

AFH 2000: AFRICA IN WORLD HISTORY

Spring 2026

Instructor: Dr. Philip Janzen
Office: 494 Grinter Hall
Office Hours: Tues 11:30-1:30
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Course Schedule:
T period 4 (10:40 – 11:30)
R periods 4-5 (10:40 – 12:35)
0105 Keene-Flint Hall

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Course Overview

In North America, Africa is often represented as a faraway and isolated continent, on the periphery of world history. This course starts from the premise that Africa has long been linked with the rest of the world and has been central to many global developments. Through four thematic units, we will examine how the relationships between Africans and the rest of the world have changed over time: Africa and the World before the 19th Century; Atlantic Africa; Colonialism and Decolonization; and Contemporary Africa. Because the continent contains a wide array of languages, societies, and peoples, we cannot hope for exhaustive coverage. However, we will visit every major region at least once during the semester.

Learning Objectives

In this course, students will learn how Africa's history has been shaped by both internal and external dynamics. In lectures, readings, discussions, and assignments, students will learn to analyze and challenge popular narratives of African history. We will examine broad historical processes that have shaped communities and the local and regional dynamics of specific peoples and places. The course will also emphasize the importance of learning African languages for understanding how Africans have interpreted and made sense of their worlds.

Course Readings

Links to all course readings can be found on Canvas.

Evaluation

• Map Quiz	(10%)	1/29
• Assignment #1: Article Précis	(20%)	2/16
• Assignment #2: Midterm Essay	(25%)	3/12
• Assignment #3: Final Essay	(30%)	4/22
• Participation	(15%)	- - -

Procedure

In general, classes on Tuesdays will be lectures and classes on Thursdays will be a mix of lectures and discussions based on the assigned weekly readings. I expect students to attend the lectures, complete the readings by the assigned dates, and participate actively in discussions. To prepare for discussion, students should summarize the main ideas and arguments of the weekly readings, identify important passages, and note any questions. Participation grades are based on quality contributions to class discussions.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 Introduction to the Course

1/13-1/15 **Lectures:** Review Syllabus; Images of Africa

Reading: Binyavanga Wainaina, "How to Write About Africa"

UNIT I: AFRICA AND THE WORLD BEFORE THE 19th CENTURY

Week 2 East Africa, Swahili, and the Indian Ocean

1/20-1/22 **Lectures:** Language, Wealth, and Urban Complexity on the Swahili Coast

Reading: John M. Mugane, "Swahili, the Complex Language of a Cosmopolitan People," in *The Story of Swahili*, 15-40.

Week 3 Trans-Saharan Trade and Islam in West Africa

1/27-1/29 **Lectures:** West African Empires

Reading: Mauro Nobili and Mohamed Shahid Mathee "Towards a New Study of the So-Called Tārīkh al-fattāsh," *History in Africa* 42 (2015): 37-73.

MAP QUIZ IN CLASS 1/29

Week 4 Political Complexity in the Great Lakes Region

2/3-2/5 **Lectures:** Healing, Agriculture, and Politics in the Ancient Great Lakes

Reading: Steven Feierman, "Colonizers, Scholars and the Creation of Invisible Histories," in *Beyond the Linguistic Turn* (1999): 182-216.

Week 5 History and Historiography of Buganda

2/10-2/12 **Lectures:** Spirit Mediums and the Founding of the Buganda Kingdom

Discussion Readings: Sir Apolo Kaggwa, *The Kings of Buganda*, translated by M. S. M. Kiwanuka (Nairobi: 1971): 10-14; Neil Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze*, 98-130.

ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE ONLINE 2/16

UNIT II: ATLANTIC AFRICA

Week 6 The Transatlantic Slave Trade

2/17-2/19 **Lectures:** Slavery in Africa; The Middle Passage

Discussion Readings: Stephanie Smallwood, "Turning African Captives into Atlantic Commodities," in *Saltwater Slavery* (2007): 33-64.

Week 7 Africans in the Americas

2/24-2/26 **Lectures:** Social Death; Recreating Africa in the Americas

Discussion Readings: Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 1231-1249.

UNIT III: COLONIALISM AND DECOLONIZATION

Week 8 End of the Slave Trade and Early Colonization

3/3-3/5 **Lectures:** Imperialism and "Legitimate" Trade

Discussion Reading: Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*, Chapter 3.

Week 9 Review and Midterm Essay

3/10-3/12 Review for Midterm Essay

ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE ONLINE 3/12

SPRING BREAK

Week 10 Colonialism

3/24-3/26 **Lectures:** Colonial Rule; Language and Identity

Discussion Reading: Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*, Ch. 1, 1-33.

Week 11 Decolonization

3/31-4/2 **Lectures:** Decolonization in Ghana and Congo

Discussion Reading: Frantz Fanon, "On Violence," in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961): 1-62.

UNIT IV: CONTEMPORARY AFRICA

Week 12 Development

4/7-4/9 **Lecture:** Postcolonial State Building; Origins of Development

Discussion Readings: James Ferguson, "Decomposing Modernity: History and Hierarchy after Development," in *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (2007), 176-93.

Week 13 Urban Africa and Popular Culture

4/14-4/16 **Lectures:** African Cities; Music, Film, Visual Art, Literature

Discussion Readings: Selections from Amanaz - Africa; Pumzi; Black Coffee and Hugh Masekela, Stimela; Swahili street fiction; and *oriki* from Nigeria

Week 14 Course Wrap Up and Review

4/21 Review for Final Essay

ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE ONLINE 4/22

COURSE NOTES

Attendance

Frequent unexcused absences will result in a low participation 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 who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. See the “Get Started With the DRC” Disability Resource Center [webpage](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Grading Scale

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.

Other Policies and Information

This course complies with all other UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#).