

Spring 2021

AFH 3342 (10320/26288) History of West Africa from the Ghana Empire to 1800

Class periods: Tuesdays: 10:40 am- 11:30 am

Thursdays: 10:40 am- 12:35 pm

Room: [FLI 0101](#)

Instructor: Mustapha, Kofi Mohammed

Office hours: Wednesdays 10-12 or by appointment

Contact: mmustapha@ufl.edu

Course description:

This course is designed to introduce students to some general themes in the history of West Africa. The class's larger focus is centered around activities from the beginning of the first millennium AD to 1800. Topics are divided into five broad sections. Section I deals with the (pre) history of West Africa and critical sources of information and knowledge about West Africa's (pre) history. The class will discuss the trans-Saharan caravan trade and its networks and the influence of Arab/Muslim merchants, travelers, and writers on the documentation of some West African historical activities. Section 2 introduces the Sudanic empires that flourished in West Africa before the first millennium and the beginning of the 2nd millennium. Some of the kingdoms that emerged in the savannah and forest zones of West Africa, such as Mamprugu, Dagbon, Oyo, Benin, and Asante, will be introduced. In Section 3, the course introduces the nature of Socioeconomic and political organizations in ancient West Africa before 1800. The topics highlight the economic, education, and socio-cultural organizations of West Africa before 1800. Section 4 of the course introduces the art forms in West Africa before 1800 and some of the early forms of technology experimented and practiced in West Africa. Some of these technical activities to be discussed include ceramic production, textiles making, and ironworking. Section 5 examines the Trans-Atlantic economic activities and the displacement of the human population in West Africa. The class will review some of the legacies of the Atlantic economic and political activities in West Africa. Throughout the course, the instructor will engage students of this class in different concepts and perspectives such as cultural contact, culture continuity and change, economic hegemony, capitalism, indigenous inventions and innovations, external influence and diffusion, and the concept of heterarchy and hierarchy across the various topics.

Course objective:

The course aims to introduce students to different theoretical perspectives underpinning the historical developments and activities in West Africa. This will allow students to appreciate and have insights into the dynamics and patterns that have emerged through the region's peculiar development trajectory. The course will equip students with critical and analytical skills to collect, analyze, review, critique historical narratives, sources, and formulate hypotheses to investigate patterns in West African history.

Course Policy: The course plan is subject to change to reflect students' interests while not disrupting the course syllabus's general outline. The instructor will announce any such change(s) during the semester.

Academic Dishonesty

Students are required to uphold high academic standards and avoid academic dishonesty. Details on student responsibilities and regulations can be viewed at [Student Conduct and Honor Code](#)

Online class activities:

Students participating in the class online must keep their cameras on unless with the notice and approval to otherwise in reasonable circumstances. It is advisable to use a convenient space that will not disrupt other participants' attention in the class.

Class requirements:

At the beginning of the class, students will be put into groups. The number of groups and the number of students in a group will depend on the class size. Groups will be assigned readings of particular weeks to lead class discussions and presentations. A group leading a class discussion will be required to give a short presentation of about 10-15 minutes and present some critical and analytical questions for discussions.

Class attendance: class attendance and participation are required for this class. The class attendance and participation will count for 10% of the final grade.

Weekly essays: Students will be required to submit weekly essays or summaries of some readings assigned. The essay or summary will be about 250 words or as will be indicated in class. The instructor will continuously give other instructions weekly. Students response to the weekly essays is to be posted on canvas discussions for grading.

Mid-term exam: There will be a midterm exam in the form of class presentations. Students are allowed to choose from any of the topics discussed before the midterm exams' time and present a comprehensive research project on that topic. Students are allowed to choose from topics and resources outside the class syllabus as long as that is within the general theme of West African history before 1800.

Final exams: Finals for this class will be a research project on the various themes and concepts discussed over the semester. Students are allowed to employ various concepts and perspectives that run through the class for their research projects. Students shall turn in their final projects by **4/30/2021**.

Final evaluation

Class attendance/participation	10%
Weekly essays	40 %
Midterm presentation	20 %
Final project	30%

Grading Scale

A	94-100	C	67- 69
A-	90-93	C-	64-66
B+	85-89	D+	60-63
B	80-84	D	55-59
B-	75-79	D-	50-54
C+	70-74	F	0-49

General Text:

Achebe, N., Adu-Gyamfi, S., Alie, J., Ceesay, H., Green, T., Hiribarren, V., & Kye-Ampadu, B. (2018). **History Textbook**: West African Senior School Certificate Examination.

Davidson, B. (2014). *West Africa before the colonial era: a history to 1850*. Routledge.

Gomez, M. (2019). *African Dominion: A New History of Empire in Early and Medieval West Africa*. Princeton University Press.

