

**HISTORY 106  
INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN HISTORY**

**BULLETIN INFORMATION**

HIST 106 - Introduction to African History (3 credit hours)

**Course Description:**

An examination of several traditional sub-Saharan African societies and of their political and economic transformation in the modern, colonial, and post-independence periods.

**SAMPLE COURSE OVERVIEW**

TBA

**ITEMIZED LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**Upon successful completion of History 106, students will be able to:**

1. Demonstrate use of the principles of historical thinking to understand human societies.
2. Define and summarize major events, developments, and themes of African history.
3. Evaluate significant themes, issues, or eras in African history.
4. Demonstrate basic skills in the comprehension and analysis of selected sources and their relevance in the context of historical knowledge.
5. Demonstrate the ability to develop interpretive historical arguments drawing on primary and/or secondary sources.
6. Demonstrate the ability to recognize the differences between original historical source material (primary sources) and later scholarly interpretations of those sources (secondary sources).

**SAMPLE REQUIRED TEXTS/SUGGESTED READINGS/MATERIALS**

1. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York, 1994; orig. pub. 1958) [a novel].
2. Blackboard, collection of various sources to be read throughout the semester, as detailed below in Section V.
3. Luli Callinicos, *A People's History of South Africa. Vol. One: Gold and Workers 1886-1924*, (Johannesburg, 1981).

**SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS AND/OR EXAM**

This course will assess student achievement through the evaluation of class participation (including attendance, performance in directed class discussion, and/or brief writing assignments), quizzes, exams, and research papers based on historical sources. The exams will include short answer section[s] and/or essay section[s] and will cover key terms, concepts, and interpretive themes and require students to analyze historical context and apply historical methods to interpret the past. Class discussions will encourage students to use diverse methods

and skills to explore primary and secondary historical sources and apply historical methods and frameworks to interpret the past.

**1. Class Participation**

**2. Quizzes**

**3. Exam one, Exam two, Final Exam**

**4. Paper assignment**

a. Word limit: 1200 words maximum (equals c. 4 double-spaced, typed pages)

i. Use 2 main theses of the Richard Lee article, "What Hunters Do for a Living"; and present as comprehensively as you can the evidence and arguments that the author uses to support his thesis and convince the reader that this thesis is accurate. The thesis of an article--or any other piece of writing--consists of the most important, overall point (or, more often, points) the author is trying to make.

ii. Keep the following in mind as you formulate your statement of Lee's thesis:

1. Do not provide merely a statement of fact or summary of the main points of the article. For example, neither "Lee's article focuses on the !Kung of the Kalahari," nor "Lee's article discusses the following x points concerning the !Kung . . ." qualifies as a statement of thesis.
2. Instead, make your statement of thesis a comprehensive and yet focused generalization about what the author is most importantly attempting to argue or claim. Be careful not to make your statement of thesis too general or too vague. For example, "Lee's article deals with the lives of the !Kung of the Kalahari" is not specific or focused enough to be an adequate statement of thesis. Similarly (to use a hypothetical example) a thesis statement that reads "the main thesis of Smith's article is that the majority of P.E. instructors at City College are incompetent" is too vague. This is because the word "incompetent" can mean too many different things. A more effective and sharply focused attempt would be "the main thesis of Smith's article is that P.E. instructors at City College devote more time and demonstrate higher interest in promoting winning teams than in teaching life-time sports to average students."
3. The final section of the essay is a critique/assessment/reaction, of c. 1 page in length. In this part of the exercise you need to analyze and react to the author's case. Are his arguments and evidence sufficient to establish the thesis put forward? Are there assumptions that appear to you false or dubious? Is there internal logic and consistency? What methods of research does the author use? To what extent were the !Kung of the 1960s isolated from

the major historical developments discussed in this course? What have been some of the most significant changes since the 1960s? These are just a few questions you might consider. This part of the essay will give you an opportunity to demonstrate that you have understood the article and grappled with it effectively. There is no "right" or "wrong" assessment in the sense of conformity or disagreement with anyone else's opinions; what does count is your own independent analysis, critical sense, and reasoned judgment.

