

**AFH 3100: African History to 1800
(Section 26486)
Fall 2020**

Meeting

MWF Period 6 (12:50 PM-1:40 PM)
via **Zoom**

Instructor

Associate Professor Susan M. O'Brien
office hours: Thursday 3-5, & by appt., via Zoom
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Course Description

This course is an introduction to the history of Africa from the birth of humankind to roughly 1800. Given the vast scope of time under consideration and the great environmental, linguistic, and cultural diversity of the African continent, the goal is not exhaustive coverage of the history of this area. Rather, using a wide range of historical sources - the findings of archaeologists and linguists, the texts of Arab travelers and European missionaries, West African oral epics, slave narratives, African art and music - we will focus on processes of economic, cultural, and political change within African societies in the centuries prior to the imposition of European colonial rule. Our broad chronological narrative will be integrated with in-depth consideration of major themes that define the distinctive regional histories of pre-colonial Africa. We will thus consider such topics as: the growth, innovation, and regional spread of material culture and ideas; the connections between trade, urbanization, and centralized state systems; the mechanisms of social hierarchy - such as gender, race, and servile status - in different African communities; and continuity and change in the organization and expression of religious belief, including the spread of Islam and Christianity. We will spend four weeks of the semester considering the local and regional impact of the Atlantic slave trade on Africa.

A parallel goal of the course is to grapple with the methodological issues involved in the study of pre-colonial Africa. We will thus examine the principles that guide historians in using different kinds of evidence to build inferences about the past in the absence of, (or, for later periods, in conjunction with) written documentation. We will thus ask not only what do we know about pre-colonial African history but how do we know it?

Requirements

Your grade in this class will be based on the following:

- 1) attendance and participation (20%).** Attendance and participation in class discussions are considered mandatory, and it will be difficult to do well on the papers and exam if you do not regularly attend class lectures.
- 2) media assignment (15%): due on Friday, September 11 by 12:50 pm.** Detailed instructions for this paper will be posted to Canvas at least a week before it is due.

3) two 5-page essay assignments worth 20% each (40%): these essays will respond to questions provided by the professor, and they will be based on class readings and lectures. Essay questions will be distributed a week before the assignment is due. The first essay is due in class on **October 16 by 9 pm**; the second is due on **November 6 by 9 pm**. Students will submit their essay electronically on Canvas.

4) one final take-home exam (6-7 pages) (25%): This exam will consist of 1-2 essay questions and/or short answers based on material covered in readings and lectures. The essay prompt(s) will be posted to our Canvas course site by **December 7**, and exams are **due, at the latest, on December 16 by 9 pm**.

There may be opportunities for extra credit in this class. Details on these opportunities will be given as the semester unfolds.

Readings

The following textbook is required and is available from area bookstores and online vendors:

Kevin Shillington, History of Africa (4th Edition), MacMillan Education Limited, 2019.

Additional readings in the form of selected book chapters, academic and news articles will be posted on our course page on the Canvas web-site. All of these readings are marked with an asterisk * on the course schedule below and will be available at least one week before they are assigned.

Overall letter grades for the course will be assigned according to the following scale:

Letter Grade	Numerical Equivalent	GPA Equivalent
A	Above 92	4.0
A-	90-92	3.67
B+	87-89	3.33
B	83-86	3.0
B-	80-82	2.67
C+	77-79	2.33
C	73-76	2.0
C-	70-72	1.67
D+	67-69	1.33
D	63-66	1.0
D-	60-62	0.67
E	Below 60	0.0

Classroom Policies and Ethics

Students are expected to arrive to class **on time**, be attentive and remain until class is over. Being consistently late is a disruption to the class and is not acceptable. Students who disrupt class will be asked to leave. **Cell phones** and laptops must be turned off at the beginning of the class.

All students should observe the University of Florida's standards of academic honesty. In the event that a student is found **cheating or plagiarizing**, s/he will automatically fail the course and will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs. Acts of plagiarism include:

- Turning in a paper that was written by someone else (i.e., papers written by another student, a research service, or downloaded off the Internet).
- Copying, verbatim, a paragraph or significant portion of text from the work of another author without properly acknowledging the source through a commonly accepted citation style and using quotation marks.
- Paraphrasing (i.e., restating in your own words) text written by another author without citing that author.
- Using a unique idea or concept, which you discovered in a specific reading, without citing that author.

