

AFH 4930: AFRICAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

Fall 2024

Dr. Philip Janzen
pjanzen@ufl.edu
Office: 494 Grinter Hall
Office Hours: Wed 1:00-3:00

Course Schedule:
Mon periods 8-10 (3:00-6:00)
0117 Flint Hall

Course Overview

What is intellectual history? Why is it important to study the intellectual history of Africa? And how have scholars approached this field of research? This seminar will consider these questions by tracing the contributions of African intellectuals and the history of knowledge production across the continent. Rather than focusing narrowly on writers and politicians, however, this course will consider a wider history of thought and belief: early forms of social organization and public healing in the Great Lakes region; the political discourses of peasants in East Africa; the creation and study of Islamic texts in West Africa; the careers of missionary-educated intermediaries; the nationalist intellectuals of the 1960s; and the spread of print culture. By moving through case studies from different parts of the continent, this course will explore a variety of intellectual traditions related to topics such as wealth, healing, gender, religion, ethnicity, language, colonialism, and decolonization.

Learning Objectives

The goal of this history research seminar is for students to bring together the main elements of the discipline: independent research, evaluating primary and secondary sources, methodological rigor, analytical thinking, and argumentative writing. Through a series of small assignments and workshops, students will experiment with sources and methods and work toward writing a 15-20 page research paper on African intellectual history. More generally, students will develop their reading and writing abilities – precious skills in our information-rich world.

Required Course Texts

Cheikh Anta Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadu Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853–1913* (Ohio University Press, 2007).

Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (Monthly Review Press, 2001).

Johannes Fabian and Tshibumba Kanda Matulu, *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire* (University of California Press, 1996).

Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton University Press, 2019).

Patrick Otim, *Acholi Intellectuals: Knowledge, Power, and the Making of Colonial Northern Uganda, 1850-1960* (Ohio University Press, 2024).

Patrick Rael, *Reading, Writing, and Researching History*, [available online](#).

Apart from Rael, you must purchase hard copies of all required texts. They are available for purchase at the UF Bookstore and from online booksellers. Links to all other readings are on the Canvas course website.

Evaluation

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-------|
| • Proposal | (15%) | 10/7 |
| • Individual Meeting | (5%) | 11/4 |
| • Presentation | (10%) | 11/18 |
| • Final Paper | (40%) | 12/9 |
| • Participation | (30%) | --- |

I will provide more detailed guidelines for the assignments in the coming weeks.

Procedure

Rather than a typical lecture course, this seminar consists of weekly discussions based on the assigned readings. Each week, 2-3 students will serve as discussion leaders. We will also work through a series of workshops focused on the methodological skills required for writing history essays.

Before each class, you must complete the assigned readings, submit two open-ended discussion questions to Canvas, and be ready to take part in the workshop activities. You should have detailed notes and be prepared to participate actively.

Your participation grade will be based on quality contributions to class discussions. Please remember to be respectful and empathetic toward one another during discussions. We all learn and process ideas in our own ways.

If you have questions about the course, please first consult this syllabus. You may also come to my office hours or contact me by email. I will do my best to respond within one business day.

Course Schedule

Week 1 Introduction to the Course

8/26 Course overview; Introductions and expectations

Questions: What is intellectual history? What is African intellectual history?

Week 2 No Class

9/2 *** Labor Day ***

Week 3 Public Healing and Historical Narratives in East Africa

9/9 Readings: Steven Feierman, "Colonizers, Scholars, and the Creation of Invisible Histories"; David Schoenbrun, "Conjuring the Modern."

Questions: How have scholars attempted to craft early African histories? How salient is the periodization of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial? What are the links between colonialism and scholarship about Africa?

Workshop Activity: Library meeting with Dr. Dan Reboussin

Week 4 African Intellectuals and Knowledge Production in Uganda

9/16 Reading: Patrick Otim, *Acholi Intellectuals*

Questions: Who were intellectuals in Acholiland? What kinds of knowledge did they produce? How did their roles change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?

Workshop Activity: Introduction to the African Newspapers Collection.

Week 5 Sources and Interpretation in West Africa

9/23 Reading: Cheikh Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad*

Questions: What factors gave rise to the Muridiyya in Senegal? How did colonial rule shape Murid identity? How do our sources shape the kinds of histories we write?

Workshop Activity: Choosing research topics and finding secondary sources

Week 6 Painting History

9/30 Reading: Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present*

Questions: What kinds of knowledge did Tshibumba Kanda Matulu produce? Was he an “historian”? What are the limitations and advantages of visual sources?

Workshop Activity: Working with visual and vernacular sources

Week 7 Proposal

10/7 No Class – Work on proposal

Week 8 Ethnicity and Colonialism

10/14 Reading: John Lonsdale, “Moral Economy and Mau Mau,” Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Decolonizing the Mind*, Chapter 1.

Questions: What were the intellectual origins of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army? How have ideas about language, culture, and ethnicity evolved in twentieth-century East Africa?

Workshop Activity: Peer review of proposals; refining research questions

Week 9 Decolonization

10/21 Reading: Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*; Césaire, “Letter to Maurice Thorez”

Questions: How have intellectuals justified and challenged colonialism? Who was Césaire’s intended audience in these texts? What did communism appeal to African and Caribbean intellectuals in the mid-twentieth century?

Workshop Activity: Writing and Revising

Week 10 Strategic Utopians

10/28 Reading: Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*

Questions: How did African and Caribbean intellectuals imagine a postimperial world? Is the nation-state the only form of self-determination?

Workshop Activity: Introductions and argumentation

Week 11 Individual Meetings

11/4 Meet with instructor individually

Week 12 No Class

11/11 *** Veterans Day ***

Week 13 Conference

11/18 Conference presentations

Week 14 No Class

11/25 *** Thanksgiving Holiday ***

Week 15 Research and Writing

12/2 Continue with research and writing final paper

FINAL PAPER DUE ONLINE 12/9

OTHER NOTES

Attendance

Frequent unexcused absences will result in a low grade. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found [here](#).

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the [Disability Resource Center](#) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible.

Health and Wellness Resources

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit www.umatter.ufl.edu/ to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit www.counseling.ufl.edu/ or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Grading Scale

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|----|--------|----|-------|----|----------|
| A | 93-100 | B- | 80-82 | D+ | 67-69 |
| A- | 90-92 | C+ | 77-79 | D | 63-66 |
| B+ | 87-89 | C | 73-76 | D- | 60-62 |
| B | 83-86 | C- | 70-72 | E | Below 60 |

Click [here](#) for more info on UF policies for assigning grade points.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is [available here](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or at [this link](#). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students [here](#).