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ALS/History 104 – Fall 2010  
**Introduction to African History**  
IRC 8, 12-1:15 TuTh  
SYLLABUS AND READINGS

**Catalog Description:** An introduction to African history from antiquity to the present. Ancient and medieval trading empires, the impact of the slave trade and colonialism are all treated along with some attention to current issues in Africa. Offered every semester (LA, S, HO2).

**Texts:** Shillington, Kevin. *History of Africa*, (London: MacMillan, 1989).  
Niane, D.T. *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*, (Essex: Longman, 1988).  
Beah, Ishmael. *A Long Way Home: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (NY: Farrar, Straus, Giroux. 2008).  
**(P) ALS/HIST 104 Packet** of reprinted documents, folktales, essays & news stories.  
**(V) video (A) Angel postings**

**Scope & Purpose:** This course explores the rich narratives of Africa's past through readings, lectures, discussions, and audiovisual material. Rather than striving for exhaustive coverage, we will explore several themes: the Idea of Africa; Africa's role in world history; environmental influences on African History; characteristic institutions in various regions; intellectual & political achievements of major African states; key features of pre-colonial, colonial, & post colonial eras in Africa; and constructions of social identity in Africa.

**Course Outcomes:**

1. Students will acquire a familiarity with **the main currents of African History**: \*major themes, \*differences in historical eras, \*an awareness of Africa's position in world history; & \*its grand ruptures: e.g. slave trade, colonialism.
2. Students will be able to think critically about African history: they will learn to **identify underlying assumptions in historical analysis, and also varied intellectual perspectives and bias..**
3. Students will be able to identify and evaluate the **merits of different historical sources**.
4. Students will develop an ability to evaluate the **impact of external politico-economic forces** on African societies.
5. Students will become familiar with **different African artistic traditions and indigenous knowledge production**.

"Hanà wani, hanà kài." (If one refuses another, one refuses oneself, i.e., what goes around comes around) [*Hausa proverb-Nigeria*]

"God has given us mules, but no roads to ride on." [*Amhara proverb-Ethiopia*]

"One man cannot build a house, but ten men can easily build twenty houses." [*Nubian proverb-Sudan*]

**Approaches to the topics & readings:**

I. We will emphasize **themes**, re-occurring **responses** by diverse peoples to **similar politico-economic circumstances**, and different cultural **techniques for interpreting reality**. The themes go beyond local events to examine recurrent patterns of historical change that have affected the whole continent.

II. Thus, students should **focus** on **selected factual examples** as they **illustrate** significant **trends**. This approach requires students to **pay close attention** to initial lectures to **identify 'key' themes**.

III. The **assignments** will **test** students' efforts to **draw these themes together** in a coherent understanding of how and why people in Africa developed the economies and cultures they did.

IV. Students are responsible for following the course along three (3) mutually reinforcing paths which balance knowledge about 'what happened' with a general understanding of 'how & why African peoples developed their lives' as they did. The format comprises:

\* **(1) Lectures** focus on general concepts, themes, & patterns, and illustrate general points with examples or case studies. The lectures do not comprehensively cover 'what happened,' rather they contain the conceptual language of the course. In class **videos & maps** supplement as the visual language.

\* **(2) Readings**, (Shillington's text & 104 document packet) present factual material, the course's vocabulary.

Relevant readings are to be completed before we discuss each topic in class.

**\*(3) Other texts & the packet of readings** help students learn about ‘technical’ problems historians face in reconstructing African history, i.e., using “oral traditions,” archaeology, genetic data, folktales, proverbs, and material arts as well as documents/written sources. The methods of history comprise the grammar.

*[\* Students who integrate these 3 aspects of the course should develop an intelligent understanding of what people in Africa have made of their lives & improve their analytic skills to understand other kinds of history.]*

**Week/Topic: approx 1 week per topic**

(1) **8/26. Africa and the World:** past and present. A snapshot of Africa’s complex present as a prelude to an examination of its past. **Images** of Africa’s present, myths of Africa’s past. **History as knowledge production.** Be prepared to discuss your assumptions about Africa and history in general.

**Shillington**, ch. 1

(P) **104 Packet**, #1-2

(V) *Afrika T.V.* (excerpt)

(2) **8/31 Mapping Africa -- ecology** past and present: water resources; deserts, vegetation; climate and disease. **Human origins** and the beginning of community (25,000-5,000 BCE), settled society (5000-1000 BCE). African **families** & other collectivities. Evolving institutions and **common social patterns**. Be prepared to discuss environmental influences on African history.

**Shillington**, ch. 1;

(P) **104 Packet**, #3

(V) *Manmade Famine* (excerpt)

(3) **9/7 Ancient Africa** in World History. The challenge of **agriculture**. Ancient **Egypt (3500-500BCE)**: culture, economy & technology. Africa & the debate about the origins of western civilization. Be prepared to discuss the varied sources of ancient history.

