
- To develop in-depth expertise in one area of the historiography of decolonization through an independent research project

CREDIT INFORMATION:

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), reading, writing, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

EVALUATION:

Your grade will be based on the following assignments.

Active participation in seminar is required—this does not always mean speaking a lot, but it does mean listening to and engaging other people's ideas and comments, giving positive feedback or support to others, and being willing to risk asking a "stupid" question in order to move the discussion forward. In participation, students should aim not just to express their opinions, but to enhance the learning of others in the seminar. (15%)

Weekly written responses should offer your “take” on the reading. It should not spend too much time summarizing book, but should instead move directly into interpretation and discussion. Your responses are limited to 500 words and should include one well-crafted question that you can draw on in our discussion. Posts are due on Canvas by Sunday at 8pm. (35%)

Once per semester, each student will **lead class discussion**. This will involve completing both the required and supplemental readings for that week, and meeting with me in advance to discuss a lesson plan. (5%)

From weeks 9-15, students will work on independent essay projects. My suggestion is a review essay on the topic of your choice, perhaps building on one of the weekly seminar papers, but I welcome your alternative proposals. The assignment has several components:

- You will prepare an **annotated bibliography** including at least 10 items. (10%)
- You will write an essay on the topic of your choice, which should be roughly 5,000 words. (30%)
- You will give a brief presentation on your findings for the class. (5%)

SCHEDULE:

Week 1: no class

Week 2, January 30: Decolonization as Worldmaking

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

Week 3, February 6: African Students and Global 1968

Pedro Monaville, *Students of the World: Global 1968 and Decolonization in the Congo*, (Duke, 2022).

Supplemental:

- Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender and Modern Style in 1960s Dar es Salaam*, (Duke 2011)
- Jay Straker, *Youth, Nationalism and the Guinean Revolution*, (Indiana, 2009)

Week 4, February 13: Gender and Anticolonial Movements

Judith Byfield, *The Great Upheaval: Women and Nation in Postwar Nigeria*, (Ohio, 2022)

Supplemental:

- Elizabeth Jacob, "Militant Mothers: Gender and the Politics of Anticolonial Action in Cote D'Ivoire," *Journal of African History* 63 (3) 2022
- Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta Mougoué, *Gender, Separatist Politics, and Embodied Nationalism in Cameroon*, (University of Michigan Press, 2019)
- (note: keep an eye out for articles and a monograph by Dr Marius Kothor about gender and decolonization in Togo)

Week 5, February 20: Seizing Technology

Marissa Moorman, *Powerful Frequencies: Radio, State Power and the Cold War in Angola, 1931-2002*, (Ohio, 2019)

Supplemental:

- Joshua Grace, *African Motors: Technology, Gender and the History of Development*, (Duke, 2022)
- Robyn D'Avignon, *A Ritual Geology: Gold and Subterranean Knowledge in Savanna West Africa*, (Duke 2022).

Week 6, February 27: Art, Repatriation and Restitution

Benedicte Savoy, *Africa's Struggle for its Art: History of a Postcolonial Defeat*, (Princeton, 2023).

Supplemental:

- Dan Hicks, *Brutish Museums: the Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution*, (Pluto Press, 2020).
- Sarr/Savoy Report on Restitution (2018) and some of the media debates it has sparked

Week 7, March 6: Climate, Colonialism and Reparations

Julie Livingston, *Self-Devouring Growth: A Planetary Parable*, (Duke, 2019)

Olufemi Taiwo, "What's Next: Why Reparations Require Climate Justice," and "Appendix B: Colonialism and Climate Vulnerability," in *Rethinking Reparations*, (OUP, 2022), (149-190 and 215-222)

Supplemental:

- Jacob Dlamini, *Safari Nation: A Social History of the Kruger National Park*, (Ohio University Press, 2020).
- Emily Brownell, "Reterritorializing the Future: Writing the Environmental History of the Oil Crisis from Tanzania," *Environmental History* 27 (4) 2022.

Week 8, SPRING BREAK

Week 9, March 20: The Politics of Knowledge Production

Joel Cabrita, *Written Out: The Silencing of Regina Gelana Twala*

Marius Kothor, "Race and the Politics of Knowledge Production in African Studies,"

Week 9, March 27: Due: Annotated Bibliography

Week 10, April 3: Individual Meetings

Week 11, April 10: Individual Meetings

Week 12, April 17: Individual Meetings

Week 13, April 24: Individual Meetings

Week 14, May 1: Presentations and Final Discussion