

History 075.401

HISTORY OF AFRICA TO 1850

Spring 2007, MW, 11-12

Instructor: Dr. Cheikh Babou, 306 G College Hall

Office hours: M:3-5, and by appointment

Email: cheikh@sas.upenn.edu

Meeting room: TBA

TA: Nicole Myers Turner

Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with a broad understanding of the cultures, history, social structures, political organizations and economy of Africa before the arrival of Europeans in the continent. We will examine the dynamics of historical change and continuity in Africa and the contributions of Africa and Africans to world civilizations. The major geographic areas of the continent will be studied within a broader chronological and thematic framework, to allow for the examination of both similarities and diversities in the African experience. We will look at the emergence and development of the Ancient civilizations of the Nile Valley, religions and cultures, trade and processes of state building and transformation in the interior and along the Atlantic and Indian coasts, the Atlantic slave trade, and finally Southern Africa.

Objectives and Format

This course has three major aims: first, to introduce students to the rich and diverse civilizations that emerged in pre-colonial Africa; second, to analyze some of the historical processes which have shaped African societies before the European encounters of the nineteenth century; and third, to critically reflect on the ways in which scholars use archeology, linguistics, oral tradition and other disciplines to reconstruct historical knowledge about pre-colonial African societies. Format consists of two lectures per week and a one-hour recitation (REC) to discuss class material.

Requirements

Attendance and class participation: Regular attendance at lectures and participation in recitation sessions are essential. You are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the readings for each week and to participate actively in discussions. Assigned readings are indicated in the syllabus for each meeting. It is the student's responsibility to complete the required readings on schedule so as to participate fruitfully in the weekly discussions. Both attendance and in-class participation will count towards your grade. One absence does not carry a penalty but any additional unexcused absence will negatively affect your final grade. If you have a legitimate reason to miss class, please let me and your teaching assistant know beforehand.

Weekly assignment: The weekly e-mail assignment and participation in recitations will count for 20% of your grade. The weekly assignment consists of not longer than two paragraphs of response to the readings and video of the week. You are expected to summarize the main arguments raised in the material you have read, then to formulate two discussion questions for recitation meetings. These questions are not directed to you or to the instructor but to the students in the section. The weekly assignment is designed to help you keep up with and reflect on course materials as the semester goes along. The e-mail assignment is due every Wednesday at 6:00 pm.

Exams: Each student will be evaluated on five pieces of work and on participation in recitations. There will be a map quiz, two essays, a mid term test and a final. The test, the final exam, and recitations are worth each 20% of the final grade. The two essays count each for 15% of the final grade and the map quiz 10%.

Map quiz ----- in class (10%)
Essay No. 1----- (15%)
Mid-term test----- (20%)
Essay No. 2----- (15%)
Final----- (20%)
Recitation and weekly assignment (20%)

Electronic resources: In this course we will be using Blackboard, which is course management software that provides space for the posting of course materials and allows fast and convenient communication between students and between students and instructor. The syllabus for this class will be posted on Blackboard as well as **a required electronic bulk pack of supplementary readings (ER)** and some additional resources related to specific course topics. Blackboard has a listserv that can be used to reach the class as a group or to communicate with individual students. Students are invited to use the digital drop box and the forum on Blackboard to post the weekly assignment. Registered students with a Penn Net ID and an E-mail address are automatically listed on Blackboard. To access the course site point your browser to <https://courseweb.library.upenn.edu> and log in with your PennNet ID and password.

Academic integrity: Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity and plagiarism policies on all assignments. Plagiarism consists of using other people's ideas without proper acknowledgment. Students who violate the university's academic integrity policies risk failing the course. (For more on academic integrity see Links on Blackboard.)

Required Readings

Books

The following books are available for purchase at the Penn Book Center 34th St. and Sansom near the bank, and at the Rosengarten Reserve Desk at the Van Pelt library.

In addition, an electronic bulk pack of required supplementary readings is available on the course documents section of Blackboard.

Bohannon, Paul and Philip Curtin. *Africa and Africans*. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press Inc., 1995.

Diop, Cheikh Anta. *The African Origin of civilization*. Lawrence Hill Books, 1974.

Ehret, Christopher. *The Civilizations of Africa: a history to 1800*. Charlottesville: The University of Virginia, 2002.

Niane, D. T. *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*. Essex, England: Longman, 1994.

Electronic Reserve on Blackboard

Martin Bernal, *Black Athena*, vol. I, 1-39

Julian Cobbing, "The Mfecane as Alibi," *Journal of African History*, 29(1988): 487-519

Graham Connah, *African Civilizations*, chapters 3 and 4

Elizabeth, Eldredge, "The Mfecane" Reconsidered, *Journal of African History*, 33 (1992):1-35

Christopher Fyfe, "The Abolition of the Slave Trade," in *History of West Africa* vol. 2, ed M. Crowder, chapter 2

Mary Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa*, xi-52

Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: a History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 1995),1-22

Roland Oliver, *The African Experience*, chapter 7

David Robinson and Douglass Smith, *Sources of the African Past*, chapters 1 and 5

Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, chapter 3 and 4

Edith R. Sanders, "The Hamitic Hypothesis" in Robert O. Collins ed., *Problems in African History: The Pre-colonial Centuries*, pp. 9-19

Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, chapter 2

Worger and Al, *Africa and the West*, pp1 -67

Recommended and reference books

These texts are not required but they constitute important additional resources for course readings and for your writing assignments. Excerpts from these books will be used to supplement required material. All recommended books are available at the Library reserve.

