

Ancient Africa 508:220

Monday & Thursday 9:50-11:10

Murray Hall 301

Professor Samantha Kelly

Office: Van Dyck Hall 105

office hours: TBA

samantha.kelly@rutgers.edu

SYNOPSIS

This course is an introduction to the history of the African continent from the beginnings of humanity to the 16th century. In it, we will consider the geographical and ecological contexts in which African culture developed; study some of the most famous African societies but also some of the most overlooked; trace trans-regional phenomena, such as trade and religion, that connected African regions to each other and to other parts of the globe; pay close attention to the many kinds of source material available to study the pre-modern African past and the different advantages and weaknesses they have; and reflect on the relationship between past and present, especially the ways in which modern concerns and assumptions have shaped and continue to shape perceptions of Africa and its history.

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

ORGANIZATION

Most class meetings will be lectures in which I provide an overview of the subject, an orientation to the associated readings, and visual material (including a number of documentary clips) that complement our written texts. Student questions and discussions are always welcome even in “lecture” meetings and may sometimes be built in to the day’s class. At the end of each unit (roughly every two or three weeks), we will devote a class meeting exclusively to discussion of the assigned readings and visual material for that unit. These meetings provide an opportunity for you to consolidate your understanding and share your questions and observations. It is therefore important, and expected, that you have done the assigned reading in time for discussions and come prepared to talk about it. I may pre-circulate specific questions and ask you to write a few comments (no more than

a page total) in response, as an aid to these discussions. Such written comments will then be considered as part of your participation grade.

SOURCE MATERIALS

Gilbert, Erik and Jonathan T. Reynolds, *Africa in World History: From Prehistory to the Present*. 3rd edition. Pearson, 2012. ISBN13: 978-0-205-05399-5. **required**. Available at the RU bookstore or can be bought online.

All other readings are available on sakai under the “Resources” tab. If you have a particular interest in ancient Egypt you may want to buy Cyril Aldred, *The Egyptians*, 3rd ed. (Thames & Hudson, 1998), in order to have its beautiful color images, but the chapters we are reading have been scanned and put on sakai like the other readings.

Links to the documentary clips, websites, and other visual material shown in class (or their URLs if necessary) will be provided so that you may review these materials outside of class.

POLICIES

Attendance at both lectures and discussion meetings is necessary and required. You may miss up to three class meetings, for whatever reason, without penalty. More than three absences will in itself lower your participation grade. Please keep in mind however that all absences will affect your participation grade in the sense that you are simply not there to participate—this holds especially true for class meetings devoted to discussion.

Lateness to class is disruptive to me and to your fellow students. I ask that you do your best to come on time, and that if you are late, you enter as unobtrusively as possible. That said, I do understand the challenges of transport and parking at Rutgers and do not factor lateness into your participation grade unless you are quite late on a regular basis.

Laptops are discouraged but not forbidden in class. **recording** lectures or discussion meetings is not allowed without my specific permission, and is usually restricted to cases involving a physical or learning disability.

Plagiarism is a violation of university policy and will be prosecuted accordingly. It is completely unacceptable to present someone else’s thoughts or words, even in paraphrase, as your own. This includes online sources, such as Wikipedia, that you may think of as just ‘factual’ information that doesn’t need citation. *Anything you consult* for a written assignment must be cited as a source. It does not lessen your essay to acknowledge where you got your information; nor need it lessen your essay to acknowledge that an idea you express first came from something you read. We all build on previous experts’ work; the key is to indicate what comes from others then show where *you* stand on the question. Copying from peers as well as written texts

is a violation of academic integrity. While discussing topics with peers is fine and often helpful, you must be vigilant that the work you submit represents your own independent thoughts and words.

ASSIGNMENTS

Your final grade for this course will be based on four factors: 1) quality participation in class discussions, including possible short written responses to discussion questions. 2) a midterm exam, comprised of two essays and a map. 3) a 5-page essay on EITHER medieval West Africa or medieval East Africa, due at different points in the second half of the semester; 4) a final essay reflecting on questions raised in the initial course questionnaire

The grade breakdown is as follows:

