2013

HIST 123-01 African History I

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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. Because of the sources available to us, African history is written much differently than any other history you have been exposed to. For this reason, it is also more easily integrated with the study of environment and ecology. This course will have a heavy emphasis on the ways in which peoples have shaped and been shaped by their environment.

As a teacher-scholar, I am in the final stages of writing a textbook for introductory African classes that has developed as a result of my teaching this course over the past fifteen years. We will be using this (not yet published) book as one of the primary texts for the course.

I care deeply about making the classroom environment one that is active, engaging and situated within the context of contemporary issues, problems and concerns. This is an exciting course because we are exploring new ground. But with this novelty comes unfamiliarity--unfamiliar names, places and concepts. All of this means several things for you and me:
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.

### Student 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)

### Texts:

(available in the University bookstore, Gallagher Student Center)
Erik Gilbert and Jonathon Reynolds, *Africa in World History* (3rd ed.)
D. T. Niane, *Sundiata*

(available on e-reserve and Canvas)
Smythe, *Why We Need African History: A Continent’s Past and Our Future*

**Expectations:** In order to help you achieve the outcomes outlined above, I have designed the following assignments.

**Group (15%) and Individual Quizzes (10%)** will assess your basic understanding of the MAIN concepts in a given reading assignments. Success on the quizzes 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.

**Essays (40%)** 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 15 by 4 pm. The second will be due November 19 by 4 pm.

**Participation (10%)** Students who participate (orally and in writing) on a weekly basis will achieve full credit. Less frequent participation will warrant partial credit. It is a better class experience for everyone, including the instructor, if all students regularly speak in and are prepared for class. Being right or correct is not nearly as important as asking questions, daring to guess, and generally engaging yourself in the conversation and work. Many assignments due the following class day fall into this category and will be evaluated for effort, little effort, or no effort.

**On-campus events (OCE) (5%)** 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 attending the Sustainability Gallery on Monday, October 21 4-5:30 and is due on or before October 22. The second one is your choice of event and is due on or before November 21. Please turn it in electronically on Canvas.
Mon., Oct. 21, 4-5:30 (and then available through February 2014 for viewing)

Grand Opening, Fenwick Place, hall between Currito Burrito and Mission and Identity

   Honoree: Mary Lu Lageman, Farm Activities Coordinator, Grailville Center. The gallery will exhibit Lageman’s life story, emphasizing her vocational and avocational pursuit of sustainability as told by Chelsea Rodstrom, International Studies and Political Science major, and designed by Abbie Kinnett and Sarah Dulle, Graphics Design majors under the direction of Jonathon Gibson.

   Students who wish to be mentored by Lageman for the upcoming year should submit an application (available at: xavier.edu/green) by Oct. 8.

   Sponsored by Senior Administrative Fellow for Sustainability and Art and Graphic Design, contact smythe@xavier.edu

Possible course topics: vocational choices—religious and agricultural; agriculture as religious practice; oral history

Off-campus field trips (5%) Because this course counts as the introductory history course for all the sustainability degrees and in an effort to promote transdisciplinary two-way community engagement learning (the focus of your instructor’s efforts as she works to build sustainability education at Xavier), you will be required to attend two off-campus field trips, described below. Within three days of the event, by Monday September 9 and October 14 (both by 4 pm) you will be expected to submit a brief two paragraph response describing how the trip broadened your thinking about how people and their societies relate to their landscapes.

XAVIER UNIVERSITY SUSTAINABILITY FIELD TRIPS
FALL 2013

Friday, September 6, 3-5, Seasonal tour of French Park with Michael S. George, Park Naturalist and Nature Center Director followed by multi-class discussion.

Friday, October 11, 3-5, Seasonal tour of French Park with Michael S. George, Park Naturalist and Nature Center Director followed by multi-class discussion.

Final exam (15%) This 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.

Grading:

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THE SCHEDULE
(This is always subject to change based on what we do/do not cover in any particular class period or other needs that arise.)

The readings and assignments listed after each day are to be done BEFORE the class period. If just an author is noted for the reading, it comes from one of your texts. If a fuller citation is used, the article or chapter can be found on e-reserve.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION
We all carry distorted images of the African continent. Likewise, our understanding of its history is distorted. The sources we have available to reconstruct African history allow us to think about Africa and history generally in new ways and require us to take the environment in which Africans developed as an essential component of their cultural development. What can you tell about the African environment from the image at the front of this syllabus?
Tuesday, August 27—Introduction to course
PRACTICE QUIZ on syllabus
Assignment for 8/29 prior to reading: Based on the number you drew: 1. Write down 10 images you have of Africa. 2. Google images of Africa and write down the most common images that you come across. Share a photograph with the rest of the class on the discussion board and explain why it is important to you.

