Overview and Objectives

Africa is central to human history. It is the continent where our species arose, where some of the greatest ancient civilizations thrived, and where dynamic, complex, and innovative cultures confronted a variety of social, political, and environmental challenges. Far from being the “primitive tribal peoples” of popular imagination, African states in the era before the tenth century CE were the outgrowths of sophisticated cultural, social, and material systems that have only recently come to light. **Our primary themes in this course concern the ways that ancient African communities (and states) developed and interacted with others based on environmental, material, and social factors.** Along the way we will also consider a few unavoidable issues in the study of early African history such as sources, the limits of our knowledge, and the ways that Africa’s ancient history has been misunderstood and misused.

After a continental overview and exploration of the peopling of Africa, we will consider a number of regional developments successively but not always in chronological order. These topics include the peopling of Africa, environment and climate change, agricultural innovation and the development of Nile Valley civilizations, the Bantu expansions, the roles of Christianity and Islam, and the development of long-distance trade networks and cross-cultural contacts. No single course can cover more than the tiniest sliver of the complexity and variety of “Africa”—the second-largest continent on Earth—but students completing this course will be able to write upon and discuss major themes in early African history with contextual sensitivity to that past as well as the issues that arise in the present.

This course is eventually intended to become the precursor to HIST 325 (Precolonial Africa), and it therefore makes a good companion to that course, which will be offered in the Winter term. There are also no prerequisites, so people will come in with variable levels of prior knowledge. In the interest of sharing our individual strengths, our normal pattern will be about 60 minutes of lecture, followed by discussion of common readings or the source documents.

An Important Note About This Syllabus

Everything on this syllabus is important. Read it carefully and refer to it frequently. **You alone are responsible for knowing its contents.** However, the unexpected sometimes intrudes and changes must be made; I reserve the right to do so. I will make sure to inform you of these changes and see that an updated version is made available on Blackboard as soon as possible. **Consider Blackboard as our central information repository, where all updates, reminders, and corrections will appear.**

Key Policy Notes (explained inside):

NO LAPTOP OR GADGET USE IN CLASS (turn the cell phone to “silent” or off).  
20% PENALTY PER DAY LATE ON ALL ASSIGNED WORK (including weekends).  
ALL UNDOCUMENTED ABSENCES AFFECT YOUR GRADE.
Assignments and Grading

Because African history requires the mastery of entirely new bodies of knowledge for most students, it is important for you not only to keep up with the reading but to think actively about it through analytical writing. Therefore, this course will incorporate two short papers (1000 to 1500 words, roughly 4 to 6 pages) on subjects connected to the major course readings. These papers will be due on the dates indicated in the syllabus, and will be expected to conform to the instructions and address subjects given a week or so prior (see “Writing Style” under Policies below). These papers do not satisfy the African Studies research-paper requirement.

Besides the short topic papers, you will be required to complete a midterm paper and a cumulative final exam weighted towards the second half, and a map quiz the second week of the term. Unannounced quizzes on the reading may be given. Your grade is weighted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map Quiz</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Paper:</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam (Cumulative):</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papers:</td>
<td>15% each (30%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation/Quizzes:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</table>

Please pay close attention to the important dates, which are recapitulated at the end of this syllabus. Late papers will be marked down 20% per calendar day or portion thereof. No further papers will be accepted once the assignment has been returned.

Course grades will be assigned according to percentages on the standard scale (90s = A range, 80s = B range, etc), with fractional percentages rounded to the nearest full point (up or down). As a fair warning, I do not change grades, except in cases of arithmetical error. I also do not let mathematics rule my grading rigidly; I will raise or lower “close” cases in light of effort and conduct.

Graduate Students in HIST 510

Graduate students enrolled under CRN 16129 will have expanded course requirements. These include additional readings and a longer research paper (5000-7500 words, about 16-20 pages) in lieu of the two short papers. This research paper must deal with the state of research on a chosen topic (historiography, issues, etc). These expanded course requirements also will include additional graduate discussion meetings and research presentations. The content and scheduling of these meetings will be determined in consultation between the graduate enrollees and the professor.

Course Texts

The following books are required and can be purchased at the Duck Store or online from your preferred retailer. Make sure you get the editions indicated as content and pagination vary.


