

THE AFRICAN PAST

University of Ottawa
Department of History
HIS 2376 A00
Fall 2020

Instructor:	Frédéric MADORE	Class time:	Asynchronous (Brightspace)
Email:	fmadore@uottawa.ca	Virtual office hours:	M, 13:00–14:30 W, 11:30–13:00
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Schedule a meeting with me: <https://calendly.com/frederick-madore>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the study of the African past. The course familiarizes students with the multidisciplinary skills and methods that enable understanding of narratives of African experiences and perspectives from the past, and the relationships between contemporary Africans and their pasts. In covering the history of sub-Saharan Africa from the earliest times to the first decades of the postcolonial era, we will address the diversity of political systems, cultures, and historical experiences in the region. The continent of Africa, even if only considering the sub-Saharan region, is so vast and contains such diversity that no single course can provide exhaustive coverage of its history, especially over such a period. Instead, we will explore a wide range of themes from the emergence of ancient empires to the transformations created by commercial exchange circuits (Sahara, Indian Ocean, Atlantic), the slave trades, European imperialism and colonial rule, African nationalist movements, the struggle for independence, and postcolonial politics.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students should:

- Acquire a general understanding of the major processes of historical change driving the history of sub-Saharan Africa;
- Gain knowledge of the wider and global connections that linked African societies to other parts of the world;
- Identify some of the main historiographical debates in African history;
- Assess and think critically about primary sources on African history (e.g., epics, medieval Arabic sources, oral testimonies, travelers' accounts, colonial records);
- Develop their ability to effectively communicate critical thinking in written forms appropriate to the historical discipline.

COURSE MATERIALS

The following is a required textbook, available for purchase at the [University of Ottawa Bookstore](#) (either in print or eBook) or on [Amazon](#):

Shillington, Kevin. *History of Africa*, 4th edition (London: Red Globe Press, 2019).

Other required readings, including primary sources, are all available on the Brightspace site.

EVALUATION

I will evaluate your learning via a series of quizzes, assignments and tests throughout the semester, as well as a take-home final exam during the exam period. The questions on the tests and exam will measure your familiarity with material in readings and lectures as well as your ability to apply historical analysis to that material. Final grades will be calculated based on the following distribution:

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| • Reading Quizzes | 10% |
| • Discussion Assignments (3@5% each) | 15% |
| • Primary Sources Analysis (2@7,5% each) | 15% |
| • Tests (2@15% each) | 30% |
| • Take-Home Final Exam | 30% |

Please note the dates in the course plan below for the quizzes, assignments, and tests.

Reading Quizzes (10%)

I will give six brief reading quizzes throughout the semester. They will be short in duration (10 minutes) and consist of randomized multiple-choice, true or false, and fill-in-the-blank questions based on the textbook chapter(s) for that week. These quizzes are given to verify your comprehension and to ensure that you are keeping up with the reading. The quizzes will open Wednesday at 17:00 and remain open through Friday at midnight. Only five quizzes will be counted into the final grade, as I will drop the lowest grade. The reading quizzes are listed on the weekly schedule below.

Discussion Assignments (15%)

Each week, starting on week 2, I will provide multiple questions related to the unit's topic on the online discussion forum. During the course of the semester, you are required to write three 300-word posts under the respective discussion thread in which you respond to one of the questions. You should use the course lectures and readings to formulate your answers. Each week's discussion thread closes on Sunday at midnight. Those assignments, which are worth 5% each, will be marked according to the plus, check and minus system.

Primary Sources Analysis (15%)

Two primary source assignments, which are worth 7,5% each, will allow you to explore a major theme in African history in deeper depth. You will select one of the primary sources (from those assigned) and write up a 500 to 600 words analysis of the document. The two exercises are due on **October 18** and **December 6 at midnight**. Detailed guidelines for this assignment can be found under the "Evaluation" tab on Brightspace.

Tests (30%)

Two online timed tests covering all material up to that point in the semester will be given on **September 30 at 11:30** and on **November 2 at 13:00**. It will be composed of multiple-choice, short IDs, and paragraph-length answers. Each of the tests will last 60 minutes. I will provide you with information on what type of questions you can expect, as well as some guidance on how to prepare.

Take-Home Final Exam (30%)

You will be asked to choose one out of two essay question options that will address some of the broader themes of the entire course, and compose a 1500-word response. The essay questions, based on material covered in readings and lectures, will be posted on **December 9 at 8:00** on Brightspace. You must submit your take-home final exam electronically by **December 15 at midnight**.

GRADING SCALE

A+ 90-100%	A 85-89%	A- 80-84%	B+ 75-79%
B 70-74%	C+ 65-69%	C 60-64%	D+ 55-59%
D 50-54%	E 40-49%	F 0-39%	

For more information regarding the University of Ottawa's official grading system, see:

<https://www.uottawa.ca/administration-and-governance/academic-regulation-10-grading-system>

PROCEDURE AND POLICIES

Procedure

This is an **asynchronous** course. All lectures will be pre-recorded and posted online, which means you can view them on your own schedule. I will present a great deal of material in lectures that is not found in the assigned readings. Course lectures and assigned readings are designed to complement each other; sometimes lectures will engage ideas in readings you have completed, while at other times I will introduce new ideas to guide your future reading. We will use Brightspace for class communication as well as to submit assignments.

