Ancient Africa
History 508:220:01
Center for African Studies 016:220:01
Murray 301
MW 1:10 – 2:30
Professor Barbara M. Cooper
Drop in Office hours: Monday 11:30 to 12:30 and Wed. 2:45 to 3:45 in 003 Van Dyck
I have no office phone, you must use email to contact me to set up an appointment at any other

time bacoope@rci.rutgers.edu

Course Description
This course begins with the origins of humankind in prehistoric Africa and ends with the
beginnings of European imperialism in Africa. The course traces social dynamics and
environmental conditions and how they influence production, trade and power. The course also
introduces students to the range of sources used by historians of Africa to reconstruct the past
(archeological, linguistic, DNA, oral historical, and written).

This course satisfies the following SAS core goals:
H. Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place.
I. Explain and be able to assess the relationship among assumptions, method, evidence, arguments, and theory in
social and historical analysis.
L. Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors.
M. Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other
forms of social organization

Required Texts (Available in the Rutgers University bookstore and on reserve in Alexander
Library)
Africans: History of a Continent, John Iliffe (Cambridge, 2007)
Themes in West African History, Emmanuel Acheompong (Ohio, 2006)
The Epic of Son-Jara, Fa-Digi Sisoko, edited by John William Johnson (Indiana, 1992)

You must access and print additional course readings posted on the course website on at
http://sakai.rutgers.edu on the Resources tab.

Course Requirements
Class Attendance and Participation 10%
You can not pass this course without attending class. My lectures and audio visuals do not simply repeat
the textbook readings so you will need to take careful notes. Being prepared means having printed the
relevant readings, having read them in advance of class, and having responded to any written assignment. I
will expect you to come to class prepared to speak and to ask questions.

Map Assignments 40%
Understanding history requires a grasp of geography, environment, and movement. These three exercises
offer you an opportunity to pull together what you have learned and review course materials in a graphic
form.

Mid-term essay 20%
Final essay 30%
You are responsible for any communications or assignments posted for the class on Sakai. [http://sakai.rutgers.edu](http://sakai.rutgers.edu) To access the site you enter your user id and password—these are the same as those for your eden account. The automated electronic listserv for the course uses whatever email address you have registered with the Rutgers Directory.

**On plagiarism:**
This course calls for written work, including essays and short papers. You must understand clearly what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. If you need more information you should consult [http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/intro.html](http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/intro.html) There are other resources online, and I have provided a “Plagiarism Review” through the entertaining site at Rutgers Camden. All students in this course must take the Plagiarism Quiz on our course website.

**Policy on Classroom Etiquette** (the full History Department policy is available on the History Department website)

**Attendance:** Attendance in this course is not optional; it is a necessary requirement for passing the course. Students with more than four unexcused absences or unreasonable patterns of tardiness should expect to see this reflected in their grade regardless of the quality of their written work. Excessive absence, tardiness or consistently disruptive early departure may be grounds for failure of the course.

*Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website [https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/](https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/) to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.*

**Cell Phones and Laptops:** Students may not use cell phones or other mobile communications devices during class. I reserve the right to revoke any student’s laptop privileges if they are abused—our class will be a multi-tasking free zone. When you indulge in activities that are not related to class it is extremely distracting to other students.

**Personal conversation:** It is rude and disruptive to engage in personal conversation during class. Students who persist in disruptive behavior may be asked to leave the class and will be marked absent for the session.
Week 1 Intro: Geographic and Ideological contexts
Graded Assignment for Week 1

Plagiarism Quiz: Acquaint yourself with the Rutgers University Plagiarism policy. To prepare for the online quiz you will want to click on the Plagiarism Review link on navigation bar of our course website. DO NOT assume that you already know what plagiarism is. Then click on “Tests & Quizzes” to take the Plagiarism Quiz. *I would like you to complete this quiz by Thursday September 8th.*

Wednesday Sept. 7 Introduction to course
Lecture: Geographic contexts

Graded Assignment due Sept. 14

Map Exercise #1: African environments
To do this assignment you will need to log into the Sakai site for the course, click on the Assignments tab on the toolbar, and open the African Environments assignment. The assignment as well as other reference materials are on the Assignment tab. You will need to print a number of materials. *This map exercise is to be turned in to me IN CLASS (not online) on Wed. Sept. 14.*

Thursday Sept. 8 [this is our “Monday” class to replace Labor Day]

Week 2

African prehistory
Reading for Monday September 12:
In class: Journey of Mankind

Reading for Wed. September 14:
Your African Environments map exercise is due in class.
In class: African Rock Art

Assignment due October 12: Map Exercise #2: African Prehistory  Open map assignment exercise #2 for African Prehistory. The assignment as well as other materials is in the folder. You will need to print a number of materials. You may want to look at this assignment *before* you do the readings between now and October 12th.

