

MODERN AFRICA FROM THE SAHARA TO THE ZAMBEZI

History 262, Fall 2017
MWF 10:00-10:50, ARH 131

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Fall office hours: Mon & Tues, 2:00-4:00 pm; Thurs, 1:00-3:00 pm

Sub-Saharan Africa is often depicted as permanently poised on the verge of both progress and primitivism. Popular discourse often attributes the obstacles facing Africans today to timeless patterns of “tribal” rivalry, industrial and agricultural underdevelopment, and ideological backwardness. Others understand Africans’ current social, economic, and political difficulties as products of a relatively recent experience of conquest and foreign rule, but tend to treat the post-colonial experience as a static and irreversible legacy of failed experiments of modernization. This class seeks to move beyond these assumptions and representations, by investigating some of the complex, dynamic, and diverse trajectories of West, Central, and East Africans’ experience, in order to understand the historical contingencies of different communities’ successes as well as their struggles.

It would be impossible to cover the history of a subcontinent in any comprehensive fashion. We also need to take seriously the limitations of treating “Africa” as a uniform historical, geographical, or cultural unit. Therefore, in this course we will integrate synthetic overviews with localized case studies in order to explore the historical dynamics of trade; forced labor; the spread of Islam and Christianity; colonial power and contestation; economic and social development; nationalism; statebuilding; and globalization. In discussing these processes of transformation, we will consider three central themes: how modern Africa and Africans are products of their encounters with the rest of the world; how shifting meanings of race, class, gender, ethnicity, religion, generation, and even history itself have functioned as both causes and outcomes of historical change; and how human agency and creative adaptability have addressed structural upheaval on a local, regional, and global level, through cultural expression, social formation, ideological networks, political and economic institutions, and memory.

Course objectives:

Students in this course will:

- Develop a historical consciousness and critical awareness of some key issues and developments in modern Africa;
- Develop a historical empathy with a diversity of actors and voices of the past;
- Develop competencies in reading and interpreting primary sources, secondary sources, memoirs, and autobiographies;
- Strengthen their analytical writing skills;
- Strengthen their oral communication skills and ability to contribute to a collective dialogue.

Course requirements & evaluation:

Preparation for and contribution to class discussions: 25%

Although class days will occasionally include short lectures and group work, the vast majority of our time together will be devoted to collective discussion. History happens in dialogue; therefore, I really do evaluate class participation. If you do not participate regularly and substantively, you will receive a significantly lower grade for the course. For each day of discussion, you may earn four potential points: one for being there, two for voicing opinions, three for basing those opinions on discernable evidence from the texts, and four for doing all of the above while engaging with your peers in a way that helps advance the discussion. Note that this mode of evaluation assigns more worth to the quality than the quantity of your participation each day; offering one thoughtful, helpful, and well-substantiated comment will earn you more points than dominating the discussion with unfounded or tangential observations. Late arrivals, leaving the room during class time, and talking privately while someone else has the floor undermines a collective atmosphere of mutual respect and commitment, and will be duly noted when assessing participation grades.

To prepare for discussion, you should engage in two levels of inquiry with the reading or film viewing. The first is to understand what the texts are saying. To that end, you should keep in mind the following questions about each source. Make a note of your answers in the margins of the text and/or keep a separate running record.

I. For primary sources (texts produced during the period under investigation, i.e. pieces of the historical record):

- 1) What was the writer's (or filmmaker's, or artist's) intent in creating that text?
 - 2) Who or what is the subject of the piece? Whom does the author claim to represent or speak for?
 - 3) Who was the intended audience? How does the author attempt to connect with that audience?
 - 4) What kind of story is the author trying to tell, and how does he/she structure that narrative? What argument does the author seek to advance? Which passage best exemplifies the underlying point of the piece?
 - 5) What rationale or evidence does the author employ to make his/her case? Which elements of the story are factual, and which are subject to interpretation?
 - 6) What was the particular historical context in which the author was working?
 - 7) What kind of background or bias shaped the author's message?
 - 8) Which aspects of the account seem trustworthy, and which less so?
- (Note: if any of above questions cannot be answered by the text itself, or if any textual references are unclear, do a little outside digging!)*