Thursday, August 29—Images
Assignment for 9/3 after reading: With a partner from your team, pick a news article from *The New York Times, BBC, The Guardian*, or *The Economist* online and identify what, if any, sources for African history identified in your assigned reading might have been used and why.

Tuesday, September 3—Sources
Reading: Ehret, Civilizations of Africa, pp. 1-17; Lamphear and Falola, Aspects of Early African History, 73-78
QUIZ #1
Assignment for 9/5 after reading: Which environmental zone seems most like that of southwestern Ohio (or, if you prefer, the region of the country you come from)? Why?

Thursday, September 5—Environmental zones
Reading: Senan Murray, “Lake Chad fisherman pack up their nets” *BBC News* (read first 3 pages at least); Gilbert and Reynolds, 4-13
Assignment for 9/10 after reading: What do you think is the most important idea in the Introduction? Why?

Tuesday, September 10—African History and Our Future
Reading: Smythe, *Why We Need African History: A Continent’s Past and Our Future*, Introduction
Assignment for 9/12 after reading: Why is the study of human evolution important?

SECTION 2: EARLY HUMAN HISTORY
We think Eastern Africa is likely the cradle of humanity for climactic reasons. In this section, we will explore early human developments in light of their African
environments. Historians rely extensively on the study of archeology for this reconstruction.

**Thursday, September 12**—Introduction to Early Human History and Archaeology (the wonder of it all)
Reading: Smythe, *Why We Need African History*, Section 1—The Long Duree and Chapter 1: Humanity’s African Origins

**Tuesday, September 17**—Africa and Human Origins, 5 mya—200,000 ya
Reading: Smythe Ch. 1; Ann Gibbons, *The First Human: The Race to Discover our Earliest Ancestors*, “Charts”
QUIZ #2 on Smythe, ch. 1

**Thursday, September 19**—Gatherers and Hunters, 5 mya—present
Reading: Gilbert and Reynolds, ch. 3
   John Reader, “Ancestral Economies,” chapter 13, 115-125
QUIZ #3
Assignment for 9/24 after reading: Perform educative assessment online and be prepared to discuss questions 3-5 with your teammates.

1. Before I started learning about different ways that Africans have lived in the past, I thought…

2. Now, that I have learned more about it and discussed it in class, I think…
3. I (worked hard, worked some, did not work much) to understand the reading and learned these things….
4. I (worked hard, worked some, did not work much) to understand the reading and still do not understand…
5. What I would want my roommate to know about the ways Africans lived in the past is …
Thursday, September 24—Gatherers and Hunters, continued

Thursday, September 26—NO CLASS (individual meetings with professor take the place of this class)

SECTION 3: AGRICULTURAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENTIATION, 9000-1000 BCE
This era is marked by, first, a dramatic increase in rainfall and, at the end, a significant decline in rainfall. Scholars think the first was a factor in the development of agriculture and the second a factor in early state development and urbanization. Much of our historical reconstruction relies on archeology and historical linguistics in this era.

Tuesday, October 1—Introduction to agricultural and cultural differentiation
Reading: Smythe, Why We Need African History, Ch. 2: Early Subsistence: Gathering-Hunting and Agriculture
QUIZ #4
Assignment for 10/3 after reading:
Depending on the number you picked:
1. Xavier launched a new degree this fall: Land, Farming and Community. Based on Smythe, chapter 2 why might it be important for every Xavier student to be familiar with the history of agriculture?
2. How does this chapter change the way you think about agriculture and why your ancient ancestors started farming?
3. What African crop is pictured above and to the right?

Thursday, October 3—Invention of Agriculture, 9000-3500 BCE
Reading: Smythe, Why We Need African History, Ch. 2

Tuesday, October 8—FALL BREAK
Thursday, October 10—— Pastoralism: Another way of life
Reading: Smythe, *Why We Need African History: A Continent’s Past and Our Future*, Ch. 3: Early Adaptation: Climate Change and Pastoralism
QUIZ #5

Tuesday, October 15—— Pastoralism, continued
ESSAY #1 DUE
Assignment for 10/17 after reading: Imagine how drastic climate change in the United States might result in either a Lake Chad or Ancient Egyptian kingdom scenario. Explain the region of the United States impacted, the climate change that would cause it, and what the resulting consequences might be.