Students with **disabilities** requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Anyone with a disability should feel free to see the professor during office hours to make the necessary arrangements.

Online Course Evaluation Process: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Week 1: August 31- September 4

M Introduction to class

W Africa in Western thought & media

* Media articles: 'Dateline: Africa,' 'Savage Beasts and Beastly Savages', 'The Media and Africa: The Portrayal of Africa in the New York Times 1955-1995', 'The Ivory Story, Africans, and Africanists'

F Africa in Western thought & media, cont'd
Shillington, History of Africa, pp. 1-3.

* Media Articles: President Trump's Controversial 2018 Remarks, and Countering Negative Images of Africa through Social Media, etc

Week 2: September 7-11

M **LABOR DAY: NO CLASS**

W physical geography & climate; dealing with climate change
+ Shillington, History of Africa, pp. 3-6.

* Mark Hertsgaard, 'Regreening Africa,' The Nation, November 2009; Polgreen, 'In Niger, Trees and Crops Turn Back the Desert,' The New York Times, February 2007.

F Africa & human origins; the emergence of hunter-gathering
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Chapter 1 (pp. 9-22)

****MEDIA PAPER DUE by 12:50 pm****

Week 3: September 14-18

- M Origins of Farming & Pastoralism in Africa
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Chapter 2, pp. 23-31.
- W Ancient Egypt & Nubia
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Chapter 2, pp. 31-46.
* Diana Craig Patch, "Art & Writing in Ancient Egyptian Culture," *Inscribing Meaning: Writing and Graphic Systems in African Art* Smithsonian Institution, 2007: 107-116.
- F Women & Gender in Ancient Egypt
* Tyldesley, *Daughters of Isis*, Introduction and Chapters 1-2 (pp. 1-81).

Week 4: September 21-25

- M The Spread & Impact of Early Iron-Working (West Africa)
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Chapter 3, pp. 47-53.
- W The Spread & Impact of Early Iron-Working: Kush, Meroe, & Axum
+ Shillington, History of Africa, pp. 53-66.
- F Bantu Migrations
+ Shillington, History of Africa, pp. Chapter 4, pp. 67-77.

Week 5: September 28-October 2

- M early Christianity in North Africa
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 3, Chapter 5, pp. 79-88.
- W the Arab invasions of the Nile valley & North Africa
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 3, Chapter 5, pp. 88-92.
- F Trans-Saharan Trade & the kingdom of Ancient Ghana
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 3, Chapter 6, pp. 93-102.

Week 6: October 5-9

- M Islam & the Sudanic States of West Africa (Mali/Songhay)
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 3, Chapter 7, pp. 103-114.
* excerpts from the epic of Sunjata
- W + Shillington, History of Africa, Section 3, Chapter 7, pp. 114-119.

* John Hunwick, "Arab views of black Africans & slavery," in West Africa, Islam, and the Arab World (Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006): 75-89.
- F the African diaspora in the Mediterranean
* Hunwick & Trout, The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam (Markus Wiener, 2002): 1-32.

Week 7: October 12-16

- M the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 4, Chapter 8, pp. 121-126.
* Wendy Belcher, "African Rewritings Of The Jewish And Islamic Solomonian Tradition: The Triumph Of The Queen Of Sheba In The Ethiopian Fourteenth-Century Text Kebrä Nägäst," in Sacred Tropes (2009): 441–459.
- W Muslim penetration of Ethiopia & Somalia
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 4, Chapter 8, pp. 127-130.
* Wendy Laura Belcher, "Sisters Debating the Jesuits: The Role of African Women in Defeating Portuguese Proto-Colonialism in Seventeenth-Century Abyssinia," Northeast African Studies, 13, 1 (2013): 121-166.
- F pastoralists & farmers of the East African interior
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 4, Chapter 8, pp. 130-135.
FILM in class: PBS' African Civilizations with Henry Louis Gates

****FIRST ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE by 9 pm****

Week 8: October 19-23

- M later Iron Age in central & southern Africa
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 4, Chapter 9, pp. 136-145.
- W Great Zimbabwe & Mutapa
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 4, Chapter 9, pp. 145-154.
- F the emergence of Swahili language, culture, & states on the East African coast
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 4, Chapter 10, pp. 155-170.