II. For secondary sources (historians' analysis of the past):

- 1) What question is the writer (or filmmaker) posing?
- 2) How does the author answer that question? Which sentence(s) best state the writer's overall argument?
- 3) What other interpretation(s) does the author appear to be adding to or arguing against?
- 4) How does the author organize and develop the argument throughout the piece? What are the sub-arguments that bolster the main argument? What kind of story is the author trying to tell?
- 5) How does the author use evidence to prove the argument?

You may be called upon to provide answers to any questions that apply on a given day, and to support your answers with specific points in the text.

The second level of inquiry in preparing for discussion involves extrapolating larger sets of implications from the readings and grappling with their significance. To that end, you are also responsible for formulating and addressing larger interpretive questions about the reading. Ask yourself how the texts for the day relate to one another and to the larger themes and other readings you have encountered in the course – do they reinforce or complicate a particular angle of interpretation? What overlaps or discrepancies emerge when you hold up these texts next to each other? What kind of story do they tell about continuity and change over time? I will email specific discussion questions in advance to help guide your analysis of the texts, and sometimes you will be responsible for preparing brief responses to these questions in writing (see below). Be sure always to bring a hard copy of the assigned reading to class.

I do understand that speaking up in class can be challenging. As in honing any critical skill, contribution to group discussions requires preparation, practice, and feedback. The above guidelines are designed to help you become more adept and more comfortable with posing and answering questions and responding to others' ideas. I will provide periodic updates on your participation grades to give you a sense of how your participation is developing.

Finally, please note that outside of class, my main tool of communication with class members is email, so please check your email regularly for discussion questions and other notices. In class, however, please refrain from using laptops or other electronic devices unless you have been given permission to do so.

Source briefs (1 page each, 7 total, 21%):

Roughly once a week, you will turn in a brief analysis (1-2 paragraphs) of the texts, responding to the questions on the syllabus. These will be evaluated on a 10-point scale. Your overall grade will be averaged from 7 out of the 10 briefs, which means you may take a pass on three briefs of your choice, &/or drop your lowest grades. Briefs are due to me by email no later than the start of that class period. Because these briefs will form the basis of class discussion that day, no late submissions will be accepted. You may choose to build on these briefs in your longer papers.

Two short papers (4-5 pages, 15 % each)

These essays will require you to engage critically with a specific historical issue or problem and to craft an argument by synthesizing and analyzing primary and secondary sources. I will post the topics and instructions on Pweb about two weeks before each deadline. All work must be typed and double-spaced, using 12-pt font and 1-inch margins. Citations must be in footnotes or endnotes using Chicago (or Turabian) Style. I am happy to comment on full or partial drafts in advance, as long as you submit them to me well before the deadline and make an appointment to discuss them. You may also submit revisions, based on my comments, for a new grade, provided you track changes and include a written summary of the revisions (conceptual, organizational, &/or stylistic, not just mechanical) you have implemented; these must be turned in no later than one week after I have returned the papers. Please feel free to come and talk to me about your ideas at any stage of the writing process!

Mid-semester exam (10%) and final exam (10 %):

These exams will require you to synthesize identifications and documentary analyses, each covering that respective half of the semester. More specifics about the format will be circulated closer to the exam.

Map quiz: 4%

This quiz will test your geography of the modern political units of East, Central, and West Africa.

Policy on late assignments and absences:

Each of you may take a 48-hour extension on one of the two papers (your choice). If choosing this option, you must notify me of your intent to take the extension no later than 24 hours before the deadline. (Please remember that if you take an extension, you are still responsible for preparing the requisite reading or other class assignments that may coincide with your revised paper deadline.) All other late submissions will receive a grade deduction. Exceptions may be made for serious health or personal issues, at my discretion, if accompanied by documentation from the appropriate office (Health Services or Student Affairs). Briefs are intended as preparation for class discussion and will not be counted if turned in late, under any circumstances.