Need Help?

If you have questions about the course or assignments, please first consult this syllabus. Since there is no in-class moment to ask questions, I ask that you pose any questions that would be pertinent to the entire class in the relevant discussion thread on the Brightspace site. This will enable other students to benefit from the answer. If you email me such questions, I will respond to you by asking that you post on the forum.

You may also contact me by [email](#) or come to my virtual office hours. If you do contact me by email, use your university issued email and adhere to professional email etiquette. I will do my best to respond within two business days. I will make it a priority to respond as quickly as possible to emergencies and other extreme issues. I hold three hours of virtual office hours per week via Zoom (13:00–14:30 on Mondays; 11:30–13:00 on Wednesdays). I encourage you to make use of the meeting scheduling app [Calendly](#). You can use this app to book 15-minute meetings with me during my office hours. You may arrange a meeting outside of those hours if you are unavailable during this time.

Please contact the [Service Desk](#) for technical issues.

Late Assignments

Given the logistical challenge of administering make-ups in an online course of this size, make-up quizzes or tests will be granted only in cases of documented illness. You may receive an extension for assignments only in extraordinary circumstances. If you do not receive an extension from the instructor, assignment will be penalized by 5% per 24-hour period after the deadline.

Grade Disputes

Grade disputes will be considered only if they adhere to this policy. Grade disputes must be made in writing. You must wait at least two days after you receive your grade to submit a grade dispute (“cooling off period”); you may wait no more than two weeks after you receive your grade to submit a dispute. Your written dispute must contain a documented logic for why you believe your assignment was incorrectly marked. The instructor will then review your dispute and issue a decision within one week. Failure to comply with this procedure will result in forfeiture of your ability to dispute your grade.

STUDENT RESOURCES

Student Mentoring Center

<https://arts.uottawa.ca/en/mentoring>

The goal of the Mentoring Center is to help students with their academic and social well-being. Regardless of where a student stands academically, or how far along they are in completing their degree, the mentoring center is there to help students continue on their path to success.

Academic Writing Help Center (AWHC)

<https://sass.uottawa.ca/en/writing>

The AWHC is committed to helping students develop writing strategies and skills that will enable them to identify and correct their mistakes and help them to become better writers. It offers individual writing appointments, in class presentations and workshops, and online writing resources.

Plagiarism and Academic Fraud

For more information, consult your instructor and/or the University website: <https://arts.uottawa.ca/en/life-on-campus/academic-fraud-plagiarism>

Counseling Service

<https://sass.uottawa.ca/en/personal>

The Counseling Service offers personal counseling, career counseling and study skills counseling.

Access Service

<https://sass.uottawa.ca/en/access>

The Access Service contributes to the creation of an inclusive environment by developing strategies and implementing measures that aim to reduce the barriers to learning for students who have learning disabilities, health, psychiatric or physical conditions.

Students who require accommodations or academic support because of a physical or learning disability, or any condition that affects their ability to learn, are invited to register with Access Service: telephone, 613-562-5976; TTY, 613-562-5214; email, adapt@uottawa.ca; web, <https://sass.uottawa.ca/fr>. Students can then meet with an Access Service specialist to identify their individual needs and to discuss appropriate interventions.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 September 9-13—Introduction: Studying African History

- Syllabus
- Shillington, 1-6 (“Introduction”).
- Wainaina Binyavanga, “How to Write About Africa”, *Granta* 92 (2005), <https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/>.

Primary Source

- G. W. F. Hegel, “Africa” (1830s).

PART 1 THE AFRICAN MIDDLE AGES: STATE FORMATION AND THE RISE OF CENTRALIZED SOCIETIES TO C. 1550

Week 2 September 14-20—Trans-Saharan Trade and the Sudanic States of West Africa

- Shillington, 93-119 (Ch. “Trans-Saharan trade and the Kingdom of Ancient Ghana” & “Islam and the Sudanic states of west Africa”).

Primary Source

- Ibn Battuta, “Mali. 1352”.

<i>Reading Quiz #1</i>

Week 3 September 21-27—Early States in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa

- Shillington, 121-154 (Ch. “Eastern Africa to the sixteenth century” & “Later Iron Age states and societies of central and southern Africa to the sixteenth century”).

Primary Source

- Francisco Alvarez, “The Land of Prester John. 1525”.

<i>Reading Quiz #2</i>

Week 4 September 28-October 4—Africa in the Indian Ocean World: The Swahili Coast

- Shillington, 155-170 (Ch. “Trading towns of the east African coast to the sixteenth century”).
- Derek Nurse and Thomas Spear, *The Swahili: Reconstructing the History and Language of an African Society, 800-1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), pp. 80-98 (Ch. “Rise of the Swahili Town-States, 1100–1500”).