**Shillington**, ch. 2-4

(V) *Different but Equal*

(P) **104 Packet # 4** (Pyramid text)

(4) **9/14. Classical North East Africa:** Reaction Paper 1: due Tues. Sept 14<sup>th</sup>

Early trans-Saharan trade. The Upper Nile: **Kush and Axum**. Origins of African Christianity. Be prepared to discuss the contributions of Nile Valley civilizations & debates about them.

**Shillington**, ch. 5

(P) **104 Packet # 5-8** (Pyramid txt, Ezana, Solomon & Sheba)

(V) *Mysteries of Kush*

(5) **9/21. Medieval Trading Empires:** Commerce, cities & statecraft-- 1) State formation and long distance trade; 2) Militarization --the adoption of horses and Islam; 3) Sudanic states--**Ghana, Mali, Songhay**, 700-1600 CE); 4) **Swahili** city-states of E. Africa 1000-1500 CE; 5) Great **Zimbabwe** (800-1500 CE)

Be prepared to discuss **oral traditions** as history sources& to discuss Islam’s role in Africa’s history.

**Shillington**, ch.9-10

(P) **104 packet # 9-11**

(V) *Caravans of Gold/Keita*

\* **Sundiata** paper due: Th. Sept 23rd

(6) **9/28 Maritime Revolution/Rise of So. Atlantic System.**

**European Slave Trade and West Africa to 1800**—The rise of the South Atlantic slave trade. The impact of the slave trade on Africa’s societies & economies. Abolition & the decline of the slave trade. Be prepared to discuss why the slave trade is important to Africa & world history. Explain slavery’s legacy

in

Africa. **REACTION PAPER # 2** (slavery/slave trade narratives) due Thurs.Oct 7th

**Shillington**, 12, 13, 16

(P) **104 Packet # 12-14 (slave trade accts, memoirs)**

(V) *Equiano: Son of Africa*

(V) *Wonders of Africa: Slave Kingdoms*

(7) **10/12-Building New States/Imagining New Societies.** New state formations: “western colonial settler” states v. indigenous formations. Be prepared to discuss: “abolition,” & *western* v. *African* ideas about state structures. Be familiar with examples from *West Africa* [Sierra Leone & Liberia: Western settler states];

*Southern Africa* - Cape Colony, the *mfecane* & Zulu expansion; & *W. Sudan* -jihadic new states.

READINGS: **Shillington**, ch. 15, 16 & 18

(P) **104 packet # 15-18** (nat'l origins)

(V) *Liberia: stepchild of slave trade*

(V) *Shaka Zulu* (excerpt)

**(8) 10/19. Imperialism, the Partition of Africa & Theories of "new" imperialism.** Their application to the "scramble for Africa," at the Berlin Conference (1884-85). 19<sup>th</sup> c "ideas" of Africa and **discourses** of racism & imperialism.

**Shillington**, ch. 20-21

(P) **104 Packet # 19 (Euro inventions of Africa)**

(V) "Sara Baartman" + "Magnificent African Cake" (10 min)

**9. 10/26. Colonialism in Africa.** The structure and operating assumptions of colonial domination. Theory & practice of racial superiority, assimilation and the African "other." African reactions to colonial subjugation: tax protests, peasant uprisings, work strikes, and religious protest movements. The tools of empire: schools, churches, clinics, mines & farms. Material effects of the colonial imagination. Be prepared to discuss colonialism as a social system with distinct values & objectives. REACTION PAPER # 3 due Th. Nov 4<sup>th</sup>

**Shillington**, ch. 22-23

(H) **104 Packet # 20-21**

(V) **Africans:** tools of exploitation

**(10) 11/2. Nationalism & pan-Africanism** between World War I & WW II. Varieties of resistance to colonial domination. Work of the pan-African Congresses, négritude writers and nationalist consciousness. Be prepared to discuss accommodation and resistance to colonialism as both "material" and "ideological," & to define "nationalism."

**Shillington**, ch. 24

(V) Afr. Soldiers, **Great War** (5 min.) + **Africa, WWII** (15 min.)

**(11) 11/9. Independence Movements : political decolonization.** Case studies of Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal & Kenya. Be prepared to discuss why: 1) WWII was a turning point in African History; the sources historians use to reconstruct this era; & the varied meanings of decolonization. REACTION PAPER #4 Th. Nov 18<sup>th</sup>

**Shillington**, ch 22-25

(V) **Africa: nationalism** (excerpt)

**(12) 11/16. The Cold War and global politics 1950-90:** Super power rivalry & the atomic age. National liberation wars in Angola, Mozambique, & Zimbabwe. **Cold War & the anti-apartheid struggle** in South Africa. Be prepared to discuss why & how the Cold War structured decolonization in southern Africa.