Hopkins, A. G. (2019). *An economic history of West Africa*. Routledge.

Shillington, K. (1995). *A History of Africa: JD Fage*. Macmillan International Higher Education.

Section I: Pre-history of West Africa

Week 1: Introduction: The study of West African history and sources

Tuesday: Class discussion

Chapter 1: Achebe, N., Adu-Gyamfi, S., Alie, J., Ceesay, H., Green, T., Hiribarren, V., & Kye-Ampadu, B. (2018). History Textbook: West African Senior School Certificate Examination.

Anquandah, J.R. (2013). The People of Ghana: Their origins and cultures. *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana. New Series*, (15), 1-25.

Falola, T., & Jennings, C. (Eds.). (2003). *Sources and methods in African history: Spoken, written, unearthed* (Vol. 15). University Rochester Press.

Thursday: Class discussion on sources of historiography: case studies

Anquandah, J. (2006). The Accra Plains c. AD 1400-1800 overview of trade, politics and culture from the perspective of historical archaeology. *Institute of African Studies Research Review*, 2006(Supplement 7), 1-20.

Mustapha, M., & Apoh, W. (2019). The Influence of James Anquandah on the Development and Practice of Eclectic Archaeology in Ghana. *Ghana Studies*, 22(1), 206-221.

Week 2: Introduction to Holocene period of West Africa

Tuesday:

Casey, J. (2013). The stone to metal age in West Africa. In *the Oxford handbook of African archaeology*.

McIntosh, S. K., & Akeyeampong, E. K. (2006). The Holocene pre-history of West Africa (10,000–1000 BP). *Themes in West Africa's History*. Ohio University Press, Athens, 11-32.

Thursday:

MacEachern, S. (2005). Two thousand years of West African history. *African archaeology: A Critical introduction*, 441-66.

Stahl, A. B. (1994). Innovation, diffusion, and culture contact: The Holocene archaeology of Ghana. *Journal of World Prehistory*, 8(1), 51-112.

Week 3: Trans-Sahara caravan trade: Arab-Islamic influence in West Africa

Tuesday: Class discussions on the development of the Trans-Sahara caravan trade

Berzock, K. B. (Ed.). (2019). *Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art, Culture, and Exchange Across Medieval Saharan Africa*. Princeton University Press.

Falola, T., & Adediran, B. (1983). Islam and Christianity in West Africa.

Thursday: Class discussions and student group presentation on the legacies of the Trans-Sahara caravan trade

Film: Caravans of Gold: [AFRICA Episode 3 Caravans of Gold Written & Presented by Basil Davidson Executive Producer Mic - YouTube](#)

Chapter 6: Medieval African economies. Ocran, M. K. (2019). *Economic Development in the Twenty-first Century: Lessons for Africa Throughout History*. Springer International Publishing

Chapter 2: The emergence of trading states and empires (17-21). Davidson, B. (2014). *West Africa before the colonial era: a history to 1850*. Routledge.

Levtzion, N. (1986). Merchants vs. Scholars and Clerics in West Africa: Differential and Complementary Roles. *Rural and Urban Islam in West Africa*, 21-37.

Section II: The Sudanic and savannah/forest zone empires

Week 4: The Ghana Empire

Tuesday: Class discussion on Ghana Empire

Chapter 1: Conrad, D. C. (2010). *Empires of Medieval West Africa: Ghana, Mali, and Songhay*. Infobase Publishing.

Chapter 3: Pioneers in Ancient Ghana (25-34). Davidson, B. (2014). *West Africa before the colonial era: a history to 1850*. Routledge.

Thursday: class discussion and student presentation on Ghana

Chapter 6: Medieval African economies. Ocran, M. K. (2019). *Economic Development in the Twenty-first Century: Lessons for Africa Throughout History*. Springer International Publishing.

Chapter 4: Conrad, D. C. (2010). *Empires of Medieval West Africa: Ghana, Mali, and Songhay*. Infobase Publishing.

Week 5: The Mali Empire

Tuesday: Class discussion on the Mali empire

Chapter 2: Conrad, D. C. (2010). *Empires of Medieval West Africa: Ghana, Mali, and Songhay*. Infobase Publishing.

Chapter 4: Davidson, B. (2014). *West Africa before the colonial era: a history to 1850*. Routledge.

Chapters 6: Medieval African economies. Ocran, M. K. (2019). *Economic Development in the Twenty-first Century: Lessons for Africa Throughout History*. Springer International Publishing.

Niane, D. T., Pickett, G. D., Chappell, D. W., & Jones, J. (2006). *Sundiata: An epic of old Mali*. Longman Pub Group.

