



## MODERN AFRICA FROM THE SAHARA TO THE ZAMBEZI

HIS 262, F2 2020

Sub-Saharan Africa is often depicted as teetering on a ledge between progress and primitivism. This class seeks to problematize and historicize such characterizations, by investigating some of the complex, dynamic, and diverse trajectories of West, Central, and East Africans' experience. Admittedly, it is 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 cohesive historical, geographical, or cultural unit. Therefore, in this course we will integrate synthetic overviews with localized case studies to explore the historical dynamics of global and regional trade; forced labor; the spread of Islam and Christianity; colonial power and anti-colonial resistance; economic and social development; nationalism; statebuilding; and globalization. In discussing these transformative processes, we will consider three central themes: how modern Africa and Africans have shaped and been shaped by 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.

Images this page, clockwise from top: Daudi Chwa II, 34<sup>th</sup> Kabaka of Buganda; Kwame Nkrumah voting in independent Ghana's first general election; Mau Mau women in Kenya.

***Instructor***

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<https://grinnellcollege.webex.com/meet/prevoste> ), or by appointment

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Drop-in hours TBA



## COURSE SCHEDULE

*Note: All times refer to CST zone; all page & chapter numbers refer to the most recent book editions (see book list, below).*

*Also note: Although this schedule constitutes the core framework for our class plan, I reserve the right to make changes in order to accommodate class rhythms, textual or technological access, or unforeseen circumstances.*

### I. Conceptualizing & contextualizing “Africa”

Fri, Oct 30: Introduction

**Class webex meeting, 8:45-9:45 a.m.**

Preparation:

- Kenyan 2007 election coverage (Pweb)
- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, pp. 1-20
- Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, ch. 1-3

Mon, Nov 2: Africa and the world in the 18<sup>th</sup> century

**Small groups meet** (see instructions in Pweb folder)

Preparation:

- 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)

Wed, Nov 4: 19<sup>th</sup>-century revolutions

**Class webex meeting, 8:45-9:45 a.m.**

Preparation:

- 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*, 352-75 (Pweb)
- D. A. Low, ed., *The Mind of Buganda (“Buganda docs”)*, docs 1-14 (Pweb)
- Low, *Fabrication of Empire: The British and the Uganda Kingdoms, 1890-1902*, ch. 3 (Pweb)
- Wright, ch. 5

### II. European conquest & colonial rule

Fri, Nov 6: Colonial economies & labor

**Brief #1 due** (see instructions in Pweb), based on:

- Parker & Rathbone, pp. 91-100
- Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, prologue & Part I/ch.1-11 (pp. 6-181)
- Wright, pp 149-176
- Worger et al., *Africa & the West v. 2 (“AW”)*, docs 4, 18 & 19

Mon, Nov 9: Ethnicity and the colonial state

**Class webex meeting, 8:45-9:45 a.m.**

Preparation:

- John Iliffe, "The Creation of Tribes," from *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, 318-41 (Pweb)
- Parker & Rathbone, pp. 101-113
- AW docs 1, 5-7

Wed, Nov 11: The 1929 Women's War

**Brief #2 due**, based on:

- Judith van Allen, "'Sitting on a Man': Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 6:2 (1972), 165-181 (Pweb)
- Commission of Inquiry testimonies, from Toyin Falola, ed., *The Women's War of 1929: A History of Anti-Colonial Violence in Eastern Nigeria* (Pweb)

Fri, Nov 13: Forging a new politics

**Small groups meet**

Preparation:

- Tabitha Kanogo, "Becoming Kavirondo: Clitoridectomy, Ethnicity, & Womanhood," from *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900-1950*, pp. 73-103 (Pweb)
- Cooper, pp. 20-71
- AW docs 10-13, 17, 21-23, 27
- Wright, 176-193

### III. Liberation struggles

Mon, Nov 16: The 1947-48 Railway Strike

**Class webex meeting, 8:45-9:45 a.m.**

Preparation:

- Ousmane Sembene, *God's Bits of Wood* (entire)

Wed, Nov 18: Imagining independence

**Small groups meet**

Preparation:

- Parker & Rathbone, ch. 6
- Cooper, 77-115
- AW, docs 34, 39 & 40
- Writings on Negritude and nationalism by Leopold Senghor & Frantz Fanon (Pweb)

