



## MODERN AFRICA FROM THE SAHARA TO THE ZAMBEZI

HIS 262, Spring 2024  
MWF 9:00-9:50, HSSC N1112

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 left: 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**



Prof. Elizabeth Prevost (pronounced “PRAY-vo”)

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Spring office hours: Mon 10:00-11:50 a.m., Thurs 9:00-10:50 a.m., & by appointment

### **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 and hearing a variety of African voices;
- 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 skills;
- 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. Most are also on reserve in Burling 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 on reserve and/or for streaming on Pweb and/or through your own streaming services.

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

#### Class citizenship & participation (20%)

History happens in dialogue, and I evaluate class participation accordingly. Let's work as a team to generate and share ideas, and to ensure that everyone can hear and be heard. We will use different platforms to develop that dialogue during our shared classroom time. 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;
- thoughtful responses to the discussion questions to classmates' comments;
- "I" statements that respect differences of opinion and experience, engage positions rather than people ("I dis/agree with X's point" rather than "I dis/agree with X"), and 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;
- your regular presence, and presentness, in class. If you need to miss class because of a health or personal issue, please let me know; with permission, a missed class may be made up by posting a short reflection about the texts and questions for that day on the Pweb Discussion Board.

Additional notes on classroom discourse:

- 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 in their lived experience. I welcome those connections as long as you tie them concretely 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 more 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 and practice it than to deem it 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 not exactly derogatory, and it's fine to include this term within quotations from primary sources, but in common parlance, "Africans" or "indigenous people" is preferable. Furthermore, whenever 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 “West Africans,” “Kenyans,” “Kikuyu women,” “workers,” “peasants,” “elites,” “intellectuals,” etc.

- On the other hand, some of the sources use, or make reference to, racial slurs and other offensive language that has historically demeaned Africans and upheld racist systems of power. This includes (though is not limited to) the N-word, which may not be spoken aloud in class, even if/when quoting from or referring to a primary source.
- The history of modern Africa is a violent one, and many of the texts contain material that may be difficult to encounter. I have attached trigger warnings to texts that contain particularly graphic depictions of violence, but there may be others; please come talk to me if you’re having difficulty with the texts for this reason (or any others).
- If using an electronic device in class, please ensure that wifi is turned off and that all windows and applications not being used for class (readings, notetaking, etc) are closed. Laptops and tablets are permitted in class; phones are not.

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

**Briefs (10 total, 60%):**

Roughly once a week, you will submit a short analysis (1-2 double-spaced pages, 1-2 paragraphs, max 500 words) of that week’s texts, responding to specific questions. Each of these will be evaluated on a 10-point scale. Your final grade will include ten of the possible twelve briefs, which means you may skip up to two of your choice, and/or drop your two lowest grades. These briefs are intended to initiate discussion and normally may not be turned in late.

**Final synthetic paper (6-7 pages, 20%)**

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 captures interpretive tension?
- Do you develop the argument logically and coherently through sound organization?
- Do you support the argument with appropriate evidence and examples from the relevant primary and secondary sources, properly cited (preferably 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, concise, and free of major errors?

Academic honesty expectations follow college policy.

### ***Writing support***

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

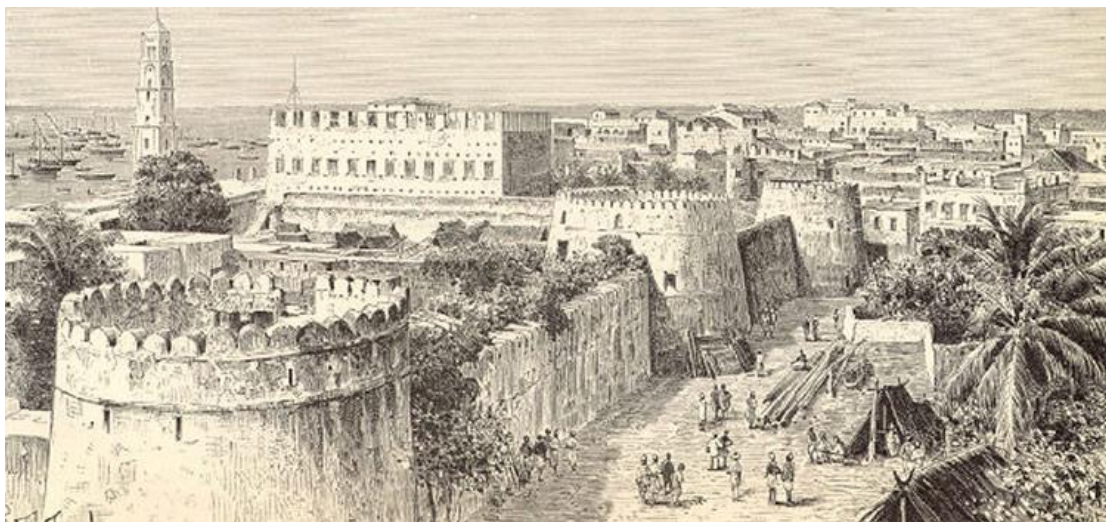
Grinnell's Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center supports students working on papers, projects, presentations, and applications. Schedule a session with one of the Center's professional instructors and get feedback as you interpret readings, talk through your ideas, analyze evidence, develop and organize 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>