Thursday: Class discussion and student presentation on Mali

Chapter 5: Conrad, D. C. (2010). *Empires of Medieval West Africa: Ghana, Mali, and Songhay*. Infobase Publishing.

Chapter 4: Davidson, B. (2014). *West Africa before the colonial era: a history to 1850*. Routledge.

Week 6: The Songhay Empire

Tuesday: Class discussion on the Songhay empire

Chapter 3: Conrad, D. C. (2010). *Empires of Medieval West Africa: Ghana, Mali, and Songhay*. Infobase Publishing.

Chapter 5: Davidson, B. (2014). *West Africa before the colonial era: a history to 1850*. Routledge.

Chapters 6: Medieval African economies. Ocran, M. K. (2019). *Economic Development in the Twenty-first Century: Lessons for Africa Throughout History*. Springer International Publishing.

Hunwick, J. (1996). Secular power and religious authority in Muslim society: The case of Songhay. *Journal of African History*, 175-194.

Thursday: Class discussion and student presentation on Songhay

Chapter 5: Davidson, B. (2014). *West Africa before the colonial era: a history to 1850*. Routledge.

Chapter 6: Conrad, D. C. (2010). *Empires of Medieval West Africa: Ghana, Mali, and Songhay*. Infobase Publishing.

**Week 7: The Volta basin and forest kingdoms
Mole-Dagbanba, Asante, Benin, and Oyo**

Tuesday: Class discussion and student presentation on Mole-Dagbamba kingdoms

Lentz, C. (2006). *Ethnicity and the making of history in Northern Ghana*. Edinburgh University Press.

MacGaffey, W. (2013). *Chiefs, priests, and praise-singers: History, politics, and land ownership in northern Ghana*. University of Virginia Press.

Thursday: Class discussion and student presentation on Asante, Benin, and Oyo

Lentz, C. (2006). *Ethnicity and the making of history in Northern Ghana*. Edinburgh University Press.

MacGaffey, W. (2013). *Chiefs, priests, and praise-singers: History, politics, and land ownership in northern Ghana*. University of Virginia Press.

Section III: Early urbanization: Socioeconomic and political organizations in ancient West Africa

Week 8: Urbanization in West Africa

Tuesday: Class discussions on urbanization in West Africa from non-western perspectives

De Villiers, M., & Hirtle, S. (2012). *Timbuktu: The Sahara's Fabled City of Gold*. McClelland & Stewart.

ES'ANDAH, B. W. (1976). An archaeological view of the urbanization process in the earliest West African States. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 8(3), 1-20.

McIntosh, S. K., & McIntosh, R. J. (1984). The early city in West Africa: towards an understanding. *African Archaeological Review*, 2(1), 73-98.

Thursday: Economics, trade, and commerce

Dueppen, S. (2018). The archaeology of political complexity in West Africa through 1450 CE. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*.

McIntosh, R. J., & McIntosh, S. K. (1988). From Siècles Obscurs to revolutionary centuries on the Middle Niger. *World Archaeology*, 20(1), 141-165.

Monroe, J. C. (2018). "Elephants for Want of Towns": Archaeological Perspectives on West African Cities and Their Hinterlands. *Journal of Archaeological Research*, 26(4), 387-446.

Northrup, D. (1972). The growth of trade among the Igbo before 1880. *The Journal of African History*, 13(2), 217-236.

Week 9: Social systems: Culture and linguistic diversity

Tuesday: Class discussion on indigenous social systems and order

Chapter 11: Davidson, B. (2014). *West Africa before the colonial era: a history to 1850*. Routledge.

Chapter 1: F. Ugboaja Ohaegbulam, *West African Responses to European Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Lanham, New York, Oxford: University of America Press, 2002.

Alexander, L., Agyekumhene, A., & Allman, P. (2017). The role of taboos in the protection and recovery of sea turtles. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 4, 237.

Osei-Tutu, P. (2017). Taboos as informal institutions of local resource management in Ghana: Why they are complied with or not. *Forest policy and economics*, 85, 114-123.

Thursday: Midterm: Group Presentations on different topics in some countries in West Africa Each person within a group present on a topic in a country

Section IV: Arts and Technology

Week 10: Ceramic and Iron technologies

Tuesday: Class discussion on indigenous pot making and ironworking in West Africa

Chirikure, S. (2007). Metals in society: iron production and its position in Iron Age communities of southern Africa. *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 7(1), 72-100.

Holl, A. F. (2020). The Origins of African Metallurgies.

Mayor, A. (2010). Ceramic traditions and ethnicity in the Niger Bend, West Africa. *Ethnoarchaeology*, 2(1), 5-48.

Stahl, A. B., das Dores Cruz, M., Neff, H., Glascock, M. D., Speakman, R. J., Giles, B., & Smith, L. (2008). Ceramic production, consumption and exchange in the Banda area, Ghana: Insights from compositional analyses. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, 27(3), 363-381.