Fri, Nov 20: Mau Mau

**Brief #3 due**, based on:

- Wambui Waiyaki Otieno, *Mau Mau's Daughter*, ch. 1-6
- Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, "'Mau Mau' Detainee," in Bruce Fetter, ed., *Colonial Rule in Africa: Readings from Primary Sources* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 197-203.
- AW doc 30

### IV. Negotiating nationhood

Mon, Nov 23: Development

**Small groups meet**

Preparation:

- Cooper, Interlude & ch. 5
- Wright, ch. 7
- AW docs 56-59

Wed, Nov 25: The Cold War in the Congo

**Class webex meeting, 8:45-9:45 a.m.**

Preparation:

- *Lumumba* (film, Raoul Peck, 2000)
- David Newbury, "The Continuing Process of Decolonization in the Congo: Fifty Years Later," *African Studies Review* 55 (April 2012), 131-141 (Pweb)
- AW, docs 36-38

Mon, Nov 30: Colonial legacies

**Brief #4 due**, based on:

- Michael Crowder, "Whose dream was it anyway? Twenty-five years of African independence," *African Affairs* 86 (Jan 1987), 7-24 (Pweb)
- Robbert Maseland, "Is colonialism history? The declining impact of colonial legacies on African institutional and economic development," *Journal of Institutional Economics*, 14 (April 2018, Special Issue 2, "Colonial Institutions and African Development"), 259-287 (Pweb)
- AW doc 41, 47, 60, 61

Wed, Dec 2: The postcolonial city

**Class webex meeting, 8:45-9:45 a.m.**

Preparation:

- *Mandabi* (film, Ousmane Sembene, 1968)

Fri, Dec 4: The gatekeeper state

**Small groups meet**

Preparation:

- Cooper, ch. 7
- AW docs 48, 55, 68

## **V. Ethnicity and the postcolonial state**

Mon, Dec 7: The postcolonial politics of "tradition"

**Class webex meeting, 8:45-9:45 a.m.**

Preparation:

- Otieno, *Mau Mau's Daughter*, ch. 7-12

Wed, Dec 9: Historicizing genocide

**Brief #5 due**, based on:

- David Newbury, "Understanding Genocide," *African Studies Review* 41 (Apr. 1998), 73-97 (Pweb)
- Robert Melson, "Modern Genocide in Rwanda," in Gellately & Kiernan, eds., *The Specter of Genocide* (Pweb)
- AW doc 64
- Review Cooper ch. 1 and Parker & Rathbone ch. 2

Fri, Dec 11: Trauma and memory

**Small groups meet**

Preparation:

- Film: *Sometimes in April* (film, Raoul Peck, 2004) **TW: contains graphic scenes of violence.**
- AW doc 67

**VII. Reckoning with the past, reclaiming the future**

Mon, Dec 14: Contested histories

**Class webex meeting, 8:45-9:45 a.m.**

Preparation:

- Parker & Rathbone, ch. 7
- Selections from Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "Decolonizing the Mind" (Pweb)
- Hochschild, introduction (pp 1-5), ch. 15, & ch. 19
- Burroughs & de Mul blogpost on Leopold statuary:  
<https://imperialglobalexeter.com/2020/07/20/as-leopold-ii-statues-fall-how-do-we-educate-ourselves-about-his-colony/>
- Chimamanda Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story,"  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story)

Wed, Dec 16: The new globalization?