### ***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 communicate 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)



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

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

*Note: Readings, films, and assignments are listed under the class day for which they should be prepared. Details and instructions for how to prepare them can be found on Pweb.*

*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 or unforeseen circumstances.*

### **Week 1: Conceptualizing & contextualizing modern “Africa”**

Mon, Jan 22: Introduction

- Press coverage of 2007 Kenya election (Pweb)
- Patrick Gathara twitter feed on 2020 election (Pweb)

Wed, Jan 24: Terms and frameworks

- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, pp. 1-20
- Parker & Rathbone, *African History: A Very Short Introduction*, chapters 1-3

Fri, Jan 26: Africa and the Atlantic world in the 18<sup>th</sup> century

- Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, 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). TW: contains graphic descriptions of enslavement and violence.

*Brief due*

### **Week 2: 19<sup>th</sup>-c revolutions**

Mon, Jan 29: Religion & statebuilding

- 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)

Wed, Jan 31: The case of Buganda

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

Fri, Feb 2: The case of Niumi

- Wright, *World & a Very Small Place*, ch. 5

*Brief due*

### **Week 3: Colonial states & society (race & labor)**

Mon, Feb 5: European conquest

- Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, pp. 91-100 (intro & “Conquest” sections of chap. 5)
- Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, prologue & chaps 1-7

Wed, Feb 7: Colonial economies (Central & East Africa)

- Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, chaps 8-11, 15 (TW: contains graphic descriptions of racial violence).
- Worger et al., *Africa & the West v. 2 ("AW")*, document #s 4 & 19

Fri, Feb 9: Colonial economies (West Africa)

- Wright, *World & a Very Small Place*, pp 149-176
- AW, doc 18

*Brief due*

#### **Week 4: Colonial states & society (ethnicity & gender)**

Mon, Feb 12: Indirect Rule

- John Iliffe, "The Creation of Tribes," from *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, 318-41 (Pweb)
- Parker & Rathbone, *African History*, pp. 101-113 ("Colonial States" and "Despotism v. Ornamentalism" sections of chap. 5)
- AW docs 1 & 5

Wed, Feb 14: The 1929 Women's War (I)

- 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)

Fri, Feb 16: The Women's War (II)

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

*Brief due*

#### **Week 5: Forging new political spheres**

Mon, Feb 19: Bodies of protest

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

Wed, Feb 21: Interwar & wartime mobilizations

- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, pp. 20-50
- AW docs 10-13, 17, 20
- Buganda docs 20, 21, 24 (Pweb)

Fri, Feb 23: Impacts of WWII

- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, ch.3
- Wright, *World & a Very Small Place*, pp. 176-193
- AW docs 21-23, 27
- Buganda docs 45 (Pweb)

*Brief due*

### **Week 6: The 1947-48 Railway Strike**

Mon. Feb 26: The strike as class struggle

- Ousmane Sembene, *God's Bits of Wood*, 1<sup>st</sup> half (up to p127)

Wed, Feb 28: The strike as national struggle

- *God's Bits of Wood*, 2<sup>nd</sup> half (p128-end)

Fri, Mar 1: Whose strike?

- Cooper, "'Our Strike': Equality, Anticolonial Politics and the 1947-48 Railway Strike in French West Africa," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1996), pp. 81-118 (Pweb)

*Brief due*

### **Weeks 7 & 8: Roads to independence**

Mon, Mar 4: Imagining different futures

- Parker & Rathbone, *African history*, ch. 6
- *AW*, docs 34, 39, 40

Wed, Mar 6: Varieties of solidarity (I)

- Writings on Negritude and nationalism by Leopold Senghor & Frantz Fanon (Pweb)

Fri, Mar 8: Varieties of solidarity (II)

- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, ch. 4

*Brief due*

Mon, Mar 11: Constitutional discontent

- Carol Summers, "All the Kabaka's Wives: Marital Claims in Buganda's 1953-5 Kabaka Crisis," *Journal of African History* Vol. 58, No. 1 (2017), pp. 107-127 (Pweb)
- Buganda docs 46 & 47 (Pweb)

Wed 13: Buffer day

Fri 15: Buffer day

### ***SPRING BREAK***

### **Week 9: Liberation struggles**

Mon April 1: Rewriting culture, knowledge, and power

- Selections from Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "Decolonizing the Mind" (Pweb)

