2014

123-01 African History I

Kathleen Smythe
smythe@xavier.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/history_syllabi_fall_2014

Recommended Citation
http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/history_syllabi_fall_2014/26
AFRICAN HISTORY I
(HIST 123)

Hailstones Hall 100x
Prof. Kathleen R. Smythe
Fall 2014

THE COURSE
Description: Human history in Africa is longer than in any other part of the world. Yet, few people know much about the continent’s history. The aim of this course is to introduce you to the peoples of Africa and their history from human evolution through the sixteenth century. This is an exciting course because we are exploring new ground. But with this novelty comes unfamiliarity—new names, places and concepts. Because of the sources available to us, African history is written much differently than any other history you have been exposed to. African history is also more easily integrated with the study of environment and ecology. Therefore, this course will have a heavy emphasis on the ways in which peoples have shaped and been shaped by their environment.
Philosophy: I seek to make the classroom environment one that is active, engaging and situated within the context of contemporary issues, problems and concerns.

All of this means several things for us:

1. That you will be responsible for working hard outside of class to make sense of reading and other assignments. This means active reading, pursuing interests and leads, and making connections between what you are learning and have learned in this class and others, between what you are learning and what other students have learned, and between what you thought you knew and how the reading material is changing that.

2. That I am responsible for making our classroom time interactive and to call you to think deeply and broadly about why African history matters.

3. That you should feel free to raise questions in class. Your questions and ideas are probably THE MOST IMPORTANT component of a successful class. I and your peers will learn more about the material, what it means and how we might apply it to our lives and future if we hear how you are thinking about it or how you are struggling to make sense of it, or how you are struggling to accept what you are reading, or you get the idea.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs)**

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

-- Create an historical argument and to defend it with historical evidence (History Department SLO 5)

-- Express historical arguments clearly and persuasively (History Department SLO 3)

-- Understand the past on its own terms: develop images of Africa and Africans that accurately reflect historical and contemporary life on the continent (History Department SLO 2)

-- Understand how Africans have responded to their environments and shaped them (proposed Core SLO: Solidarity and Kinship)

-- Become, if you are not already, an active participant in your own education

-- Identify and critically assess multiple dimensions of ethical issues involving global societies (proposed Core SLO: Discernment)

-- Describe and examine the multifaceted character of society by recognizing differences and similarities among individuals and groups (History Department SLO 1; proposed Core SLO: Cura Personalis)

-- Address the root causes of injustice with compassion and academic rigor (proposed Core SLO: Service Rooted in Justice and Love; partially History Department SLO 3)

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Daily Reading Inventory (DRI) (30%): The DRI will assess your regular commitment to the course content (questions 1 and 2 on the DRI), your investment in your own education (question 3) and your basic understanding of MAIN concepts in a given reading assignments (question 4). Success on questions 3 and 4 will be closely related to your ability to garner the important developments (not the details) discussed in the assigned reading. Paying close
attention to chapter headings, introductions, section headings, maps, pictures, and conclusions will be essential to your success on the quizzes. NO ONE can remember everything from one of the chapters assigned for any given day. If you finish the reading feeling as though you have one or two concrete ideas of how African history works, how some Africans might have thought about their world and their lives, or how the environment that Africans lived in impacted their choices and ideas, then you are prepared to come to class, dig deeper into the reading and learn more from your classmates and instructor.

In addition to the DRI, you will be asked, as you enter the classroom every day to choose a colored piece of paper to indicate your level of preparedness for class discussion. Green means you read actively and took notes, discussed the reading with a classmate or looked something up to gain further information. A yellow card means you read actively but did not do anything additional. A red card means you did not read and you wish not to be called on. You can choose a red card 3 times in the semester with no penalty. After that, it will start to impact your grade, through your DRI s and the class discussions.

The first DRI is due the first day of class.

2. On or Off campus events (OCE) (10%): In order to promote a greater university civic conscience and to demonstrate the relevance of out-of-class campus learning opportunities to your in-class learning experiences, you are required to attend two academic events throughout the semester and write a one-page assessment of what you learned and how it relates to some class that you are currently taking (it does not need to be African history). The first OCE will be due September 25 by 4 pm and the second OCE will be due November 13 by 4 pm. Please turn it in electronically on Canvas.

3. Essays (30%): You will write two four-page essays during the course. The questions and instructions will be distributed two weeks before the essay is due. You may re-write them according to instructions below on “Writing”. The first essay will be due October 14 by 4 pm. The second will be due November 20 by 4 pm. You will turn them in on Canvas.

4. Final Exam (30%): This cumulative assessment will be a combination of map identification, short answer and essay questions. Students will determine most of the content. It will be cumulative.

OTHER THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Team-based learning: This class is loosely based on a Team-Based Learning instructional model. In this model, students read material before class and take an in-class exam, individually and then collectively over the material. Subsequently, students will work on questions and assignments. There will be less lecturing in this course than in a traditional history course.