## **SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE WITH TIMELINE OF TOPICS, READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS/PROJECTS**

### **PART I: INTRODUCTION**

- Week 1:**        **Course introduction**
- Week 2:**        **Early developments in Africa and Africa in early world history**  
Key words: hominids, homo sapiens, Later Stone Age (c 40,000-10,000 BCE)  
In-class project 1: Periodization in Africa  
Key words/concepts; in-class assignment & discussion: Central concept is Amin Pre-mercantilist period (up to 17th century); 2) Mercantilist period (17th-18th centuries); 3) Integration into the full capitalist system [1] (19th century [up to c. 1880s]); 4) Integration into the full capitalist system [2] colonisation (c. 1880s-1960s); 5) Integration into the post-colonial world (1960s-present). Each student is asked to identify in an informal exercise Amin.  
READING: Blackboard *Africa in World History*, Chap. 1., Blackboard Amin article
- Week 3:**        **Geography and history in Africa**  
Key words/concepts; in-class project assignment & discussion: Each of the assigned groups in class is assigned one of the 5 chapters of the Bohannon & Curtin reading. In an informal exercise each student is responsible for describing/defining key terms in their assigned chapter; as with the previous in-class project each group then prepares a group response, which they share with the other groups in class that have focused on different chapters, after which there is general discussion; see second attached file, B & C in-class project notes.  
Geography and history in Africa  
Key words/concepts: The 4 major ecological zones of West Africa; the patterning of those zones across the region; the ways this patterning contributed to movement & change in West African history; and how the ecological patterning of the rest of sub-Saharan Africa was (and remains in many ways) different.  
READING: Blackboard Bohannon and Curtin, *Africa and Africans*, Chaps. 5-9.
- Week 4:**        **Islam and its influence in sub-Saharan (especially West) Africa**  
In-class project 3 (and formal Written Exercise due): Hunter-gatherers

Key words/concepts: Arabian peninsula & its historical significance; Mohammed & the origins of Islam; Koran

READING: Blackboard Lee article

## **PART II: WEST AFRICA TO THE LATE 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY**

### **Week 5: Ghana (continued) and its successors, Mali and Songhai**

In-class project 4: Ghana, the earliest Western Sudanic kingdom

Key words/concepts; in-class project assignment & discussion: Half the groups in class are assigned the translated 11<sup>th</sup> century Al-Bakri source; half the 12<sup>th</sup> century Al-Idrisi source. Each student is asked to attempt to identify and list what the assigned source tells us of historical significance about the early West African kingdom of Ghana (each source also includes information about other places). In the in-class project nine specific questions on Ghana (in the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries and also in the contemporary era) are posed to be answered from the respective reading in each group. Group answers are then collected and the most accurate evidence is put up on the board. The questions have been ordered so that answers to the first six are similar and those to the last three are contradictory. Class discussion then explores the reasons for both the similarities and differences.

Key words/concepts: chronology & main characteristics, including economic bases of wealth and power, of each successive empire; similarities & differences among the three; rise & decline of each.

READING: Blackboard Al-Bakri and Al-Idrisi excerpts, Blackboard Burns and Collins, *A History of Sub-Saharan Africa*

### **Week 6: Reform and revolution in 19<sup>th</sup> century West Africa**

In-class project 5: The overseas slave trade

Key words/concepts; in-class project assignment & discussion: Each group is assigned one of the four articles in the reading packet on the slave trade. They are asked to identify the geographic focus of their assigned article; the main effects of the trade identified by their article; what information, if any, is provided on demographic effects and the existence of a slave trade prior to the Atlantic trade; and the main thesis of their assigned article. As usual this information is collected and (if accepted as accurate by other groups who read the same article) put up on the board. General discussion then explores reasons for similarities and differences among the sources. The class ends with a mini-lecture & discussion examining the historical debate over the numbers involved in the Atlantic slave trade and the significance of those numbers, as well as an examination of the legacies of that trade in Africa today.

Key words/concepts: 19<sup>th</sup> century West Africa; (1) in the savanna interior (Hausaland, underlying causes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century transformation there that led to colonization).

READING: Blackboard Gilbert and Reynolds, *Africa in World History*, Chap. 8 (overview); Martin

**Week 7: Early East and Central Africa**  
EXAM I

**PART III: EAST, CENTRAL, AND SOUTHERN AFRICA TO THE LATE 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY**

Key words/concepts: East African coastal areas part of international trade from 1st century A.D.; developments there; until 19<sup>th</sup> century, interior involved in local and regional interactions and dynamics; the revolutionary effects of the penetration of international slave & ivory trading into the interior in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

READING: Blackboard Burns and Collins, *A History of Sub-Saharan Africa*, Chap. 7.

**Week 8**

In-class project 6: 19<sup>th</sup> century East and Central Africa

Key words/concepts; in-class project assignment & discussion: Students are asked to identify the main thesis of the assigned article, & some of the important evidence and argument provided that support that main thesis. General class discussion focuses on these topics, plus a mini-lecture that points out the numerous ways in which the case study is typical of the majority of 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> century precolonial East & Central African societies, and how those circumstances have shaped modern geopolitics in the region.