If you need to be absent for illness or off-campus college commitments (athletic or otherwise), you may accrue credit for the class you missed by submitting a 1-paragraph response to the discussion questions. If the absence falls on a brief day, you may turn in a slightly longer brief.

Note: absolutely NO work will be accepted after Friday, May 15, at 5:00. The college requires that ALL coursework be submitted by the end of exam week unless you are taking an incomplete.

Accommodations:

Grinnell College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students need to provide documentation to the Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, John Hirschman, located on the 3rd floor of the Rosenfield Center (x3089) and discuss your needs. Students should then notify me within the first few days of classes so that we can discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course and coordinate your accommodations.

Religious holidays:

Grinnell College acknowledges and embraces the religious diversity of its faculty, students and staff. Faculty and students share responsibility to support members of our community who observe religious holidays. Students will provide faculty members with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent, and this notice would be expected to occur no later than the third weeks of the semester. Faculty members will make reasonable efforts to accommodate students who need to be absent from examinations or class due to religious observance. Students are responsible for completing any part of the course work, including examinations, they have missed due to religious observance, and faculty members are responsible for giving them the opportunity to do so.

Course texts:

The following required texts are available at the college bookstore, on Amazon, and, with one exception, on reserve in Burling Library. All other readings will be available as handouts, on E-reserve, or on Pweb (as noted below). Several assignments include films, for which screening times will be announced in advance.

- John Parker & Richard Rathbone, *African History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford)
- Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge)
- Donald R. Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa* (M.E. Sharpe, 3rd ed.)
- Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (Houghton Mifflin)
- Sembene Ousmane, *God's Bits of Wood* (Heinemann) – Note: not available on reserve
- Wambui Waiyaki Otieno, *Mau Mau's Daughter* (Lynne Rienner)
- William Worger, Nancy Clark, & Edward Alpers, eds., *Africa and the West: A Documentary History—Vol. 2: From Colonialism to Independence, 1875-present* (Oxford)

Schedule of meetings and assignments:

Contextualizing modern “Africa”

Fri, Aug 25: Introduction

- Kenyan election coverage (Pweb/email)
- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, pp. 1-16

Mon, Aug 28: Narratives and sources

- Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, ch. 1-3
- Paul du Chaillu, “Trade in Gabon,” in Robert O. Collins, ed., *Documents from the African Past* (Pweb)

Wed, Aug 30: Africa and the world in the 18th century

- Parker & Rathbone, ch. 4
- Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa*, ch. 4
- Worger et al, *Africa & the West, vol 1*, docs 17 & 23 (Pweb)

Brief due: Why & how did Niumi have a different experience of the Atlantic slave trade, compared with other parts of West Africa?

Trade, Statecraft, and Religion in the Nineteenth Century

Fri, Sept 1: Commerce and society on the Swahili Coast

- Steven Feierman, “A Century of Ironies in East Africa,” from P. Curtin, S. Feierman, L. Thompson, & J. Vansina, *African History: From Earliest Times to Independence*, pp. 352-75 (Pweb)

Mon, Sept 4: Revolutions in Buganda

- D. A. Low, ed., *The Mind of Buganda* (“Buganda docs”), docs 1-14 (E-reserve or packet)
- Low, *Fabrication of Empire: The British and the Uganda Kingdoms, 1890-1902*, ch. 3 (Pweb)

Brief due: Did the upheaval in Buganda’s government in the 1880s and 90s constitute a revolution from above or below? A political or a social revolution?