Week 9: October 26-30

- M the development of the Atlantic slave trade
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 5, Chapter 11, pp. 173-185.
- W resistance & survival in the era of the Atlantic slave trade

* Joseph E. Inikori, 'The Struggle Against the Transatlantic Slave Trade: The Role of the State,' in Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies, edited by Sylviane Diouf: 170-193.
- F resistance & survival in the era of the Atlantic slave trade, cont'd

* Walter Hawthorne, 'Strategies of the Decentralized: Defending Communities from Slave raiders in Coastal Guinea-Bissau, 1450-1815,' in Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies, edited by Sylviane Diouf: 152-169.

Week 10: November 2-6

- M Sahelian societies during the era of the Atlantic trade
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 5, Chapter 12, pp. 186-192.
- W kingdoms of the forest & coastal societies during the era of the Atlantic trade
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 5, Chapter 12, pp. 193-199.
- * Edna G. Bay, 'Belief, Legitimacy and the Kpojito: An Institutional History of the 'Queen Mother' in Precolonial Dahomey,' *Journal of African History* 36, 1 (1995): 1-27.
- * Randy J. Sparks, "Two Princes of Calabar: An Atlantic Odyssey from Slavery to Freedom," *William & Mary Quarterly* Third Series, 59, 3 (2002): 555-584.
- F memories of the slave trade in contemporary Ghana
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 5, Chapter 12, pp. 199-201.
* Bayo Holsey, "In Place of Slavery: Fashioning Coastal Identity," in Grinker et al, *Perspectives on Africa: a Reader in Culture, History, & Representation* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010): 372-381.

****SECOND ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE by 9 pm****

Week 11: November 9-13

- M West-Central Africa in the Era of the Atlantic trade
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 6 intro pp. 203-204, Chapter 14, pp. 224-227.
- W **NO CLASS: VETERAN'S DAY**
- F the Kongolese & the Atlantic slave trade
* John Thornton, 'African Political Ethics and the Slave Trade: Central African Dimensions.'
*John Thornton, 'The Development of an African Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1491-1750,' The Journal of African History, 25, 2 (1984): 147-167.

Week 12: November 16-20

- M Southern African to the 18th c: early Boer settlement & Khoesan resistance
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 6, Chapter 15, pp. 234-241.
- W Southern African to the 18th c.: states & societies of the South African interior
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 6, Chapter 15, pp. 241-246.
- F South Africa in the Nineteenth Century
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 7, Chapter 20, pp. 289-298.

Week 13: November 23

- M The British at the Cape, the Great Trek, & the Xhosa Cattle-Killing
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 7, Chapter 20, pp. 298-307.

*J. B. Peires, 'The Central Beliefs of the Xhosa Cattle-Killing,' The Journal of African History, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1987): 43-63.

W-F **THANKSGIVING BREAK!!**

Week 14: November 30-December 4

M West African Jihads in the Nineteenth Century
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 7 intro pp. 247-249, Chapter 16, pp. 249-255.

W Abolition of the Atlantic Slave trade
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 7, Chapter 17, pp. 256-262.

F Christian Missions, New States, and precolonial 'nationalism'
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 7, Chapter 18, pp. 263-272.

Week 15: December 7-9

M the Opening of the East African Interior
+ Shillington, History of Africa, Section 7, Chapter 19, pp. 273-288.

* Jonathan Glassman, 'The Bondsman's New Clothes: the Contradictory Consciousness of Slave Resistance on the Swahili Coast,' *Journal of African History* 32, 2 (1991): 277-313.

W wrap-up and discussion of final exam

***** DECEMBER 16 AT 9 pm: FINAL ESSAY EXAM DUE
(early submissions welcome) *****