Participation: 25%
Midterm exam: 25%
Medieval essay: 25%
Final essay: 25%

SCHEDULE

Thurs Sept 7: Introduction

1. Mon Sept 11. Africa in the Western Imagination
review the images in Gilbert and Reynolds "Photo Essay: Imagining Africa" between pages 134 and 135. read "Ehret.TermsConcepts".
2. Thurs Sept 14. Geography and History
Gilbert and Reynolds, Ch. 1 (pp. 4-13)
3. Mon Sept 18. Human beginnings [guest lecture by Fred Foster]
Gilbert and Reynolds, ch 2 (pp. 14-24). Check out "Journey of Mankind" inline slideshow, <http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/journey/>
4. Thurs Sept 21. Foragers and Language
Gilbert and Reynolds, Ch 3 (pp. 25-39); Marshall Sahlins, "The Original Affluent Society," in *Culture and Practice. Selected Essays* (New York, 2005; orig. 1972), 95-137.
5. Mon Sept 25. Technology and Migration
Gilbert and Reynolds, ch 4 (pp. 40-66). Christopher Ehret, "Language and History." Saidi, "Women's Authority. Female Coalitions, Politics, and Religion," 75-95.
6. Wed Sept 28. Discussion: "Pre-history"

7. Mon Oct 2: Ancient Egypt I: Archaic, Old Kingdom, 1st Intermediate Period.
Gilbert and Reynolds, 67-71; 81-84. Cyril Aldred, *The Egyptians*, 81-128. [In class: video “Lost civilization,” episode 2 (50 mins), “Ancient Egypt, quest for immortality”]
8. Thurs Oct 5: **no class**
9. Mon Oct. 9: Ancient Egypt II: Middle and New Kingdoms.
Gilbert and Reynolds, 71-74. Aldred, *The Egyptians*, 129-174. [in class: “Egyptian Journeys with Dan Cruickshank, 1 of 6: secrets of the tomb builders.”]
10. Thurs Oct 12: North Africa and the Mediterranean, c. 1000 BCE-300 AD
Gilbert and Reynolds, ch 5 (pp. 74-81). Burstein, “The Kingdom of Meroe,” in *Graeco-Africana*, 127-146; idem, “The Nubian Slave Trade in Antiquity,” 195-205.
11. Mon Oct 16: Axum.
Gilbert and Reynolds, Ch 6 (85-97). James McCann, “Environment and History in Africa,” in *Green Land Brown Land Black Land*, pp. 36-48. **Only these pages for now**
12. Thurs Oct 19: Discussion.
read Appiah, “Europe Upside Down”
13. Mon Oct 23. **Midterm exam**
14. Wed Oct 26. Spread of Islam: North and West Africa
Reynolds ch 7 (pp. 98-119). McCann, “Environment and History in Africa,” pp. 23-31 on Sahel. Ibn Battuta on West Africa.
15. Mon Oct 30. Sunjata I: History and Oral epic
Epic of Son-Jara, Intro, 1-14; episodes 1 and 2, pp. 20-29; David Conrad, *Sunjata*, pages TBA
16. Thurs Nov 2. Sunjata II: history and the present. [in class: viewing of part of “Keita! Heritage of the griot”]
[*Epic of Son-Jara*, episode 4 (pp. 48-65), episodes 6 and 7 (pp. 88-101)] **nb**
probably to be replaced by similar readings in Conrad prose edition
17. Mon Nov. 6. Discussion: Sunjata
18. Thurs Nov. 9 Discussion: West Africa

19. Mon Nov 13. Spread of Islam: east Africa. **First essay option due: West Africa/Sunjata**
Reynolds ch. 8 (pp. 120-138)
20. Thurs Nov 16. Zagwe and Solomonic Dynasties of Ethiopia
Glorious Victories of 'Amda Seyon, 53-57, 72-92. Al-Umari on Muslim Ethiopia.
21. Mon Nov. 20. Great Zimbabwe
Fauvelle, "Golden Rhinoceros." Ibn Battuta on the Swahili Coast.
22. **Tues Nov 21 = Thurs classes:** Discussion: Medieval East Africa
- [Thanksgiving Break]
23. Mon Nov 27. Africa and Europe in the 15th century. **Second essay option due: East Africa**
"Speech of Caramansa."
24. Thurs Nov 30. The Atlantic Slave Trade and West Africa in the 16th c.
Gilbert and Reynolds, ch. 9 (pp. 143-174); Lindsay, *Captives as Commodities*, ch. 2 (54-83).
25. Mon Dec 4. East Africa and the Indian Ocean world in the 16th c.
Campbell, *Structure of Slavery in Indian-Ocean Africa and Asia*, introduction (vii-xxvi).
26. Thurs Dec 7. Discussion.
27. Mon Dec 11. No class. work on your final essays.
28. Thurs. Dec 13 **Final papers due in my office by 5 pm.**