Wed, Sept 6: Revolutions in Buganda

- The Life of Ham Mukasa (Pweb)

Fri, Sept 8: New interactions in West Africa

- Wright, ch. 5

Map quiz

European Partition and Colonial Rule

Mon, Sept 11: Contextualizing conquest

- Parker & Rathbone, pp. 99-100
- Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, prologue & ch. 1-11

Note: I am away today for professional travel, so class discussion will take place via P-web.

Wed, Sept 13: Leopold’s Congo and its critics

- Hochschild, ch. 12-18

Fri, Sept 15: Colonial economies & labor

- Wright, pp. 142-173
- Bruce Fetter, *Colonial Rule in Africa* ("Fetter docs"), docs 42, 43, 45, 46 (Pweb)
- Buganda docs 20-21, 28, 32, 39
- Worger et al., *Africa & the West v. 2* ("AW"), docs 4, 18 & 19

Brief due: *How did economic needs shape the colonial control of labor, & in turn social relations within colonies? To what extent were Africans economic agents in this process?*

Mon, Sept 18: The colonial state

- John Iliffe, "The Creation of Tribes," from *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, pp. 318-41 (Pweb)
- Parker & Rathbone, pp. 101-113
- AW docs 1, 5-6
- Buganda docs 15-18, 22-27, 29, 34, 35

Wed, Sept 20: Colonial education

- AW doc 7
- Fetter docs 47 & 49 (Pweb)
- Buganda docs 30, 33, 38
- Selections from the Phelps Stokes Commission Report (Pweb)

Brief due: *To what extent were the priorities of colonial states and colonial elites reflected in education provisions?*

Gender and Colonial Society**Fri, Sept 22: The 1929 Women's War: Narratives**

- Margery Perham, "The Aba Market Women's Riot in Nigeria, 1929," in Carey & Kilson, eds., *The Africa Reader, vol. 1* (Pweb)
- Judith van Allen, "'Sitting on a Man': Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 6:2 (1972), pp. 165-181 (Pweb)

Mon, Sept 25: The Women's War: Sources

- Commission of Inquiry documents, from Toyin Falola, ed., *The Women's War of 1929: A History of Anti-Colonial Violence in Eastern Nigeria* (Pweb)

Brief due: *According to its participants and observers, did the Women's War amount to an organized, widespread assault on colonialism? Was the conflict ideologically driven?*

Wed, Sept 27: Regulating sexual and social bodies

- Tabitha Kanogo, "Becoming Kavirondo: Clitoridectomy, Ethnicity, & Womanhood," from *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900-1950*, pp. 73-103 (Pweb)

Fri, Sept 29: Gendering the urban and industrial marketplace

- Luise White, "Domestic Labor in a Colonial City: Prostitution in Nairobi, 1900-1952," in Sharon B. Sticher & Jane L. Parpart, eds., *Patriarchy and Class: African Women in the Home and the Workforce*, pp. 139-60 (Pweb)
- Jane L. Parpart, "Where Is Your Mother?": Gender, Urban Marriage, and Colonial Discourse on the Zambian Copperbelt, 1924-1945," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1994), pp. 241-271 (Pweb)

Liberation Struggles

Mon, Oct 2: Radical workers, peasants, and intellectuals

- Cooper, pp. 16-37
- *AW* docs 10-13, 17

Paper due

Wed, Oct 4: The postwar moment

- Cooper, ch. 3
- Wright, pp. 200-6
- *AW*, docs 21-23, 27
- Fetter doc 67 (Pweb)

Fri, Oct 6: *Mid-semester exam*

Mon, Oct 9: Labor and nationalism in postwar West Africa

- Sembene Ousmane, *God's Bits of Wood*, up to p. 127

Wed, Oct 11: Labor and nationalism in postwar West Africa

- Sembene, p. 128-end

Brief due: *Why, in Sembene's rendition, did the strike succeed?*

Fri, Oct 13: Labor and nationalism in postwar West Africa

- Frederick Cooper, "Our Strike?: Equality, Anticolonial Politics and the 1947-48 Railway Strike in French West Africa," *Journal of African History* 37: 1 (1996), pp. 81-118 (Pweb)