Wed, Apr 3: Mau Mau (I)

- Wambui Waiyaki Otieno, *Mau Mau's Daughter*, chaps. 1-6



Fri, Apr 5: Mau Mau (II)

- Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, “‘Mau Mau’ Detainee” (Pweb)
- AW doc 30

*Brief due*

### **Week 10: The Cold War in the Congo**

Mon, Apr 8: Lumumba’s promise

- *Lumumba* (film, Raoul Peck, 2002)
- AW, docs 36-38

Wed, Apr 10: Lumumba’s legacy

- *Lumumba, la mort d'un prophète* (film, Raoul Peck, 1990)
- Burlin Barr, “Raoul Peck’s “Lumumba” and “Lumumba: La mort du prophète”: On Cultural Amnesia and Historical Erasure,” *African Studies Review* 54: 1 (Apr 2011), 85-116 (Pweb)
- Prerana Reddy interview with Raoul Peck (Pweb)

Fri, Apr 12: Roads not taken

- David Newbury, “The Continuing Process of Decolonization in the Congo: Fifty Years Later,” *African Studies Review* 55 (April 2012), 131-141 (Pweb)

*Brief due*

### **Weeks 11 & 12: Navigating nationhood**

Mon, Apr 15: The postcolonial city

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

Wed, Apr 17: The wrong dream?

- Michael Crowder, “Whose dream was it anyway? Twenty-five years of African independence,” *African Affairs* 86 (Jan 1987), 7-24 (Pweb)
- AW docs 41 & 47

Fri, Apr 19: Assessing colonial legacies

- 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 docs 60 & 61

*Brief due*

Mon, Apr 22: The developmental state

- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, Interlude & ch. 5
- Wright, *World & a Very Small Place*, ch. 7
- AW docs 56-59

Wed, Apr 24 The gatekeeper state

- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, ch. 7
- AW docs 48, 55, 68

Fri, Apr 26: New soldiers on new fronts

- AW docs 66A-E
- Selections from John Garang, *Call for Democracy in Sudan* (Pweb)
- Boko Haram reading (tba)

*Brief due*

### **Week 13: Ethnicity and the postcolonial state**

Mon, Apr 29, The politics of “tradition”

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

Wed, May 1, Historicizing genocide

- 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. (TW: contains graphic descriptions of genocide & violence.)
- Review Cooper ch. 1 and Parker & Rathbone ch. 2

Fri, May 3: Trauma, justice, and memory

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

*Brief due*

### **Week 14: Reckoning with the past, reclaiming the future**

Mon, May 6: Neocolonialism & globalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

- Wright, *World & a Very Small Place*, ch. 8 & epilogue
- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, ch. 8

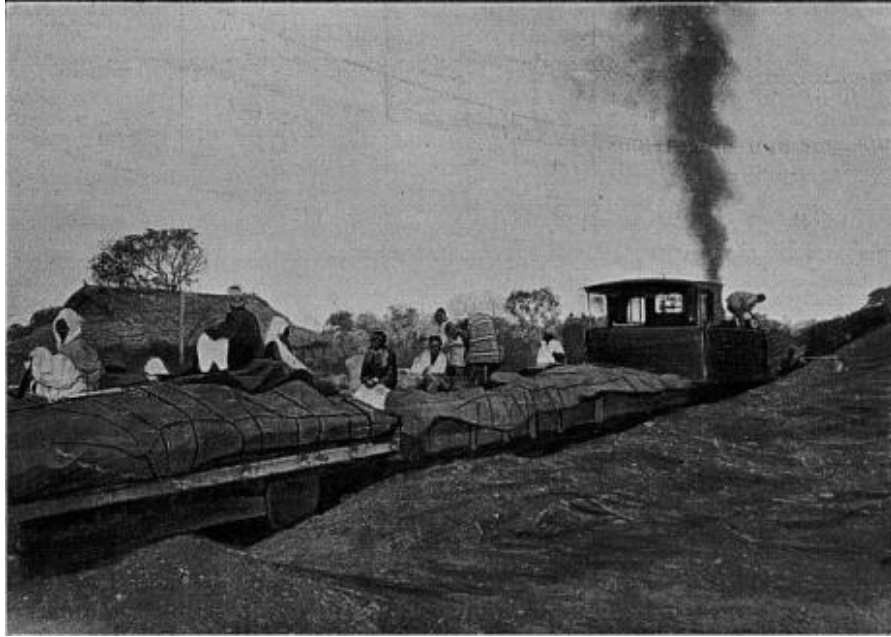
Wed, May 8: Congo’s contested histories

- Parker & Rathbone, ch. 7
- Hochschild, introduction (pp 1-5) & 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/>

Fri, May 10: Conclusion

### **Exam week**

Wed, May 15: Final paper due by 5:00 p.m.



The 1947-48 French West African Railway Strike