

African History to c. 1850
The Johns Hopkins University, AS 100.121
Fall 2013

Professor

Pier M. Larson
Office: 338C Gilman Hall
Office Hours: By appointment (please email)
Contact: larson@jhu.edu, 443-850-7470
<http://plarson.info/>

Class Meeting Times

Lectures: M & W @ 10, Hodson 210, Professor Larson
Discussion Section 1: F @ 10, Maryland 309
Discussion Section 2: F @ 10, Shaffer 302

Teaching Assistants

- Misha Mintz-Roth, Section 1. Office Hours: Th 10-12, Gilman Atrium, mmintzroth@gmail.com, 917-974-5005.
- Kirsten Moore, Section 2. Office Hours: W 8:30-9:30 & W 11-12, Gilman Atrium, kmoore44@jhmi.edu.

Scope and Purpose

This is the first semester of a two-semester introductory survey of African history. The course examines a vast place over a long span of time: all of Africa from human evolution to about the mid-nineteenth century. Because modern humans have been living in Africa for longer than anywhere else, Africans are remarkably diverse in race, language, culture, and history. There was greater genetic and linguistic variation in Africa at 1400, for example, than on any other continent. The same is true of cultural variation. In addition to the diversity among its “indigenous” populations, Africa is also a modern place. As have other continents, Africa has over the years received large numbers of immigrants from East, West, and South Asia, from the Arabian Peninsula, from Europe, and from the Americas. Many—though not all—of Africa’s more recent immigrants have intermarried with “indigenous” people and came to consider themselves Africans, hyphenated-Africans, or alternately African and non-African, depending on the context. Just as there are Asian, African, and European Americans, then, Africa has its Asian, European, and American Africans. In short, Africa has a long and complex human history, one that does not boil down to the history of any one racial, ethnic, or social group. To be African designates belonging to a continent, not a racial identity nor a specific phenotype.

Studying (and teaching) such a vast and diverse continent can be challenging. Because no introductory course can claim to be fully comprehensive, this one will explore several themes in the history of Africa to about the mid-nineteenth century. The readings and

lectures consider various regions of the continent, including North, West, East, Central, and South Africa.

The goals of this course include both knowledge and enjoyment. You should come away from the class with a new appreciation for Africa and a general idea of its history to about 1850. Acquiring knowledge about a place few Americans know will require a good bit of effort and concentration—"getting" the details of life along the ancient Middle Niger River or in Great Zimbabwe or at the Cape of Good Hope can be as painstaking as understanding an organic chemistry textbook or mastering physics lab. But African history is often a pleasing challenge! We will be reading some fascinating books, including a colorful oral history of the founding of the Mali empire (*Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*) and a fictionalized history of the rise and fall of Shaka, founder of the Zulu kingdom (*Chaka*). These enjoyable readings in Africa's literature will help you to appreciate some of the culture and logic of African life as well as to experience the continent's complex history.

Requirements for superior achievement in this course (a grade of A) include regular attendance at the lectures and your respective discussion sections with no absences left unexplained (*before class*), always completing the reading for each week before your assigned discussion section, turning your informal papers in on time each week, regular and vociferous participation in course discussions, and thoughtful and well-written exam papers turned in on time. *Anyone missing a class (either a lecture or a discussion section) should notify his or her discussion section leader by telephone or email BEFORE the said class meeting, not afterward.*

Requirements

1. Attendance, preparation, asking questions, and participation in class discussions, or, in other words, being responsible and engaged. This is what I expect from every student. Absences—especially unexplained ones—will adversely affect your grade in the final calculation because you will miss important lecture information essential to writing the take-home midterms and finals, and you will not turn in your informal papers.
2. Informal weekly reaction/thought papers. These are informal (grammar, spelling, organization and the like are not expected to be perfect) but the papers must be typed, not handwritten. One page, single spaced, is entirely adequate. You are *not* encouraged to write more. The paper should record your informal reaction to the week's assigned reading, a sort of journal of your thoughts. Also strive to answer questions such as: What was the argument of the assigned readings? What did you find interesting about them? New? Provocative? Questionable? Each paper should also raise two or more questions or issues for the class to deliberate, and you should raise these verbally during your discussion section. The questions should be thought-provoking ones for your fellow students to consider, not simple informational questions for the instructor to answer. The purpose of the weekly papers is for the instructors to

get a sense of how you are engaging with and thinking critically about the readings and to help you prepare for your oral participation in each discussion section. Weekly papers are due each week in discussion section. Ten points will be subtracted from your final grade for each reaction paper not turned in *on time* or excused *before class*. You must turn in *your own* reaction paper and it is a violation of academic honesty to have another person turn it in for you or for you to turn in someone else's paper. If you notify your discussion leader of an upcoming absence from class before the class takes place, you *may be able to* make arrangements to get the informal paper to him or her by some other conveyance.

