AFRICA SINCE 1800

Rutgers University – Camden
History Department
Spring 2014
Instructor Jody Benjamin
Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11-12:20pm
Location: TBD
jbenjam@fas.harvard.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1-2:30pm
Course description:

Information about Africa, a geographically vast and demographically diverse continent, appears frequently in US media for less than positive reasons and in often confusing ways. This course surveys the history of sub-Saharan Africa from 1800 to today. It explores the historical contexts and long-term processes at play that help us to think critically about problems as they exist in contemporary Africa. We will seek to move beyond mono-causal explanations as we learn about and grapple with the major historical debates and themes of the continent’s history over two centuries. Using examples from around the sub-Saharan region, we will examine a variety of African and other perspectives on colonialism, nationalism and the post-independence period. Students will learn basic historical research methods, develop their ability to read critically and to construct a persuasive written argument.

Course requirements:

Map quiz – 15%
Two Papers – 30% (Paper 1 due Mar. 13; Paper 2 due May 1)
Class Participation – 20%
Final examination – 35%

Papers:

There will be two required papers for this course. The first paper will pertain to the period of the “Scramble for Africa.” It will be based on a primary document that will be posted on the course website. The first paper must be 3-5 pages in length and is due Thursday, Mar. 13 (papers are to handed in to my mailbox by 5 pm). The second paper must be 5-7 pages in length and pertain to decolonization in Africa. Students will be free to choose any topic on that theme and relevant primary documents in consultation with the Instructor. The second paper is due on May 1 in my mailbox by 5 p.m. Please note that late papers will result in a full letter grade deduction for every day late.

Exams:

Students are expected to take the map quiz and the final exam.

Attendance:

Attendance will be taken. Students are expected to appear on time and prepared every time class meets. Student participation in class discussions is an important part of the course expectation. More than three unexcused absences will result in an automatic F.

Required course books:

1. A history of modern Africa : 1800 to the present / Richard J. Reid. 2nd ed. Malden,

In addition the above books, readings for this course will be posted on the course website that students are meant to download and read before class. There are also three podcast listening assignments listed below with their url address. Students may access these or other podcasts from the African Online Digital Library at http://afripod.aodl.org/.

Course Schedule

Week One (Jan. 21-23): Introduction/ Overview

January 21
In class viewing: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story (TED Organization)” (USA: TED, 2009).

January 23

Week Two (Jan. 28-30): Western Transformations

January 28

January 30


*Recommended but not required:*


**Week Three (Feb. 4-6): Eastern Intrusions**

**February 4**


**February 6, MAP QUIZ**


**Week Four (Feb. 11-13): Understanding the “Scramble” for Africa**

**Feb. 11.**


**Feb. 13.** (In-class debate)


Week Five (Feb. 18.-Feb. 20): Imperial Success and African Accommodation/ African Success and the Limits of Empire

Feb. 18.

Feb. 20. (In-class Thesis Peer Review)


Recommended but not required:

Week Six (Feb. 25-27): Concessionaires and Mine Owners/ The Lure into the Interior

Feb. 25.


Feb. 27.

**Week Seven (Mar. 4-6): Civilizing Missions and Contradictions**

Mar. 4.


Episode 65: A Female King: Gender and Oral History in Eastern Nigeria; Africa Online Digital Library.; http://afripod.aodl.org/2012/09/afripod-65/

Mar. 6.


**Week Eight (Mar. 11-13): The Interwar Period/ African Initiatives in Religion**

Mar. 11.


***SPRING BREAK (March 15-March 23, 2014)***

**Week Nine (Mar. 25-27): World War II and Africa. What was at stake? For whom?**

Mar. 25.

Special meeting to view film.

Mar. 27.

Week Ten (Apr. 1-3): African Nationalist Movements and Decolonization
Apr. 1-3.

Week Eleven (Apr. 8-10): Empires Fall Apart
Apr. 8.

Apr. 10.

Week Twelve (Apr. 15-17): Post-colonial states in crisis/ Last hold-outs retrench
Apr. 15.

Apr. 17. (In class-debate.)
Mahmood Mamdani, “Making Sense of Political Violence in Postcolonial Africa,”

**Week Thirteen (Apr. 22-24): Structural Adjustment/ Environmental Challenges**

Apr. 22-24.


**Week Fourteen (Apr. 29-May 1): Current and Future Prospects**

Apr. 29.-May 1. Final paper due May 1. 5-7 pages.