All other readings will either be in the required coursepack (available at the Duck Store) or, in the case of source documents and a couple of other readings, on Blackboard. Copies of the two books and coursepack will be available on reserve. If you have any trouble obtaining the books, please let me know immediately.
Policies

Attendance: Attendance is expected at all class meetings and events, given that we are meeting only twice a week. After the first week, each undocumented absence has the potential to lower your grade by one full step (A to A-, B+ to B, et cetera). Besides direct penalties, however, poor attendance tends to result in poor grades, because lectures and discussions do not merely recapitulate the readings, and getting notes from a classmate is a poor substitute. Furthermore, I ask that you be punctual, as late arrival and early departure—including anticipatory “rustling”—are intensely disruptive. If you have insufficient time between classes to be on time and stay the entire period, please rethink your schedule. I will for my part do my best to start and end class on time.

Special Needs and Gizmos: Although I’m otherwise a technophile, gadgets in class have proven to be annoying and distracting not only for their users but for others around them as well; they are like magnets for your fellow students’ eyes and thus attention. As a result of negative experience, therefore, I do not permit the use of laptop computers or personal communications devices (text or voice) in the classroom without specific permission from me. Please silence your cell phone or turn it off before you come in. If you need to be reachable during class, or you are physically unable to write and must take notes by laptop, come and see me; otherwise, technological disturbances will affect your grade. Recording of lectures and discussions also requires express permission from me.

If you have physical or learning differences that require other special accommodations, notice from Disability Services (ds.uoregon.edu) is necessary. I am not empowered to make such arrangements myself, but rest assured that I will do everything in my power to address your documented needs.

Writing Style: I expect your formal (take-home) writing for this course to be typed and to employ grammatically correct and clear college-level English. All non-lecture material that is used in a paper must be cited, not just the direct quotations! Failure to do so will result in a zero for the assignment—or worse. For citation format and the like, I prefer Turabian’s Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations 7th edition (or the Chicago Manual of Style on which it is based). MLA style, for those who know it, is permitted but not preferred. (If you don’t know what citation or style guides are, please ask.) A good rule of thumb is “be consistent.” Poor style and grammar may result in a lower grade, if only because it will be hard for me to discern your intent.

For writing assistance, see the Teaching and Learning Center: http://tlc.uoregon.edu/

For guides to writing history in particular, I would suggest Rampolla’s Pocket Guide to Writing History, available cheaply from Amazon.com or other booksellers including the Duck Store.

Academic Honesty: The information is necessary for very few of the students in my courses, but unfortunate recent experience has prompted me to include it in my syllabi. I refer you, for your information, to Student Conduct and Community Standards at the Office of Student Life:

http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/tabid/68/Default.aspx

You will find there a number of relevant headings to policies on academic honesty and conduct. In practice, the issues of academic honesty that arise most often are cheating and plagiarism. The all-writing exam format tends to discourage the former, but the latter has become a greater problem in the take-home papers. Most plagiarism stems from ignorance, not malfeasance. If you are unsure of what plagiarism is, an excellent guide exists here at UO:

http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/
It is a gross understatement to say that deliberate academic dishonesty will adversely affect your grade. At the very least, you will receive an automatic failing mark for the course. However, my personal view of the matter is that plagiarists and cheaters have no place in an institution of higher learning. Therefore I always press for the maximum penalty for offenses of this nature, which usually means suspension or expulsion from the University. If you have any concerns or you're not sure whether something is plagiarism, ask me as soon as possible, before you turn it in for a grade.

(This does not mean that you are barred from discussing papers or readings with one another outside of class, only that the work you turn for a grade must be your own writing and ideas, produced specifically for this class, with proper citation of all non-lecture sources including the textbooks.)

One final warning, regarding the tempting crutch of the Internet: if you can find it, so can I—so resist the temptation to cut corners or cut-and-paste. By all means use the Internet’s tools (such as Google or Wikipedia), but use them properly and judiciously, and accept nothing from an unaccredited source like Wikipedia alone as reliable or authoritative. Find the accredited sources for yourself. If in doubt, get in contact with me; your professors after all want to help you along before problems occur, and aid you in your academic journey.

In this light, you may be required during this course to submit writing assignments to SafeAssign. SafeAssign is a software tool designed to help students avoid plagiarism and improper citation. It encourages original writing and proper citation by cross-referencing submitted materials with an archived database of websites, essays, journal articles, and other published work. By enrolling in this course you grant the instructor permission to submit your work to SafeAssign or similar analytical programs.