READING: Blackboard Atkinson article

**Week 9: Geography and the peopling of early Southern Africa**

Key words/concepts: Geography & rainfall patterns of southern Africa & their historical influences; San hunter-gatherers (1<sup>st</sup> people in the region, dating back many millenia); Khoi (1<sup>st</sup> pastoralists, from 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.); then gradual spread & dominance of Bantu-speaking mixed farmers, also from 4<sup>th</sup> century. South Africa to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century

Key words/concepts: Coming of Europeans, first Portuguese (1492); then others; establishment of 1<sup>st</sup> long-term European presence by the Dutch East India Company in 1652; establishment of white-ruled Cape Colony; extension of Cape Colony & European settlement, especially from c. 1700; interactions with African groups; contemporary African perspectives on European colonialism.

READING: Blackboard Shillington, *History of Africa*, Chap. 15.

**Week 10: Pre-industrial 19<sup>th</sup> century South Africa**

Key words/concepts: The causes & consequences of the Mfecane (19<sup>th</sup> century; reactions by the larger, earlier settled white population (Afrikaners)

In-class project 7: South Africa in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries  
Key words/concepts; in-class project assignment & discussion: All students are assigned the task of identifying and providing a brief discussion of the main forms of social control by whites over blacks presented in the Callinicos book as a result of the development of industrial gold mining (built on foundations of earlier diamond mines); this is also the basis for the general class discussion of events in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as more recent developments in the area.  
READING: Blackboard Shillington, *History of Africa*, Chap. 18, Reading packet (from Copy Pickup) Callinicos, *Gold and Workers*.

#### **PART IV: AFRICA FROM THE LATE 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY INTO THE 21<sup>st</sup>**

##### **Week 11: Colonial rule in Africa, I**

Take-home Exam II due & map quiz 2

Key words/concepts: Divide colonial rule into 4 broad periods.

Colonial rule in Africa, II

Key words/concepts: Emphasize that whatever the colonial power, all colonial systems were based on colonial control of African land & labor; then note that the most fundamental distinction between types of colonies was whether they had significant white settler populations or not; note the creation of new socio-economic groups among Africans; and the (short-term and long-term) effects of the Great Depression.

READING: Blackboard Bohannan and Curtin, *Africa and Africans*, Chaps. 17-18

##### **Week 12: The last years of colonial rule and the winning of political independence, c. 1940-65**

In-class project 8: The establishment of colonial rule in Africa as depicted by Chinua Achebe

Key words/concepts; in-class project assignment & discussion: Students are asked to read and respond to *Things Fall Apart*, both as a novel and for what it tells us about the ways in which colonial rule was established among one particular West African society (the Ibo or Igbo), the consequences for the members of that society, and how that depiction relates to what we had learned in the previous two classes and what we have encountered in media coverage of contemporary Africa.

Key words/concepts: The crisis & unraveling of colonial rule; the effects of WW II; the new post-war world of the UN and two major super-powers (the US & USSR) which had no vested interest in maintaining the old colonial system; and the winning struggle for African political independence.

READING: Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, Blackboard Bohannan and Curtin, *Africa and Africans*, Chap. 19.

##### **Week 13: Post-colonial Africa, I; Post-colonial Africa, II**

Key words/concepts: Gains and limitations of political independence; basic information on post-colonial Africa (such as population & population growth, rapid urbanization, wide-spread & persistent poverty, problems with food production & health (including HIV/AIDS), & the three dominant international structural dynamics that thwart Africa.

READING: Blackboard Selected newspaper articles, Blackboard Collins and Burns, Chaps. 24-26.

**Week 14: National Resistance Movement/Army (NRA/M); Joseph Kony; Lord**

In-class project 9: Post-colonial Africa, III

Key words/concepts: Politicized ethnicity; Acholi; Idi Amin; Milton Obote; Yoweri Museveni;

In-class project 10: Post-colonial Africa, IV

READING: Blackboard Atkinson, Blackboard Gilbert and Reynolds, *Africa in World History*, Chap. 18.

Key words/concepts: The purpose of this class, after looking at the many major structural and other macro-level problems affecting post-colonial Africa, is to conclude with a class period that emphasizes the many positives and examples of promise that also characterize life in Africa.

**Week 15: 20<sup>th</sup>-century South Africa, I**

Key words/concepts: The South African War

READING: Blackboard Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa*, Chap. 4.

**Week 16: 20<sup>th</sup>-century South Africa, II**

Key words/concepts: Apartheid as a system of extreme racial segregation, social control, discrimination, & oppression; apartheid

20<sup>th</sup>-century South Africa, III

Key words/concepts: Cracks in the apartheid edifice (late 1970s ff.)

READING: Blackboard Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa*, Chap. 5, Blackboard Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa*, Chap. 6.

**Final Exam according to University exam schedule**