A HISTORY OF WEST AFRICA

Course Description
The class focuses on the history of West Africa from the 5th Century and the period of the great empires to independence. It is designed to give students an introduction to an area that has contributed substantially to the development of the New World. The majority of African Americans in North, South and Central America as well as the Caribbean come from West Africa. The course focuses on internal political developments of select polities in this area. The course has several themes – state formation, identity (ethnic, class and gender), politics and trade.

Required Books:
David Robinson, Muslim Societies in African History. Cambridge University Press.
Ousmane Sembene, God’s Bits of Wood. Heineman.

Additional Readings: SAKAI Many of your readings are on SAKAI. There are also additional materials on SAKAI that you may use in writing your essays. Essay topics will be posted on SAKAI as are instructions for writing the papers.

Course Requirements:
(1) Components of your final grade
   • 25% Mid term examination
   • 35% Final Examination
   • 15% Classroom participation: scheduled class discussions, in class
     o Quizzes, etc.
   • 25% Two short essays on topics to be announced.
     o Due Dates
       ▪ Essay #1 September 30th
       ▪ Essay #2 November 18th

(2) Essays: You will be given a list of topics for your essays. The key source book for your essays will be Akeyampong’s, Themes in West African History. You may use the essays as a first source in researching your essays. In writing the essay you must use the text, William Kelleher Storey Writing History: a Guide for Students. You are expected to write with correct grammar and to use normal college essay form – footnotes, bibliography, etc.

(3) Class Attendance: Attendance will be taken each class. You are allowed THREE UNEXCUSED ABSENCES. Any additional will jeopardize your grade. If you are ill you must bring a doctor’s note. If you know you will be absent notify the instructor to insure that you do not miss class assignments.
Films: There are a number of films selected to emphasize the material in the readings. This material should be treated the same as course readings. You will have written assignments related to the exams.

Maps: One way to understand the history is to be familiar with the geography and location of the places studied. Maps will be put on SAKAI or given out in class. Be sure to use them in your readings as they will be on examinations.

SAKAI and Examinations: Both of your exams will be on SAKAI. You will have a 12 hour period to take the exam but once you sign in the ‘clock’ will be ticking. This means that with the mid-term, you will have a class period to take the exam. With the final you have 3 hours. The final exam will include, within the time slot, the period listed for the final by the university. Both will consequently be open book but BOTH WILL BE TIMED.

SYLLABUS

Note: All readings not in your required texts are available on SAKAI

Week I. Course Introduction, Requirements and an intro to West Africa

September 2nd
Film: ‘Dollars and Dreams – West Africans in New York’/Living Memory

J The geography of West African history

Shillington, Chapter 1-4

Week II. Trade, Islam and the Great Sudanic Empires

September 7th: Ancient Ghana
Readings:
Shillington, Chapter 6
Robinson, Chapter 1 & 2

Film: Basil Davidson, Caravans of Gold

September 9th Islam and Ancient Mali
Readings:
Shillington, Chapter 7
Sundiata – selections from the Epic.

Robinson, Chapter 3 &4

Week III West African Coastal states to the 19th Century (Part I)

September 14th: The Yoruba people in the Oyo Empire
Readings:
Shillington, Chapter 13

**September 16th: The Gold Coast**

**Readings:**
Ray Kea, “I am here to plunder on the general road’: Bandits and banditry in the pre-19th century Gold Coast”, in D. Crummey, *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa*.

**Week IV West African Coastal State to the 19th Century (Part II)**

**September 21st: Asante**

**Readings:**
Robinson, Chapter 9
Shillington, Chapter 13


**September 23: Benin**

**Readings:**
Ryder, "The Benin Kingdom"
Shillington, 186-194.

**Week V The Slave Trade**

**September 28th: General overview**

**Readings:**
Walter Rodney, *West Africa and the Slave Trade*

Shillington, Chapter 12

Sylviane Diouf, 'The last resort: Redeeming Family and Friends’, in *Fighting the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 81-100,

**September 30th African Voices in the Slave Trade**

**Readings:**

Robinson, Chapter 5

**FIRST ESSAY DUE**

**Week VI De-Centralized Societies – The Igbo**

**October 5th: The Igbo**

**Readings:**


**October 7th: The organization and consequence of the Slave Trade**

**Readings:**

David Northrup, ‘The Slave Trade and Economic Development” (Chapter 6) and ‘The ‘God Men’ of the Trade, *The Trade Without Rulers*,

John Orijì, 'Igboland, slavery and the Drums of War and Heroism”, Sylviane Diouf, in *Fighting The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 121-131

**Week VII Jihad, Abolition and the Emergence of a Christian Elite**

**October 12th: A Member of the Christian Elite: Case History**

**Readings:**

Shillington, 188-192,


Robinson, Chapter 10

**October 14th: The 19th Century Crisis in Yorubaland – The Fulani Jihad**

**Readings:**


**Week VIII Conquest – The spread of Islam and loss of**

**October 19th: The ending of the slave trade & Loss of**

**Readings:**

Shillington, Chapter 16

**March 13th – Mid-Term Examination On Line**

**Readings:**

Robinson, Chapter 13

**Week IX The Loss of Sovereignty – The Conquest**

**October 26th:**

**Readings:**

Shillington – Chapter 20 & 21

Robinson, Chapter 6

Film: Davidson ‘The Beautiful African Cake’
October 28th: The Ingenuity of Samori Toure
Readings:

Week X Colonial Society and World War I

November 2nd: Colonial Rule
Readings:
Shillington, Chapter 23


November 4th: Colonial Rule – The status of African women
Readings:


Week XI The Inter-war Years – Nationalists Grumblings

November 9th: Anglo-Phone West Africa
Readings:
Shillington, Chapter 24


November 11th: Francophone West Africa
Readings:

Week XII The Nationalist Movement – World War II

November 16th: World War II and the rise of African nationalism
Readings:
Shillington, Chapter 25

November 18th: West African Troops in the Theaters of War
Readings:


Second Essay Due

Week XIII French West Africa in Fiction – God’s Bits of Wood

November 23rd: The French West African Railway Strike
Readings:
Ousmane Sembene, *God’s Bits of Wood*

November 24th
THANKSGIVING RECESS
Readings:
Ousmane Sembene, *God’s Bits of Wood*

Week XIV Independence

November 30

Ousmane Sembene, God’s Bits of Wood

December 2nd: Rise of Nationalism
Shillington, Chapter 26


Film: Basil Davidson ‘The Rise of Nationalism’

Week VI Final Class

December 7th: Review Session

Hopkins, Selections from *African Nationalism*

FINAL EXAMINATION: December 16th 8:00-11:00 PM (ON SAKAI)