**Shillington**, ch. 22 & 27

(V) *Viva Mandela!*

**(13) 11/30 End of the Cold War (Aftershocks, 1990-2005).** Weak states, military rulers, corruption & global corporations, state violence, & ethno-nationalism as factors in producing new social problems--child soldiers, migrants, refugees, genocide, AIDS, sexual violence, etc. Case studies of HIV/AIDS (Rwanda, Uganda, So Africa) environmental movements (Nigeria, Kenya) ethnic cleansing/genocide (Sudan) and pro-democracy movements (Mali, Kenya). Paper: A Long Way Home due Tu. Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>

**Shillington**, ch. 28-29

(P) **104 # 26-28**

(V) *An African Martyr: Saro-Wiwa*

**(14) 12/7. Creative Arts and Knowledge Production** in contemporary Africa.

African popular culture + social protest: music, crafts, art/architecture, cinema & literature.

(V) *Jit* (excerpt)

(V) *You Africa/Y.N'Dour + Amandla!*

15. Review: Myths and history in Africa. Why do misperceptions persist. How do we use history to evaluate the present? REACTION PAPER # 5 Turn in at Finals/last class, Tues. Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2pm, IRC # 8.

#### Course etiquette:

**1. Readings should be completed before the class which covers them.** All **assignments** are expected **on time**. Late papers are penalized **5%** per day and will be accepted up to 1 week late. Make up exams are available only by prior arrangement & due to an **emergency**.

2. Students are expected to come to class on time and remain in class unless there is an emergency. Please be courteous Traffic in and out of the classroom after class has begun IS DISRUPTIVE. If you are ill or need the toilet, leave class, but please do not return.

3. Please confine conversation in class to course matters. No laptops, ipods or cell phones on in class

If you ignore this rule you will be asked to leave.

4. **Attendance** is factored into grades & is taken each class. Per college policy, if ¼ classes missed in 1<sup>st</sup> month, students will be involuntarily withdrawn. If last 3 weeks' classes are missed, the final is withheld.

5. **Participation in discussion** is integral to learning & will be graded (10%) as: (a) active & frequent; (b) consistent participation; (c) present with occasional response; (d) irregular presence/irrelevant participation; & (f) repeated absence or inattention.

\* If you are **registered** with **SDS/Stud. Disability Serv** & need special consideration for exams or class, please

submit the paperwork to me when the course begins.

**Getting the best grade:** Requirements for superior achievement in the course (an A) include :

1. No unexplained absences over three
2. Readings before class, participating in discussion;
3. Well written papers: concise, grammatically correct, and well argued (62% of the grade).

**Evaluation Criteria for Papers/Essays** = 1) *relevance* to questions 2) supporting points made with *evidence* 3) grounding the discussion in the necessary *context*; 4) *insight* & originality; 4) organization & *presentation*, including attention to style, grammar & spelling; & 5) accurate use of quotations & *referencing/endnotes*. \*Be familiar with campus plagiarism policy. See ALS website-“avoiding plagiarism.”

#### I. **Papers:**

- 2 short papers [30% grade] (4-5 pages, double spaced, 12 point font only).

- 1) Critical discussion of *Sundiata* due Th. **Sept 23<sup>rd</sup>** [15%] **Submit with attached sheet.**
- 2) Critical discussion of *A Long Way Home* due Th **Dec 2nd**. [15%] **Submit with guide sheet.**

#### II. **Exams:**

Th. Oct 14th = *Mid-Term*, Mixed Format

*Final* Tu. Dec 14th, 2pm is Reaction Paper # 5, a country analysis [8%]

#### III. **Reaction Papers:** [5 x 8% =40% grade].

#### IV. **Due dates:**

Sep 14 <sup>th</sup> =	Reaction Paper #1	(8%)
Sep 23 <sup>rd</sup> =	<i>Sundiata</i> paper	(15%)
Oct 7 <sup>th</sup> =	Reaction Paper #2	(8%)
Oct 14 <sup>th</sup> =	<i>Midterm</i>	(15%)
Nov 4 <sup>th</sup> =	Reaction Paper # 3	(8%)
Nov 18 <sup>th</sup> =	Reaction Paper # 4	(8%)
Dec 2nd =	Critique of <i>A Long Way Home</i>	(15%)
Dec 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2 pm =	<i>Final</i> = Reaction Paper #5	(8%)
	attendance/participation	(15%)

#### **Emergency Evacuation/Shelter-in-Place Procedures**

In the event of an emergency evacuation (i.e., fire or other emergency), classes meeting in this building are directed to reassemble at [*Fine Arts Theater*] so that all persons can be accounted for. Complete details of the College's emergency evacuation, shelter-in-place and other emergency procedures can be found at

<http://www.oneonta.edu/security/>.