Mid-term Essay Assignment due on October 21 (you will submit this electronically on our Sakai site).
Look on the Assignment tab to see the shape of your mid-term essay exam. Having the question in mind in advance may assist you in your reading and note taking.
**Week 3 Invention and Heterarchy**
Reading for Monday Sept. 19
Christopher Ehret, *The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800*, (University Press of Virginia 2002), Chapter 3 “Culture and Technology in Africa, 9000-3500 BCE” (in the Resources folder of our course Sakai site—print all the pages in the folder so you can get them in the right order. Make sure you print Chapter 3—we will read Chapter 4 on Sept. 26)
In class: Invention and domestication

Reading for Wednesday Sept. 21
Roderick McIntosh, *Peoples of the Middle Niger: the Island of Gold* (Blackwell, 1998) (in the Resources folder of our course Sakai site). Read only pages 1-33, we will read the other excerpts in this document for Sept. 28th.
In class: Exploring heterarchy

**Week 4 Climate and Human History**
Reading for Monday Sept. 26
In class: Making sense of diversity

Reading for Wednesday Sept. 28
Susan McIntosh “The Holocene Prehistory of West Africa” in Akyeampong (ed.) *Themes in West Africa’s History* (Ohio University Press, 2006), pp. 11-32. Also read Roderick McIntosh, *Peoples of the Middle Niger* excerpt (in our Resources folder but you have probably already printed it out), 81-87 and 131-139.

**Iron Age Civilizations and Oral Evidence**
Week 5
Reading for Monday October 3
In class: O’Neill and Muhly, “The Tree of Iron” Media Library call number 2-6678

Reading for Wed. October 5
In class: Why is this “An African Classical Age”? [You should be working on your African Prehistory map exercise]

Week 6
Reading for Monday, October 10
In class: Understanding Historical Linguistics
Reading for Wednesday, October 12
Your Map exercise on African Prehistory is due in class today.
In class: Contemporary preoccupations: environment and ecology

Recall that your Mid-term Essay Assignment will be due online on October 21

**Perceptions of Civilization**
Reading for Monday October 17
In class: Monotheisms in African History

Reading for Wed. October 19
In class: Spencer, “Black Athena” Media Library call number 2-2100

Your mid-term essay is due uploaded to our course site on Friday, October 21 at 5pm.

**The Travel Narrative as Historical Document**
Map Assignment #3 Trade Routes Map: You will want to take a look at the shape of this assignment as we move into the “historical” period. Print the maps related to Ibn Battuta (they will help you follow the readings) and familiarize yourself with the others—you might want to make a rough draft of the map as you are reading the upcoming readings and take notes on who is trading what. This assignment will be due on November 14th in class.

Reading for Monday October 24
Iliffe, “Colonising society in eastern and southern Africa,” in *Africans* 100-130 [note that we are reading the Iliffe chapters out of sequence to accommodate our visitor on Nov. 2]

Reading for Wed. October 26
In class: The nature of the narrative

Reading for Monday Oct. 31
In class: Mali through the eyes of a North African Muslim scholar
Reading for Wed. Nov. 2
In class: The author, a renowned scholar of East Africa and the Indian Ocean, will be appearing in our class to give a talk—be prepared to ask intelligent questions. We will be joined by Professor Sumit Guha’s students.

Recall that your map exercise will be due on Monday the 14th.

**Poetry, Power and Performance**
Reading for Monday Nov. 7
Susan Kiguli, TBA (on Sakai).
In class: Susan Kiguli is a poet and scholar from Uganda who is a specialist on poetry and performance in East Africa. She is at Rutgers as an American Council of Learned Societies visiting scholar and has agreed to come speak to our class.

Reading for Wed. Nov. 9
Iliffe, “Colonising society in western Africa,” *Africans*, 63-99 [note that we are returning to read the chapter we skipped earlier.]
In class: African history as demography

Reading for Mon. Nov. 14
In class video: Dani Kouyate, “Keita! Heritage of the Griot” [first half] Media library call number 2-2888
*Trade and Trade Routes map exercise is due* in class today.

You will want to take a look at the final paper assignment at this point so that you can begin thinking about what you will want to write about and how you want to use the many readings we have had that shed light on the history of Mali. The essay will be due uploaded to our Assignments tab on December 19th by 1pm.

Reading for Wed. Nov. 16
In class video: Dani Kouyate, “Keita! Heritage of the Griot” [second half] call number 2-2888
Read the Preface and Introduction to our edition of *The Epic of Son-Jara*, pp. ix-15.

Reading for Monday Nov. 21 [“Wednesday”]
*The Epic of Son-Jara*, Episodes One and Two, 1-29
Note: it would be almost impossible to make sense of this narrative without reading the notes in the back of the book.
In class: Experiencing oral performance
Reading for Mon. Nov. 28
*The Epic of Son-Jara*, Episodes Three and Four, 29-65

Reading for Wed. Nov. 30
*The Epic of Son-Jara*, Episodes Five through Seven, 65-101

**The Past in the Present**
Reading for Mon. Dec. 5
James McCann, *Green Land Brown Land, Black Land* (Heinemann, 1999), pp 9-51 (Sakai).
In class: Comparing McCann, Iliffe, and Webb

Reading for Wed. Dec. 7
In class: History, Heritage, and Legitimizing the present

Mon. Dec. 12 [final class]
No new reading.
In class: European “mapping” of Africa through the site To the Mountains of the Moon

Your final writing assignment, which is a 5-7 page essay rather than an exam, must be uploaded onto the Assignments tab of our course no later than December 19th at 1pm.