Bernal, Martin. *Black Athena: the Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, volume I: the Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1987.

Collins, Robert O. *Problems in African History*. New York: Markus Wiener Press, 1993.

Connah, Graham. *African Civilizations: Precolonial Cities and States in Tropical Africa: an Archeological Perspective*. Cambridge (England): Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Davidson, Basil. *The African Slave Trade*. Boston: Little Brown, 1980.

Elphick, Richard. *Kraal and Castle: Khoi Khoi and the Founding of White South Africa*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.

Khapoya, Vincent. *The African Experience: an Introduction*. Prentice Hill, 1998.

Poh-Kwamena and al. *African History in Maps*. New York and London: Longman, 1982.

UNESCO General History of Africa, Volume 1: Methodology and African Pre-History, ed. J. Ki-Zerbo

UNESCO General History of Africa, Volume 2: Ancient Civilizations of Africa, ed. G. Mokhtar.

UNESCO General History of Africa, Volume 3: Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century, ed. I. Hrbek.

UNESCO General History of Africa, Volume 4: Africa from the twelfth to the sixteenth century ed. D. T. Niane.

UNESCO General History of Africa, Volume 5: Africa from the sixteenth to the Eighteenth century, ed. B.A. Ogot.

Schedule of meetings and assignments

Introduction and overview

Week 1:

January 8: Introduction
January 10: Issues in African History
Bohannon & Curtin, 6-15; Collins ER, 9-19
REC Africa in History

The Land and the People

Week 2:

January 15: MLK Jr. Day. No classes.
January 17: Geography of Africa
Ehret, 29-34; Bohannon & Curtin 18-23;
REC the map of Africa

Week: 3

January 22: The peopling of Africa
January 24: **Map quiz**
Ehret, 17-25; 28-58; 59-100;
REC Africa, cradle of humanity

Ancient African civilizations and cultures

Week 4:

January 29: Film: *Different but Equal*
January 31: Ancient Egypt
Diop xvii-170
REC The civilization of Ancient Egypt

Week 5:

February 5: Kush (Ancient Nubia)
February 7: Aksum (Ancient Ethiopia)
Ehret, 200- 208; 208-215; Diop, 230-235
REC The relations between the Egyptian and Nubian civilizations

Week 6

February 12: Film: *Black Athena*
February 14: African Traditional Religions
Bernal, ER and Lefkovitz, ER.; Bohannon and Curtin, 115-123
REC *The Black Athena Debate*

Christianity and Islam in Africa

Week 7:

February 19: Christianity in Africa

Essay No 1 due

February 21: The coming of Islam

Reading, Oliver ER, 86-101

REC Christianity and Islam in Africa

Islam, Trade and State Building

Week 8:

February 26: Film: *Caravans of Gold*

February 28: Ghana, Mali and Songhay

Bowill, 67-97; 133-195

REC Islam, State and Society in Medieval West Africa

Week 9

March 12: The Sundiata Epic

March 14: The Swahili civilization

Niane, *the Epic of Sundiata*; Ehret, 248-251; 377-379

REC The Sundiata Epic: myth or history

Kingdoms of the Forest

Week 10:

March 19: Ife, Oyo and Benin

March 21: Ashanti

Ehret, 314-318; Bohannan and Curtin, 54-57; Robinson and Smith ch5, ER

REC The Yoruba and Ashanti states

Week 11

March 26: mid-term exam

March 28: The Kingdom of Kongo

Vansina, ER 37-69; Bohannan and Curtin, 172-178

REC Kongo and Christianity

Topics for essay No 2 distributed

The Atlantic Slave Trade

Week 12

April 2: The Portuguese Expansion of the 15th century

April 4: Origins and growth of the Atlantic Slave Trade
Lovejoy, 1-22; Bohannon and Curtin, 180-188; Worger et Al..ER
REC Origins and expansion of the Atlantic Slave Trade

Week 13

April 9: The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade
April 11: The Impact of the Atlantic Trade on Africa
Essay No II due April 11
Rodney, ER; Fyfe, ER
REC Consequences of the Atlantic Slave Trade in Africa

Southern Africa

Week 14

April 16: The *mfecane*: Shaka and the Zulu Kingdom
April 17: Review session
Robinson and Smith ch 1 ER, Cubbing and Eldridge, ER
REC Shaka in the history of South Africa

Final exam: April 30

Essay papers

Your papers should be about 5 pages double-spaced. Make sure that you have a beginning, in which you pose the question and suggest how you will go about answering it; a middle, in which you organize your evidence around an argument; and an end, where you respond to the question on the basis of the evidence and the argument you have developed. Your essays should be well thought-out, clearly organized and carefully proofread and they should be based on information from all the assigned readings and lectures prior to the due date. You may agree or disagree with the authors or the lecturer, but your essays should demonstrate that you have read and thought carefully about the course materials in light of your own views.

Essay NoI

1-What are Diop's main arguments for the "African Origins of civilization"? In your view, does he make a plausible case? Assess the validity of his arguments and those of his critics by paying particular attention to the nature of their sources and the contemporary relevance of the debate.

2-How, when, and why did great civilizations arise in Africa? Explain with reference to the geographical, technological, cultural, and economic factors that underpinned the

development of these civilizations. Give specific evidence from the examples of Egypt, Kush and Aksum.