Primary Source

- Ibn Battuta, “The East African Coast. 1331”.

<i>Online Timed Test Wednesday, September 30, 11:30</i>
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PART 2 AFRICA IN THE ERA OF THE SLAVE TRADE, 1500–1800**Week 5 October 5-11—West Africa in the Atlantic World**

- Shillington, 171-201 (Ch. “The Atlantic slave trade, sixteenth to eighteenth century” & “West African states and societies, to the eighteenth century”).

Primary Sources

- [The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database](#)
- William Snelgrave, “The Slaves Mutiny. 1730”.
- Mercator Honestus, “A Defense of the African Slave Trade. 1740”.

Reading Quiz #3**Week 6 October 12-18—Central and Eastern Africa to the 18th century**

- Shillington, 218-233 (Ch. “Central and eastern Africa to the eighteenth century”).
- John Thornton, “Elite Women in the Kingdom of the Kongo: Historical Perspectives on Women’s Political Power”, *Journal of African History* 47, 3 (2006): 436-460

Primary Sources

- Alvare II and Alvare III, “Relations between the Kingdom of Congo and the Papacy. 1613”.
- Giovanni Cavazzi, “Queen Anna Nzinga. 1654”.

Primary Sources Analysis #1 due Sunday, October 18 at 23:59**Week 7 October 19-25—European Settlements in Southern Africa**

- Shillington, 234-246 (Ch. “Southern Africa to the eighteenth century”).
- Julia C. Wells, “Eva’s Men: Gender and Power in the Establishment of the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-74”, *The Journal of African History* 39, 3 (1998): 417–437.

Primary Sources

- Jan van Riebeeck and Z. Wagenaar, “Of the Native Tribes of South Africa. 1652”.
- Andrew Sparman, “The Boers. 1776”.

Reading Quiz #4**October 26-November 1—Reading Week****PART 3 MODERN AFRICA SINCE 1800****Week 8 November 2-8—Jihads, State Building and Revolution**

- Shillington, 249-255; 289-307 (Ch. “West Africa in the nineteenth century” & “Preindustrial southern Africa in the nineteenth century”).

Primary Sources

- Abd Allah ibn Muhammad, “The Hijra and Holy War of Sheik Uthman dan Fodio. 1804”.
- Henry Francis Fynn, “Shaka. 1830”.

Online Timed Test Monday, November 2, 13:00**Week 9 November 9-15—The Abolition of Slavery and the Rise of “Legitimate” Commerce**

- Shillington, 256-272 (Ch. “The ending of the Atlantic slave trade” & “Christian missions, new states and precolonial ‘nationalism’”).

Primary Sources

- “William Wilberforce, in the House of Commons, Pictures the Slave Trade in All Its Horror” (May 12, 1789).
- “The Asante King questions British motives in ending the slave trade” (1820).

Reading Quiz #5**Week 10 November 16-22—The European “Scramble for Africa”**

- Shillington, 325-365 (Ch. “Colonial conquest and African resistance in east, north-central and west Africa” & “Industrialisation, colonial conquest and African resistance in south-central and southern Africa”).

Primary Sources

- “General Act of the Conference of Berlin” (February 26, 1885).
- Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden. 1899”.
- Union of South Africa, “Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and Their Treatment by Germany” (1918).

Week 11 November 23-29—Colonial Rule and the Threshold of Imperialism (1890-1945)

- Shillington, 367-416 (Ch. “Consolidation of empire: the early period of colonial rule”, “Africa between the wars: the high tide of colonial rule” & “The Second World War and Africa”).

Primary Sources

- Lord Lugard, “Indirect Rule in Tropical Africa. 1900”.
- Excerpts from “The Speeches of Cecil Rhodes 1881–1900”.
- Marcus Garvey, “Explanation of the Objectives of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, 1921”.

Reading Quiz #6**Week 12 November 30–December 6—Nationalism and Decolonization**

- Shillington, 417-426; 433-466 (Ch. “The winning of independence (1)”, “The winning of independence (2)” & “The winning of independence (3)”).

Primary Sources

- Jomo Kenyatta, “Meeting at Nyeri. July 26. 1952”.
- Kwame Nkrumah, “I Speak of Freedom” (1961).

Primary Sources Analysis #2 due Sunday, December 6 at 23:59

Week 13 December 7-9—The Colonial Legacy and the Challenges of Independence

- Shillington, 467-491 (Ch. “African responses to the colonial legacy” & “The challenges and dilemmas of development: debt and international aid”).

Primary Sources

- Jomo Kenyatta, “A One-Party System, 1964”.
- Kenneth Kaunda, “African Development and Foreign Aid, 1966”

December 10-22—Exam period

<i>Take-Home Final Exam due Tuesday, December 15 at 23:59</i>