Thursday, October 17-- Early Urbanization along the Nile
Reading: Gilbert and Reynolds, 67-77; David Montgomery, *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations*, 36-43
Assignment for 10/22 after reading: What element of matriliny as you understand it from the reading seems most appealing to you? Why? What element of matriliny seems least appealing to you? Why? Which element might mostly like be incorporated into 21st century American society?

Tuesday, October 22— Matriliny as social strategy
Reading: Smythe, *Why We Need African History: A Continent’s Past and Our Future*, Section 2—African Institutions in the Middle Time Frame and Ch. 6: Forms of Social Organization: Matriliny
OCE #1 DUE
Assignment for 10/24 after reading: Perform educative assessment online and be prepared to discuss questions 3-5 with your teammates.

1. Before I started learning about different ways that Africans have lived in the past, I thought…
2. Now, that I have learned more about it and discussed it in class, I think…
3. I (worked hard, worked some, did not work much) to understand the reading and learned these things….
4. I (worked hard, worked some, did not work much) to understand the reading and still do not understand…
5. What I would want my roommate to know about the ways Africans lived in the past is …

SECTION 4: AGE OF COMMERCE AND IRON, 1000 BCE-300 BCE
Ironworking was one of the first industrial developments of humans. It led to a far more efficient economic toolkit for many African societies but also over hundreds of years to significant deforestation. Commerce allowed Africans and their neighbors to take advantage of environmental differences and trade rare and precious items over medium and longer distances.

Thursday, October 24-- Age of Commerce and Iron
Reading: Ehret, 159-169
QUIZ #6
Assignment for 10/29 after reading: Why was North Africa important in world history 3000-2000 years ago? State two reasons and note which one you think is most important.

Tuesday, October 29—Wider Mediterranean world
Assignment for 10/31 after reading: Write a few paragraphs imagining the steps involved in inventing ironworking in Central Africa around 1000 BCE.

Thursday, October 31— Iron
Reading: Ehret, 159-169
Video: Tree of Iron
Assignment for 11/5 after reading: Depending on the number your team draws, you will prepare one of the following for class. Your individual work before class is to be well-versed in your notes and understanding of the sources and technology so that you are well-prepared for the teamwork and presentation. No group work outside of class is expected.

Part A: Sources
You need to make a presentation to a senior high school history class on the tremendous variety of historical sources available to African historians as they reconstruct history. You have chosen early iron-smelting technology as the focus of your presentation, so that you will be able to teach the students not only about the sources generally but about their particular application in this topic.

The students will evaluate your presentation based on the following criteria:

1. I have a clear sense of the wide variety of sources used to reconstruct early Haya iron-smelting.
2. I also have a clear sense of the variety of forms and techniques available within each source (such as fixed and free texts in oral traditions).
3. I have a clear understanding of where these sources were collected, by whom, and under what circumstances.
4. I was able to follow the presentation.
5. I found the presentation interesting.

Part B: Technology
A mid-sized Ohio town that used to thrive on the steel industry is putting together an historical retrospective on iron and steel production worldwide. They have asked you to come in and speak about the technology of iron production in early Africa. They are particularly interested in your knowledge regarding the ways in which this technology was integrated into their cultural values and norms. They want to be able to see their more recent history of industrial steel production and its decline from a very different perspective and hope that you can provide that.

The attendees at the event will evaluate your presentation based on the following criteria:

1. I have a clear sense of the complex and sophisticated technical process of Haya iron-smelting.
2. I have a clear sense of how the process and techniques of iron-smelting...
were closely related to other productive and reproductive activities in Haya culture.
3. I have a clear sense of how our industrial iron and steel production differed profoundly from iron smelting among the Haya.
4. I was able to follow the presentation.
5. I found the presentation interesting.

Tuesday, November 5— Iron continued

Thursday, November 7 – Christianity
Reading: Gilbert and Reynolds, ch. 6
QUIZ #7
Assignment for 11/12 after reading: Explain to your roommate, friend, mother, sibling, or someone else how historical linguistics and oral tradition work to illuminate how African societies shared ideas and traditions in the past. Report on what you still need to know to understand historical linguistics and oral traditions well enough to explain them clearly to someone else.

SECTION 5: THE MIDDLE CENTURIES, 300-1450 CE
Throughout the African continent, more African societies came into contact with each other for a variety of reasons, including trade. Blending of new ideas with old, political authority, trade, Islam and Christianity all figure prominently in this millennium of history. Control of resources, particularly water and transshipment points (where one environmental zone meets another); connections with the spirit world; and/or belonging to a “religion of the book” all provided means for authority in the “Middle Centuries.”

