

Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Crises in Africa
History 14 – Spring 2011 – 10:30-11:45 Monday / Wednesday
Syllabus

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Blackboard Platform Course

Introduction:

Western press coverage of Africa highlights "democratization," human rights, atrocities, slavery, corruption, famine, civil war and HIV/AIDS. This course implicitly interrogates press coverage of the continent by seeking historical perspectives on the contemporary situation. African experiences are centered, but lectures also raise international interests on the continent, including those of the United States and China.

Lectures, meshed with visual texts (maps, terms, portraits, cartoons) provide an overview. Scheduled class discussions encourage students to participate in rigorous consideration of all course materials, including interpretive texts, scholarly essays, popular history, novels, documentary films, and an analysis of contemporary humanitarian interventions on the continent. The first interpretive text, by Frederick Cooper, explicitly probes the past of the present. The second, by Patrick Chabal & Jean-Pascal Daloz, argues that we need new frameworks of analysis to understand how Africa works. The required readings structure our approach to African history through thematic overviews and detailed case studies. The continent is enormous and complex. This course barely scratches the surface.

We begin with the continent's physical and human geography. We briefly recall the experience of intensified contact among African, Middle Eastern, Asian and European peoples in the late nineteenth century. We invest more in conquest, the colonial era, the decolonization process, independent Africa and the early twenty-first century. Our case studies begin with the multiple interests that brought about armed conquest of African peoples in the 19th and early 20th centuries-- considering in greater depth the colonial origins of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya. Hochschild's study of the Congo suggests that global links, international lobbying, concerns for human rights, corruption and violence are not new. It also demonstrates that historians have easier access to Europeans than Africans and to men than women. African novelists and film-makers enrich our perspectives on colonial experiences. Buchi Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood* opens a creative gendered lens into colonial Nigeria through the lived experiences of her heroine Nnu Ego. The so-called Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya is our case study for the return to armed resistance and decolonization. Algeria is our one case study from North Africa. Scholarly analysis by John Reudy and the 1999 documentary

film “Algeria : Women at War” convey layered complexity. Sembene Ousmane's novel, *God's Bits of Wood* combines with a specific consideration of its historicity to underpin our investigation of decolonization and changing patterns of family life and work in French West Africa.

Cooper opens his analysis of the late 20th century with the 1994 juxtaposition of hope and horror, South African elections and the Rwandan genocide. Each carried implications for the continent's contemporary history. Key themes include accommodation of developing settlement and production patterns and changing political / military configurations. Gendered perspectives on historical agency are central to our analysis throughout the course, with special attention to the key roles played by women and youth in the changing relationships between African environments and production processes. Since neither Cooper nor Chabal & Daloz particularly draw out gendered perspectives, we seek them in fiction, film and supporting essays.

Finally, we confront violence and humanitarian aid in contemporary Africa with case studies from Sudan, Somalia and Democratic Republic of Congo. We combine essays by Alex de Waal, Cooper, scholars from Tufts Feinstein Int'l Center with documentary film to frame our efforts to understand complex political and humanitarian dilemmas. Can we interrogate contemporary crises from the conflicting perspectives of local people and international development and aid workers? What is the appropriate context and conduct of global citizenship?

Student Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the basis of their written work and contribution to quality discussion according the following formula. See the Evaluation Addenda for details.

Map exam, 5% ** Map Locations are included Course Information on Blackboard
Scheduled Discussions with Graded Discussion Antes 20% **

First hour exam, 25%

Second hour exam, 25%

Third hour exam 25%

Clarification of Evaluation / See Evaluation Addenda (blackboard):

Evaluation methods and options are designed:

to be challenging

to encourage reflection

to accommodate skill and preference differences among students

to spread student evaluation evenly throughout the course

to be fair.

**** Scheduled Discussions with Graded Discussion Antes**

All students are expected **to complete all required reading** in advance of **scheduled class discussion** so that we all have the benefit of each other's insights. Scheduled class discussions are indicated on the syllabus. All students must bring their **“discussion ante”** to scheduled discussions and turn them in at the end of class. Students are **NOT** allowed to submit discussion antes **after** discussion class unless they were

absent from class. If a student misses scheduled discussion and fails to turn in a discussion ante in the next class, the student's grade for that ante is zero.

Uniform Standards, Ethics & Discipline :

NO student will be allowed to submit extra work for extra credit. Except for extraordinary circumstances, confirmed through the office of the Dean of Students, all students will be evaluated according to the above formula and guidelines. We will have a scheduled review prior to every exam. The Prof. and TAs will hold scheduled office hours weekly. We will afford students every opportunity to succeed. We will not do damage control after the fact. Any student who is apprehended in any form of academic or personal dishonesty in the course will be subject to the fullest university sanctions.

Required Course Readings

Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*.

Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999

Frederick Cooper. *Africa since 1940; The Past of the Present*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

Sembene Ousmane, *God's Bits of Wood* (any edition)

Buchi Emecheta, *Joys of Motherhood* (any edition)

All required readings and films are available on blackboard, via JSTOR, and on reserve at Tisch Media. Some loaner copies of books are available. Recommended readings are in a separate folder on Blackboard.

Schedule of Classes

Week One – Conceptual and Continental Challenges

24 Jan. - Introduction - Perspectives on the Past of the Present

26 Jan. – Lecture – Humanity and the Shaping of Earth Air & Water

Required Reading:

Cooper, Ch.1

Chabal & Daloz, xv – 2

Binyavanga Wainaina, “How to Write about Africa,” *Granta Magazine*, 92, 2005

Doc. Blackboard

Hochschild, first third.

Week Two – Contestations -- Hearth-hold to Empire

31 Jan. - Lecture - Tools of Empire

2 Feb. - Lecture - FILM White Man's Country –Black Man's Land

Required Reading:

Hochschild, second third.