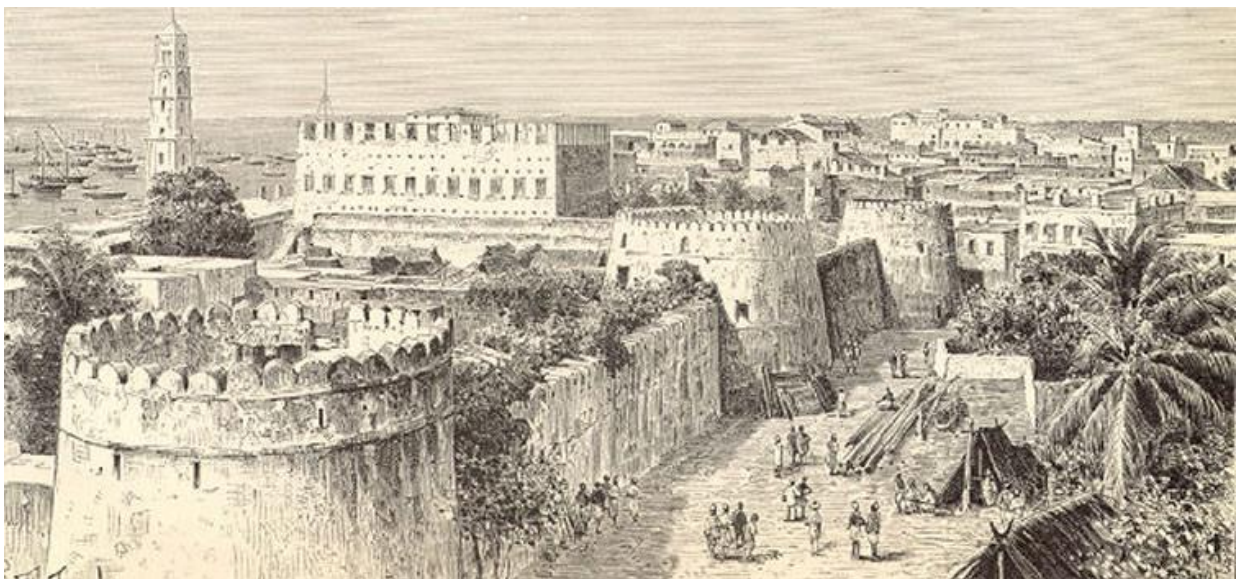
**Class webex meeting, 8:45-9:45 a.m.**

Preparation:

- Cooper, ch. 8
- Wright, ch. 8 & epilogue

Mon, Dec 21

**Final paper due by 5:00 p.m.**



19<sup>th</sup>-c Zanzibar

## COURSE INFORMATION

### ***Course objectives***

Students in this course will:

- Develop a historical consciousness about modern Africa, by investigating a combination of regional trends and localized case studies;
- Develop competencies in reading and critically analyzing primary sources (i.e. the raw materials of the past, produced during the time under investigation);
- Develop competencies in reading and critically analyzing secondary sources (i.e. historical writing about the past, produced after the time under investigation);
- Improve their analytical writing;
- Improve their oral communication skills and ability to contribute to a group dialogue.

### ***Course texts***

The following required texts are available through the college bookstore and/or online vendors. If you're on campus, you may also be able to borrow some from Burling or the lending library.

- John Parker & Richard Rathbone, *African History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford)
- Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)
- Donald R. Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa* (M.E. Sharpe, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.)
- Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (Houghton Mifflin)
- Sembene Ousmane, *God's Bits of Wood* (Heinemann)
- 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)

All other readings will be available on Pweb (as noted on the schedule). A few assignments include films, which will be available for streaming on Pweb or through your own streaming services.

### ***Course requirements and evaluation***

Class citizenship & contribution (35%, about equally divided between full class and small group meetings):

History happens in dialogue, and I evaluate class participation accordingly. In these unusual circumstances of remote learning, "class participation" might look, sound, and/or feel different than it otherwise would; therefore, it becomes even more incumbent upon us all to work intentionally as a group to generate ideas and ensure that everyone can hear and be heard. We will use different platforms to develop that dialogue, including plenary class meetings and small-group workshops. For my part, I strive to engineer an inclusive and challenging learning environment that is "comfortable enough to risk discomfort," as one of my faculty colleagues recently put it.

In evaluating your contributions, I will be looking for:

- evidence-based points that marshal specific examples and passages from the assigned texts;
- multi-layered responses to the questions that build on and develop your peers' comments, making sure to engage positions rather than people ("I dis/agree with X's point" rather than "I dis/agree with X");
- "I" statements that respect differences of opinion and experience and that grapple with historical complexity while avoiding the replication of offensive language and ideas;
- self-awareness of your role within the group dynamic (Is it a time to speak up or to listen? To assert or rethink a position? How can I phrase my points in a way that invites, rather than shuts down, further conversation?);
- a willingness to keep an open mind and to learn from new encounters with texts, people, and ideas;
- devotion of your fullest possible focus and attention to the discussion or task at hand.