Tuesday, November 12-- Introduction to the Middle Centuries
Reading: Smythe, Why We Need African History, Ch. 4: New Ideas and Tradition
OCE #2 due

Thursday, November 14-- East Africa: Swahili Coast
Reading: Gilbert and Reynolds, ch. 7
QUIZ #8

Tuesday, November 19— East Africa: Swahili Coast
Essay #2 DUE
Assignment for 11/21 after reading: Find an example of heterarchy in your community, state or nation and explain why it is heterarchical, using connections to chapter 5.
Thursday, November 21— East Africa: Interior History
Reading: Smythe, *Why We Need African History: A Continent’s Past and Our Future*, Ch. 5: Forms of Political Authority: Heterarchy
OCE #2 DUE
Assignment for 11/26 after reading:
A. What phrase best expresses the main idea of Austen’s “Introduction to the Sahara,” *Trans-Saharan Africa in World History*? Tell us why.

1. People, like the Garamantes, were able to live and trade widely in the Sahara in the centuries prior to the coming of Islam.
2. In the first centuries of the Common Era, travel and trade across the Sahara were likely intermittent prior to the coming of Islam.
3. Climate change in the Sahara meant that it was never easy to establish long-distance trade across the Sahara.
4. The Greek historian Herodotus is one of the reliable sources for reconstruction of Saharan history at the turn of the Common Era and writes of an early trans-Saharan trade route that others would follow for centuries.

B. What phrase best captures the main idea of Austen’s chapter 2 (through p. 43). Tell us why.

1. Without Islam, trade across the Sahara would not have been as important.
2. Gold remained the most important of the trans-Saharan commodities until the 1500s.
3. The camel caravans of the Sahara were organized and safe enough from the 8th c. to the 14th c. to provide Europe with all of the gold that it needed to mint coins.
4. African societies and peoples on the shores of the Sahara provided Muslim world and Europeans with a variety of commodities, particularly gold and slaves.

Tuesday, November 26— West Africa: Introduction
Reading: Ralph Austen, *Trans-Saharan Africa in World History*, ch. 1 and 2
Assignment for 12/3 after reading: Based on Austen’s 3rd chapter, which is the best explanation of political authority in Trans-Saharan African between 700 and 1800 CE? Why?
a. Trans-Saharan governments exerted only limited authority on their populations because many of their states were so large.
b. Pastoral Fulani leaders, who were often charismatic and called for more orthodox religious practice, lead many military movements that resulted in new states.
c. A focus on Islamic reform, access to trade, and an interest in political expansion marked the often short-lived rule of many states in the Trans-Sahara?
d. We don’t know as much as we would like about political authority in the Trans-Saharan region due to a lack of sources and a strong ruling focus on taxation and diplomacy.

Thursday, November 28—THANKSGIVING

Tuesday, December 3—West Africa: Commerce and Politics
Reading: Ralph Austen, Trans-Saharan Africa in World History, ch. 3
Video: The Salt Caravan
Assignment for 12/5 after reading: Do you detect any elements of Islam in Sundiata?

Thursday, December 5—West Africa: Islam
Reading: Sundiata
Assignment for 12/10 after reading: These questions will help you to think about particular content in the story that will facilitate your answering the questions below.

1. What are some of the specific tasks performed by the griots of Doua and Sundiata?
2. What is the role of seers in the story? Hunters? Blacksmiths? God? (Ivorian novelist Ahmadou Kourouma has said that hunting is a contest between rival magicians (the hunters and the animals))
3. What are the “morals” of the story?
4. What was the result (purpose?) of Sundiata’s travels while he was in exile?
5. What is the purpose of the genealogy at the beginning of the tradition?

Tuesday, December 10—West Africa
Reading: Sundiata
Assignment for 12/12 after reading: These are broader questions regarding Sundiata as an historical source.
1. How do oral traditions, like this one, help us to understand history? Name specific elements of the story that are worthy of an historian’s attention.
2. What are the limitations in using oral traditions as historical sources? Give specific examples.
3. Does this oral tradition reflect the situation in 13th century Mali or the 20th century when it was collected?
4. What are the consequences of writing down an oral tradition as D.T. Niane has done?
Other assignment for final exam TBA

Thursday, December 12— West Africa
Reading: Sundiata

Thursday, December 19 8:30-10:20 --FINAL EXAM