3. Two map quizzes: one of African geographical features and the other of modern African country names. These will be administered at the beginning of discussion section on September 20 (geography) and September 27 (countries).

4. A take-home mid-term examination. This will consist of two 5-page essay answers to two general questions relating to the required readings, professor's lectures, and course discussions through Week 7 (a total of 10 pages). Exam questions will be available at the end of lecture on Wednesday, October 16 and are due in class—at the *beginning* of class—on Monday, October 21. You must also upload your essay to Turnitin.com. *The conception and writing of these answers must be entirely your own; working with another person on the exam in any way will be interpreted as academic dishonesty.*

5. A take-home final examination. Like the mid-term, this will consist of two 5-page essay answers to two general questions relating to the required readings, professor's lectures, and course discussions from Week 8 (inclusive) to the end of the semester (a total of 10 pages). Exam questions will be distributed as hard copy at the end of class on Wednesday, December 4 and essays are due, as hard copies, Monday, December 16 by noon in the professor's department mail box (301 Gilman Hall). You may complete and turn your exam in at any time before the due date. You must also upload your essay to Turnitin.com. *The conception and writing of these answers must be entirely your own; working with another person on the exam in any way will be interpreted as academic dishonesty.*

Grading

A portion of your grade will depend on attendance and participation. Weekly Papers do not add to your grade but detract from it if you fail to turn them in on time.

Unexplained absences (not informing the professor *before* lecture or section leader *before* discussion section) will definitely count against you if your grade is otherwise on the fence between two grades. By experience, I know that absences from class will lower the quality of your midterm and final, in turn lowering your entire course grade. If you need to make adjustments in the way you write your weekly papers, you will hear from us. If you do not hear from the instructors about your weekly papers, please assume that they are of satisfactory quality. Grades will be calculated on the following

point system; individuals near a border line at the end of the semester will be bumped to the higher grade if they have been clear participants in discussions and prompt in their attendance and with their informal papers.

Participation	100 points
Map Quiz I	100 points
Map Quiz II	100 points
Midterm	350 points
Final	350 points
Weekly papers not turned in	-10 points each

Required Texts

John Parker and Richard Rathbone, *African History: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). ISBN 9780192802484 Kindle ed. available.

Ian Shaw, *Ancient Egypt: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). ISBN 9780192854193 Kindle ed. available.

Graham Connah, *Forgotten Africa: An Introduction to its Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2004). ISBN 9780415305914 Kindle ed. available.

D. T. Niane, ed. *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali* Revised ed. (London: Longman, 2006). ISBN: 9781405849425

David Northrup, *Africa's Discovery of Europe* Third ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) ISBN 9780199941216

Thomas Mofolo, ed., *Chaka* Translated by Daniel Kunene (Long Grove, Ill: Waveland Press, 2013). ISBN 9781478607151

Course Schedule

Week One, 4 & 6 Sept: Introduction

- Sarah A. Tishkoff, et. al., "The Genetic Structure and History of Africans and African Americans," *Science Express*, 30 April 2009. [MSEL electronic reserve; difficult reading, but work hard at assimilating the major conclusions.]
- Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, ch. 1-2.
- ✓ 60 pages of reading

Week Two, 9, 11 & 13 Sept: Human Origins & Early Humans

- Connah, *Forgotten Africa*, ch. 1-6.
- Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, ch. 3.
- ✓ 66 pages of reading

Week Three, 16, 18 & 20 Sept: Language & Early African Economies

- Connah, *Forgotten Africa*, ch. 7-9.