Everything Else: In all other matters of classroom policy, I default to the Duck Guide or the relevant Departmental policy. If you’re not sure of something, please ask—the sooner the better!
HIST 410: ANCIENT AFRICA

Class Schedule (subject to change based on our interests and available time)

Readings are to be completed before the class assigned, and be ready to discuss them (especially primary source documents). Readings marked with (BB) will be on Blackboard.

Foundations of African History

T  28 Sep  Introduction to the Study of African History

Th 30 Sep  Legacies of Meaning: The History of the African Past
Reading:  Christopher Lowe, “Talking About Tribe” (Blackboard).

From Prehistory to the Ancient World

T  5 Oct  The Constraints of African Environments and Geography

Th  7 Oct  The Emergence and Radiation of Humanity (MAP QUIZ)
Reading:  Ehret, 17-25.

T  12 Oct  Climate Change in Africa and the Shift to Agricultural Production
(TOPIC #1 DISTRIBUTED)
Reading:  Ehret, 26-58.

Th  14 Oct  New Migration and New Settlement: The Four Language Families
Reading:  Ehret, 59-106, 143-49.
Civilizations of the Nile Valley

T  19 Oct  Egypt and the World, from the Old Kingdom to Roman Rule
(PAPER #1 DUE)
Reading:  E. Gilbert and J. T. Reynolds, *Africa in World History* 2d ed. (Saddle
(Handout/Blackboard)
“Hymn to the Nile” (2100BCE), (Handout)
(Documents 1-2).

Th  21 Oct  Understanding Egyptian Society and Culture: Questions and Appropriations
(Handout/Blackboard)
Kathryn Bard, “Ancient Egyptians and the Issue of Race” in M.
Lefkowitz & G. Rogers, eds., *Black Athena Revisited* (Chapel Hill:

T  26 Oct  Succession in Nubia: Kerma, Kush, and Napata
Reading:  Ehret, 119-36 [Skim as background to NE Africa]; 149-55; 200-208.
Start Connah, 18-65.

Th  28 Oct  Meroë: Iron, Trade, and Social Change
(MIDTERM EXAM DISTRIBUTED)
Reading:  Continue Connah, 18-65.
Burstein, *Ancient African Civilizations: Kush and Axum* (2008), 43-54,
80-83, 87-90 (Documents 4-7, 13, 15).

T  2 Nov  The Fall of Meroë and the Ascendancy of Aksum
(MIDTERM EXAM DUE)
Reading:  Finish Connah, 18-65.
Burstein, *Ancient African Civilizations: Kush and Axum* (2008), 97-111,
115-19 (Documents 20-21, 23).

Innovation and Civilization South of the Sahara

Th  4 Nov  The Bantu Expansion, Part I
Reading:  Ehret, 107-119.

T  9 Nov  Cultural Accretion, Ironworking, and Exchange in Interlacustrine Africa
Reading:  Ehret, 159-78.
Jean-Pierre Chrétien, *The Great Lakes of Africa: Two Thousand Years of
Th  11 Nov  The Bantu Expansion, Part II  
Reading: Ehret, 179-200, 241-43.

T  16 Nov  Successions in Southern Africa  
(TOPIC #2 DISTRIBUTED)  
Innocent Pikirayi, *The Zimbabwe Culture* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira, 2001), 73-95.

Th  18 Nov  NO CLASS MEETING (LFB away; film event substitutes)

M  22 Nov  FILM EVENT: TIME/LOCATION TBA  
Film: Henry Louis Gates Jr., “Wonders of the African World” (video 05090, part 3)

T  23 Nov  Societies of the West African Grasslands and the Niger River  
(PAPER #2 DUE)  
Reading: Ehret, 136-43; 227-35; 317-22.  

Th  25 Nov  THANKSGIVING BREAK

**The Spread of World Religions in Africa (to 800CE)**

T  30 Nov  The Spread of Christianity in North and Northeastern Africa  

Th  2 Dec  The Spread of Islam (lead-in for HIST 325)  

W  8 Dec  FINAL EXAMINATION (80 minutes), 1:00-3:00pm

Recapitulation of Major Due Dates and Exam Dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thu., 7 Oct.</td>
<td>Map Quiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue., 19 Oct.</td>
<td>First Paper Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue., 2 Nov.</td>
<td>Midterm Examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tue., 23 Nov.</td>
<td>Second Paper Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed., 8 Dec., 1pm</td>
<td>Final Examination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP OF AFRICA (for map quiz prep; see Ehret p. 32.)