FALL BREAK

Mon, Oct 23: Contextualizing independence

- Parker & Rathbone, ch. 6

Wed, Oct 25: Conceptualizing independence

- Writings on Negritude and nationalism by L. Senghor & F. Fanon (Pweb)

Brief due: *What were the central overlaps and differences between Fanon's and Senghor's visions?*

Fri, Oct 27: Roads to independence

- Cooper, ch. 4
- *AW*, docs 34, 39 & 40

Mon, Oct 30: Mau Mau

- Wambui Waiyaki Otieno, *Mau Mau's Daughter*, ch. 1-6
- Fetter docs #(74 &) 75 (Pweb)
- *AW* doc 30

Brief due: *1) Did men and women experience and participate in Mau Mau differently? 2) What was the respective appeal of constitutional v. guerilla tactics for freedom fighters?*

Negotiating Independent Nationhood

Wed, Nov 1: Realities of development

- Cooper, Interlude & ch. 5
- Wright, pp. 207-33
- *AW* docs 56-59

Fri, Nov 3: No class (I am away at a conference) – film screening time TBA

Mon, Nov 6: The Cold War in the Congo

- *Lumumba: La Mort Du Prophete* (Raoul Peck, 1991)
- David Newbury, “The Continuing Process of Decolonization in the Congo: Fifty Years Later,” *African Studies Review* 55:1 (April 2012), pp. 131-141 (Pweb)
- *AW*, docs 36-8

Wed, Nov 8: The wrong dream?

- Michael Crowder, “Whose dream was it anyway? Twenty-five years of African independence,” *African Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 342 (Jan 1987), pp. 7-24 (Pweb)
- *AW* doc 41, 47, 60, 61

Brief due: Did the colonial past prevent a democratic future?

Fri, Nov 10: No class (I am away at a conference) – film screening time TBA

Mon, Nov 13: The postcolonial city

- *Mandabi* (Ousmane Sembene, 1968)

Wed, Nov 15: The gatekeeper state

- Cooper, ch. 7
- *AW* docs 48, 55

Fri, Nov 17: The politics of “tradition”

- *Mau Mau’s Daughter*, remainder

Brief due: Wambui asserts that the burial saga “was about gender, not tradition” (158). Do you agree?

Reckoning with the Past, Reclaiming the Future

Mon, Nov 20: Historicizing genocide

- David Newbury, “Understanding Genocide,” *African Studies Review*, vol. 41, no. 1 (Apr. 1998), pp. 73-97 (Pweb)
- Robert Melson, “Modern Genocide in Rwanda,” in Gellately & Kiernan, eds., *The Specter of Genocide* (Pweb)
- *AW* doc 64

Wed, Nov 22: Rethinking culture

- Selections from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, “Decolonizing the Mind” (Pweb)

Paper due

Fri, Nov 24: No class (Thanksgiving break)

Mon, Nov 27: Rewriting history

- Parker & Rathbone, ch. 7
- Richard J. Reid, “Ghosts in the Academy: Historians and Historical Consciousness in the Making of Modern Uganda,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56:2 (April 2014), 351-380 (Pweb)
- Hochschild, ch. 19

Wed, Nov 29: Genocide and memory

- *Sometimes in April* (Raoul Peck, 2004) – film screening TBA
- *AW* doc 67

Fri, Dec 1: The politics of (non-)intervention

- *Ghosts of Rwanda* (Frontline, 2004) – film screening TBA

Mon, Dec 4: The politics of (non-)intervention

- Mahmood Mamdani, “The Politics of Naming: Genocide, Civil War, Insurgency,” *London Review of Books* 29:5, 8 March 2007 (Pweb)
- Cooper, ch. 8
- *AW* doc 66

Wed, Dec 6: The new globalization?

- Wright, ch. 8 & epilogue
- *AW* doc 68

Fri, Dec 8: *Final exam*