- Christopher Ehret, *History and the Testimony of Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 22-50 [MSEL electronic reserve].
 - Fiona Marshall and Elisabeth Hildebrand. "Cattle before Crops: The Beginnings of Food Production in Africa," *Journal of World Prehistory* 16,2 (2002), p. 99-143 [MSEL electronic reserve].
 - Julie Dunne et. al., "First Dairying in Green Saharan Africa in the Fifth Millennium BC." *Nature* 486 (21 June 2012), p. 390-394 [MSEL electronic reserve].
- ✓ 95 pages of reading

Week Four, 23, 25 & 27 Sept: Ancient Egypt

- Connah, *Forgotten Africa*, ch. 10.
 - Shaw, *Ancient Egypt*, entire book.
- ✓ 165 pages of reading

Week Five, 30 Sept, 2 & 4 Oct: Nubia

- Connah, *Forgotten Africa*, ch. 11.
 - Derek A. Welsby, *The Kingdom of Kush: The Napatan and Meroitic Empires* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), p. 11-71 [MSEL electronic reserve].
- ✓ 65 pages of reading

Week Six, 7, 9 & 11 Oct: Aksum/Ethiopia

- Connah, *Forgotten Africa*, ch. 12-13.
 - Richard Pankhurst, *The Ethiopians: A History* (Oxford Eng.: Blackwell, 2001), 13-80.
- ✓ 64 pages of reading

Week Seven, 15, 16 & 18 Oct: Middle Niger River

- Reread Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, pp. 16-24.
 - Roderick J. McIntosh, *Ancient Middle Niger: Urbanism and the Self-Organizing Landscape* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 1-44.
 - Connah, *Forgotten Africa*, ch. 14 & 17-20.
- ✓ 83 pages of reading

Week Eight, 21, 23 & 25 Oct: The Maghreb, The Mediterranean, & Islam

- Connah, *Forgotten Africa*, ch. 15-16.
 - "Northern Africa in a Wider World," chap. 2 in Philip Curtin, Steven Feierman, Leonard Thompson, and Jan Vansina, eds. *African History: From Earliest Times to Independence* 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1995), p. 29-93. [MSEL electronic reserve].
 - Elena Bosch, et. al. "Genetic Structure of North-West Africa Revealed by STR Analysis," *European Journal of Human Genetics* 8 (2000), p. 360-366. [MSEL electronic reserve].
- ✓ 83 pages of reading

Week Nine, 28 Oct, 30 Oct & 1 Nov: Classical West African Kingdoms

- Connah, *Forgotten Africa*, ch. 21.
 - D. T. Niane, *Sundiata*, entire book.
- ✓ 90 pages of reading

Week Ten, 4, 6 & 8 Nov: Bantu Expansion & Great Zimbabwe

- Connah, *Forgotten Africa*, ch. 22-24 & 26-27.
 - Peter Garlake, *Life at Great Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1982), entire book. [MSEL print reserve; please make your own photocopy of this pamphlet from the print copy on reserve.]
- ✓ 68 pages of reading

Week Eleven, 11, 13 & 15 Nov: East Africa & the Indian Ocean

- Connah, *Forgotten Africa*, ch. 25.
 - Thomas T. Spear and Derek Nurse, *The Swahili: Reconstructing the History and Language of an African Society, 800-1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), p. 67-98 [MSEL electronic reserve].
 - Solofo Randrianja and Stephen Ellis, *Madagascar: A Short History* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), p. 17-75. [MSEL electronic reserve]
- ✓ 95 pages of reading

Week Twelve, 18, 20 & 22 Nov: European Expansion & Slave Trade

- Connah, *Forgotten Africa*, ch. 28-29.
 - Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, ch. 4.
 - Northrup, *Africa's Discovery of Europe*, ch. 1-4.
- ✓ 146 pages of reading

Week Thirteen, 25 Nov: Slave Trade

- Northrup, *Africa's Discovery of Europe*, ch. 5-6 & Epilogue.
 - Enslavement Narratives: Joseph Wright & Petro Chilekwa. [MSEL electronic reserve]
 - NOTE: No discussion sections this week, but an informal paper is required and must be received by your discussion section leader on or before Monday, December 2, in class.
- ✓ 80+ pages of reading

Week Fourteen, 2, 4 & 6 Dec: South Africa

- Mofolo, *Chaka*, entire book.
- ✓ 168 pages of reading (a historical novel)