Cooper, Ch. 2

Barbara Cooper, “Oral Sources & the Challenge of African History,” *Writing African History* edited by John Edward Philip (Rochester: Univ. of Rochester Press, 2005):191-215.

Week Three – Conquest, Confiscation, and Colonialism

7 Feb **Map Exam** & Lecture - Colonialism and the Creation of Natives

9 Feb. **Documentary Film** : “With these Hands”

Seeking Gendered Perspectives – “Codification of Native Custom”

Required Reading:

Hochschild, complete for DISCUSSION on Monday

Cooper, Ch. 3

Peter Walker, “Complexity and Context as the Determinants of the Future,” Feinstein International Center, Opinion Paper, 7 (July 2008.)

Week Four – Belgium’s Congo & Democratic Republic of Congo

14 Feb. DISCUSSION – Hochschild

16 Feb. – Guest Appearance by Dr. Peter Walker

Required Reading:

Cooper Ch.4

Emecheta begin

Week Five -- High Colonial Era

23 Feb. - Lecture – Characteristics of the High Colonial Era: Regional Perspectives

Review for Exam One

24 Feb. - **First Hour Exam**

Required Reading:

Emecheta complete for Discussion 1 March

Cooper Ch. 5

Week Six: Economy & Society

28 Feb. – Nigeria, Senegal & Angola – Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone

1 March DISCUSSION: Emecheta, *Joys of Motherhood*

Required Reading:

Sembene, *Gods Bits of Wood*, begin

Frederick Cooper, “‘Our Strike’: Equality, Anticolonial Politics and the 1947-48 Railway Strike in French West Africa,” *Journal of African History*, 37 (1996):81-118.

Week Seven: Pan Africanism & Decolonization Kenya and Senegal

7 March - Lecture – Characteristics of Decolonization Era

9 March - Lecture - Politicians, Labor, and Pan-Africanism

Mboya, Kenyatta, Odinga / Senghor

Required Reading:

Sembene, *Gods Bits of Wood*, complete for discussion 14 March

Lonsdale, John. “Mau Maus of the Mind: Making Mau Mau and Remaking Kenya.” *Journal of African History* 31 (1990):393-421.

Week Eight – Politics, Workers and Peasants in Struggle

14 March - DISCUSSION – Sembene, *God’s Bits of Wood* & Cooper’s ‘Our Strike’

16 March - FILM & Lecture Mau Mau.

Required Reading:

Chabal & Daloz, Ch.1-2

Presley, Cora Ann. " Kikuyu Women, the Mau Mau Rebellion and Social Change." *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Fall 1988.

Peterson, Derek R. "The intellectual lives of Mau Mau detainees." *The Journal of African History* 49,1 (2008).

SPRING BREAK - ENJOY

Week Nine – Freedom as Chaos? Decolonization as Disorder?

28 March - DISCUSSION of Mau Mau

Review for Exam Two

30 March – **Second Hour Exam**

Required Reading:

John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: the origins and development of a nation* (Indiana University Press, 2005) 2d ed. Ch. 6 “The War of Independence, 1954-1962,” pp. 156-194. (**not** covered in Exam 2)

Frederick Cooper, “Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of African History*, Vol. 49 (2008):167-96.

Week Ten - Challenges of Reconfiguration – Algeria

4 April – North Africa – Islam & the Rhythms of Engagement

6 April– FILM / Discussion Algeria: Women at War

Required Reading:

Cooper, Ch.6.

Chabal & Daloz, Ch.3-6

Helen Young, Karen Jacobsen, Abdalmonium Osman, “Livelihoods, Migration & Conflict: Discussion of Findings from Two Studies in West and North Darfur, 2006-2007” Report Feinstein Int’l Center (April 2009.)

Week Eleven – Sudan & Somalia

11 April - Lecture – Land, Cattle, Water and Complexity

13 April - Lecture –Irredentist Linkages, Informal Economies, Patrimonial Authority

Required Reading:

Cooper Ch. 7

Chabal & Daloz, Complete for DISCUSSION 20 April

Alex de Waal. “Reflections of the difficulties of defining Darfur’s crisis as genocide” in “Reflections on 20 years of Human Rights.” *Harvard Human Rights Journal*. 20 (Spring 2007): 25-33.

Alex deWaal. “AIDS: A Darwinian Event?” *Southern African Journal of HIV Medicine*. 28 (Spring 2007): 46-49.

Week Twelve – Historical Perspectives on HIV / AIDS

18 April - Africa in the Age of AIDS

20 April - DISCUSSION – Chabal & Daloz

Required Reading:

Mark Bradbury, "State-building, Counterterrorism, and Licensing Humanitarianism in Somalia," *Feinstein International Center, Briefing Paper* (September 2010.)

Jutta Bakonyi, "Between protest, revenge and material interests: a phenomenological analysis of looting in the Somali war." *Disasters* (April, 2010.)

Required VIEWING:

Film: All about Darfur - Group Screening but also on reserve for individual viewing

Week Thirteen - Genocide: What is it and why does it happen?

25 April – Lecture - Reworking Paradigms & Re-Mapping the Present

27 April - Lecture - Beyond Death, Disease and Disasters – Africa through its own Prism

Required Reading:

Alex de Waal, "Mission without end? Peacekeeping in the African Political marketplace (Report.)" *International Affairs* 85 (January 2009): 99 -114.

Alex de Waal. "The Humanitarians Tragedy: escapable and inescapable cruelties (Report)" *Disasters* (April, 2010):130-137.

Required VIEWING

Film : Heart of the Congo - Group Screening but also on reserve for individual viewing.

Review for Exam Three

Week Fourteen –

2 May - **Third Hour Exam**