Writing: Writing is too important a skill to be learned only in English classes. Expressing yourself clearly in writing is an essential skill for any subject and career. As a result, I will pay careful attention to not only the historical data that you use and arguments that
you make in your assignments but also to the way in which you write. I believe that learning to write well is a process, not a task completed and perfected in a short amount of time. To this end, you may rewrite your essay (within a week of receiving it) if you do the following. First, meet with another student in the class (preferably one who is more confident in his/her writing skills than you) to discuss your paper and suggest substantive changes. Second, approach your work as an outside reader, revising, rearranging, and making substantive changes. Then, based on your changes, those suggested by your peer, and those suggested by me, rewrite your essay. You must turn in your first essay, your revised essay and a typed cover letter describing how the paper has benefited from the changes from all three sources. Your final grade on the paper will be an average of the first and second drafts of your essay.

Attendance Policy: When I was a college student, a professor once remarked (in disgust), that education is one service that people pay a lot for and then are happy when they are cheated. He was referring to the fact that some students purposefully skip many classes, sign up for easy classes, and do not think about the fact that when they do so they are wasting the money that someone is investing in their education. Just as I believe that education is worthwhile only if it challenges and pushes you, I also believe that class attendance is important in order to get the most out of your education. Regular attendance enables you to experience the course in all its richness and diversity. Regular attendance also teaches responsibility. Obviously, there are some circumstances that will necessitate your missing class, such as serious illness or a death in the family. I ask that when this happens you notify me as soon as possible regarding your absence. Four or more unexplained absences will mean that you fail the class.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism: The University has a policy on academic honesty as stated on page 56 of the 2006-2008 Catalog.

“The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation.

All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own.

Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an “F” in the course, and expulsion from the University.”

In addition, you should be aware that our university has subscribed to turnitin.com which is a plagiarism searching website. It is possible that your assignments will be submitted electronically and screened by the website and added to their database.
THE SCHEDULE

Introduction
Tuesday, August 26—Introduction to course
Reading: Syllabus; Smythe, *Africa’s Past and Our Future (apof)*, Introduction

Thursday, August 28—Images

Tuesday, September 2—Sources
Reading: Vansina, *How Societies Are Born*, Introduction and Ch. 1; Smythe, *Africa’s Past and Our Future*, Introduction (review)

Thursday, September 4—Environmental zones
Reading: Reading: Senan Murray, “Lake Chad fisherman pack up their nets” *BBC News* (read first 3 pages at least); Gilbert and Reynolds, *Africa in World History*, 4-13

Early Human History—8 million years ago (mya) to 10,000 ya
Tuesday, September 9—Introduction to Early Human History and Archaeology
Reading: Smythe, *Africa’s Past and Our Future*, Section 1 Intro and Ch. 1

Thursday, September 11—Africa and Human Origins, 5 mya—200,000 ya

Tuesday, September 16—Gathering and Hunting

Thursday, September 18—Gathering and Hunting

Agricultural and Cultural Differentiation, 10,000 ya to c.500 CE
Tuesday, September 23—Agriculture
Reading: Smythe, Africa’s Past and Our Future, ch. 2

Thursday, September 25—Agriculture
no DRI
OCE #1

Tuesday, September 30—Early Village Society
Reading: Vansina, How Societies Are Born, ch. 2

Thursday, October 2—Pastoralism and the Environment
Reading: Smythe, Africa’s Past and Our Future, ch. 3

Tuesday, October 7—Pastoralism and Collective Imagination
Reading: Vansina, How Societies Are Born, ch. 3

Thursday, October 9—FALL BREAK

Tuesday, October 14—Iron
Reading: Watch “Tree of Iron” video

Thursday, October 16—Iron

Societies Are Born—Central Africa, c. 0 CE to 1500 CE
Tuesday, October 21—Centralized States
Reading: Vansina, How Societies Are Born, ch. 4

Thursday, October 23—Tradition
Reading: Smythe, Africa’s Past and Our Future, ch. 4, “New Ideas and Tradition”

Tuesday, October 28—Heterarchy and Age Sets
Reading. Vansina, How Societies Are Born, ch. 5; Smythe, Intro to Section 2?

Thursday, October 30
Reading: Vansina, How Societies Are Born, ch. 6
Societies Are Born—North Africa, c. 0 CE to 1500 CE
Tuesday, November 4—Age of Commerce and Iron
Reading: Ehret, 159-169 and ??

Thursday, November 6—Early Urbanization and the Nile
Reading: Gilbert and Reynolds, 67-77; David Montgomery, Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations, 36-43

Tuesday, November 11—Early Christianity in Africa

Societies Are Born—East Africa, c. 0 CE to 1500 CE
Thursday, November 13—Swahili Coast
Reading: Gilbert and Reynolds, ch. 8
OCE #2

Tuesday, November 18—Swahili Coast
no DRI

Thursday, November 20—Interior and Heterarchy
Reading: ??
Essay #2 due
no DRI

Tuesday, November 25—Interior and Heterarchy
Reading: Smythe, Africa’s Past and Our Future, ch. 5, “Forms of Social Organization: Matriliny”

Thursday, November 27—THANKSGIVING

Societies Are Born—West Africa
Tuesday, December 2—Commerce
Reading: Austen, Trans-Saharan Africa in World History, ch. 1

Thursday, December 4—Politics and Islam
Reading: ??

Tuesday, December 9
Reading: Sundiata

Thursday, December 11
Reading: Sundiata
Tuesday, December 16: FINAL EXAM, 10:30-12:30