Remote classroom protocols:

- I prefer that you keep your camera turned on during our plenary and small-group sessions, but I understand there may be good reasons why you can't or won't do that. Whether your camera is turned on or off, I expect active engagement in these discussions. You may use the chat to supplement as necessary.
- We will be recording all full class sessions and small-group meetings. These are only for internal class use and must not be circulated outside secure college storage sites (Pweb, OneDrive, Webex, etc).

Additional notes:

- Students are often eager to make connections between what they encounter in this class and what they encounter in other classes and/or outside the classroom. I welcome those connections as long as you concretely tie them to the texts and questions under consideration. My reason for this rule: sticking to a common frame of reference and a common set of sources ensures a level playing field and equitable access to knowledge among participants in any given dialogue; using outside knowledge or experience should supplement rather than replace that common frame.
- If you encounter proper names of places or people that you're not familiar with, don't be afraid to try and pronounce them as best you can. It's better to attempt to call something by its name than to gloss over it as unpronounceable.
- Historians no longer use the term "natives" to refer to peoples indigenous to Africa, because of the colonial overtones of that terminology in this part of the world. It's fine to include this term within quotations from primary sources, but if you're referring directly to groups of historical actors, it's better to do so in more specific terms of affinity to place or social and economic strata, such as "Africans," "Kenyans," "Kikuyu," "workers," "peasants," "elites," "intellectuals," etc.
- Some of the primary sources use, or make reference to, extremely offensive language that has historically demeaned Africans and upheld racist systems of power. This includes (but is not limited to) the N-word, which may not and must not be spoken aloud in this class, even if/when quoting from or paraphrasing a primary source.



Writing assignments (see above for deadlines; assignment sheets with specific prompts and instructions will be posted on Pweb):

**Briefs** (4 total, 40%):

Roughly once a week or every other week, you will submit a brief analysis (1-2 pages, 2-3 paragraphs, max 700 words) of the texts, responding to specific questions. Your final grade will include four of the five possible briefs, which means you may either skip one, or drop your lowest brief grade.

**Final synthetic paper** (6-7 pages, 25%)

Building on your previous work, you'll craft an argument about a specific aspect of modern African history by analyzing a body of primary and secondary sources.

**Expectations of written work:**

Although different assignments will entail specific criteria, the same general questions will guide my evaluation of your writing:

- Have you followed the assignment?
- Have you framed and stated a compelling argument that goes beyond a superficial or obvious interpretation?
- Do you develop the argument logically and coherently through sound organization?
- Do you support the argument with appropriate evidence from the relevant primary and secondary sources, properly cited in Chicago style?
- Do you make insightful connections between different sources and perspectives and put them in productive conversation with each other?
- Is your language clear, eloquent, concise, and free of grammatical errors?

**Writing support:**

I am available to offer feedback at all stages of your work! Additionally:

Grinnell's Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center supports students working on papers, projects, presentations, and applications. Schedule a session with one of the Center's professional instructors and get feedback as you interpret readings, talk through your ideas, analyze evidence, develop and organize arguments, craft introductions and conclusions, rewrite sentences and paragraphs, or plan presentations. Center instructors do not proofread papers, but they can show you how to edit your own work effectively. Make an appointment online: <http://mywco.com/grinnell>

Academic honesty expectations follow college policy.

***Access & accommodation***

Grinnell College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students need to provide documentation to the Coordinator for Disability Resources, Autumn Wilke

[wilkeaut@grinnell.edu](mailto:wilkeaut@grinnell.edu) , and discuss their needs with her. Students should then speak with me as early as possible in the semester so that we can discuss ways to coordinate accommodations and ensure full participation in the course.

### ***Religious observation***

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 week of the term. 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. (Approved by the Faculty, September 21, 2009)

### ***The learning environment of 2020***

This class, like many others, is happening in a larger context of uncertainty, stress, frustration, and inequality. I will be as sensitive as I can about those constraints and ask that you do the same for me and your classmates, even as we hold each other to the high standards that characterize a Grinnell education. I commit to doing all I can to make this class a meaningful experience for all of its participants, and I thank you for your trust and engagement in the collective process of learning what it means to do history in the midst of an undeniably historical moment.



The 1947-48 French West African Railway Strike