Thursday: film on iron production

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPU8Uwa-jBQ>

Iles, L., & Childs, S. T. (2014). Ethnoarchaeological and historical methods. In *Archaeometallurgy in Global Perspective* (pp. 193-215). Springer, New York, NY.

Schmidt, P. R. (2009). Tropes, materiality, and ritual embodiment of African iron smelting furnaces as human figures. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 16(3), 262-282.

Schmidt, P. R., & Mapunda, B. B. (1997). Ideology and the archaeological record in Africa: Interpreting symbolism in iron smelting technology. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, 16(1), 73-102.

Week 11: Aesthetics and performing arts: The Nok art and culture and the Bronze art of Benin

Tuesday: Class discussion on African art

Anquandah, J. (2014). The quest for meaning in African artistic representations: A case study of materials from archaeological contexts in Ghana. *Current perspectives in the archaeology of Ghana*, 204-221.

Männel, T. M., & Breunig, P. (2016). The Nok terracotta sculptures of Pangwari. *Journal of African Archaeology*, 14(3), 313-329.

Irabor, D. (2019). The Art of the Benin People. *Journal of Advances in Social Science and Humanities*, 5(8), 949-974.

Thursday: A class tour to the Harn museum African art collection

Students will present an essay on the exhibitions and their experience at the museum

Week 12: Koma terracotta's, Asante terracotta, and gold weights

Tuesday:

Gilbert, M. (1989). Akan Terracotta Heads: Gods or Ancestors?. *African arts*, 22(4), 34-86.

Kankpeyeng, B. W., Nkumba, S. N., & Insoll, T. (2011). Indigenous cosmology, art forms and past medicinal practices: Towards an interpretation of ancient Koma Land sites in northern Ghana. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 18(2), 205-216.

Quarcoopome, N. O. (2017). Akan Funerary Arts in Terra-cotta. *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, 91(14), 74-85.

Quarcoopome, N. O. (2017). The Akan Gold Weights Collection at the DIA. *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, 91(14), 14-27.

Thursday: Group presentations on various art forms in West Africa

Anquandah, J. (2014). The quest for meaning in African artistic representations: A case study of materials from archaeological contexts in Ghana. *Current perspectives in the archaeology of Ghana*, 204-221.

Section V: European encounter: trade, population displacement , and legacies

Week 13: Arrival of Europeans: Trade and human displacement

Tuesday: Class discussions on the origins of European expeditions to West Africa and early activities

Chapter 13: Davidson, B. (2014). *West Africa before the colonial era: a history to 1850*. Routledge.

Introduction: Law, R. (Ed.). (2002). *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: the commercial transition in nineteenth-century West Africa* (Vol. 86). Cambridge University Press.

Thursday: Class discussions and student presentations

Chapter 12: Shillington, K. (1995). *A History of Africa: JD Fage*. Macmillan International Higher Education.

DeCorse, C. R. (1998). The Europeans in West Africa: Culture contact, continuity and change. *Transformations in Africa: Essays on Africa's Later Past*, Leicester University Press, London, 219-244.

DeCorse, C. R. (2010). Early trade posts and forts of West Africa. In *First Forts* (pp. 209-233). Brill.

Law, R., Schwarz, S., & Strickrodt, S. (Eds.). (2013). *Commercial agriculture, the slave trade and slavery in Atlantic Africa*. Boydell & Brewer Ltd.

Week 14: Resistance, impact, and legacies of European interactions

Tuesday: Class discussions on response to European activities in West Africa

DeCorse, C. R. (2015). Culture contact and change in West Africa. In *Studies in culture contact: interaction, culture change, and archaeology* (pp. 358-377). Southern Illinois University.

Law, R. (1977). Royal monopoly and private enterprise in the Atlantic trade: the case of Dahomey. *Journal of African History*, 555-577.

Miers, S. (2003). Slavery: A question of definition. *Slavery and Abolition*, 24(2), 1-16.

Thursday: Class discussions and student presentations

Film: [The Making Of Nigeria](#) on Netflix

Alpern, S. B. (1992). The European introduction of crops into West Africa in precolonial times. *History in Africa*, 19, 13-43.

Longi, F. Y. (2014). The Kusasi-Mamprusi conflict in Bawku: a legacy of British colonial policy in Northern Ghana. *Ghana Studies*, 17(1), 157-176.

Whatley, W., & Gillezeau, R. (2011). The impact of the transatlantic slave trade on ethnic stratification in Africa. *American Economic Review*, 101(3), 571-76.

Week 15: Course Review and revisions

Tuesday: Course Review and revisions

Finals:

Week 16: Final presentation of research projects