

IS 2300: Perspectives on Africa
Class Time: TR 1:00-2:47PM
Place: 120 MSC
Fall 2018

Professor: Getnet Bekele
Office: 406 Varner Hall
Phone: (248)370-3517
E-mail: bekele@oakland.edu
Office hours: W 10:30am-12:30pm

Course Description

This course introduces you to the diversity of African societies, their history, their constantly changing way of life, and their contributions to human civilization. Obviously such a course on the history of African civilizations represents a daunting challenge. We necessarily have to look for broad themes, which distinguish and tie together the regions, states, communities, and cultures of the continent, and we have to make selections of where we study them.

Africa is not a country. Neither is the continent inhabited by people who belong to one race or one civilization. Nor does the generally accepted practice of dividing the continent into certain distinct parts—such as sub-Saharan and North Africa—make a lot of sense in the face of history and the sense of identity that individual Africans had built for themselves. In this course we look at the development of African societies, cultures, and states across the whole continent from the beginning of food production, metal working, and the emergence of ancient states such as Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia. That will be followed by a discussion on the spread of the world religions to Africa and what Africans have made of them. Some of the enduring themes in this class include also trade, politics, and Africa's encounter with the ideas, technologies, and peoples of the outside world both before and after the infamous trans-Atlantic slave trade. A fourth theme in this class relates to the history of modern Africa, which we will study by highlighting the developments that took place in that continent during the colonial and post-colonial times. We will conclude the semester by talking about Africa's current history, namely the efforts its populations are making to improve their living conditions in this rapidly changing and globalizing world.

Course Objectives

This class satisfies the General Education requirements in the Global Perspectives area.

Course prerequisites: none

General education learning outcomes:

1. Knowledge of the political systems, economies, cultures, and societies of Africa and awareness of the transnational flow of peoples, ideas, values, resources and capital.
2. Knowledge of the role different cultural heritages, past and present, play in forming values in another part of the world, enabling the student to function within a more global context.

Objectives:

1. Students should gain an introductory familiarity with African civilizations via an overview of geography, history, culture (including religion and social institutions) and Africa's major contributions to and influence by other world civilizations.
2. Students should develop an awareness of how Africa's diverse social, cultural, and historical experiences have shaped contemporary patterns of thought and practice in the U.S. and beyond in a broad range of areas such as science, economic development, the environment, and crisis management.

Course Requirements

Required books:

Eric Gilbert and Jonathan T. Reynolds, Africa in World History: From Prehistory to the Present, 3rd Edition (New Jersey, 2011).

Vijay Mahajan, Africa Rising: How 900 Million African Consumers offer more than you Think (Pearson, 2009).

Evaluation:

	<u>Points</u>
Test 1	40
Test 2	40
Test 3	30
Term project	75
Class Participation	40
Final Exam	<u>75</u>
Total	300*

* As you probably know, OU has now switched from a numeric to a letter grade. The final grade for this course will be calculated according to the following criteria: 96-100=A. 90-95= A-. 87-89=B+. 83-86=B. 80-82= B-. 77-79= C=. 74-76= C. 70-73=C-. 67-69= D=. 60-66= D. <60=F.

General rules:

As a student in this course, you are responsible for all materials covered in class lectures, movies, and in the assigned readings. Major themes and issues are brought out in the lectures and therefore class attendance and note taking are fundamental to understanding course content. Your own notes and the required readings are the best guide when preparing for examinations. In the lecture sessions, I use detailed outlines. You are not required to copy all my notes unless you want to. But you are not entitled to get my notes other than during lecture hours. I will not share lecture-notes with absentees under any circumstance.

Dates for exams and lectures themes are given in the course outline below. While every effort will be made to adhere to the schedule, it is possible that some dates and some themes may change. It is your responsibility to be aware of any such changes.

The format and procedure of the exams will be discussed in class. But expect a combination of objective and subjective questions.

The make-up policy for this class is simple: make-up exams will be given to students who can supply documentation that makes clear a legitimate reason for the absence(s).

I expect you to observe appropriate classroom activity. I should mention that talking, sleeping, reading newspapers, making or receiving phone calls, and browsing the internet will not be tolerated in this class.

Term Project

The term project relates to a five-page review that you will write on globalization's and the IT revolution's impact on African populations. Your review must be based on Mahajan's assigned book. Additional guidelines will be provided in class later in the semester.

Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction

Sep. 6 Syllabus, requirements, and course procedure

Week 2: Human evolution and food production

Sep. 11 Geography and human evolution
Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, Chs. 1& 2

Sep. 13 Farming and metal working
Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, Chs. 3& 4

Week 3: Food producers, politicians, and traders

Sep. 18 Developments in the Nile Valley
Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, pp. 67-78

Sep. 20 "Mystery of the Nile," Movie
The Pharaohs' power over the river, the land, and the people
Lecture

Week 4: Between the river and the sea

Sep. 25 The case of Ancient Nubia
Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, pp. 78-84
Study Guide for Test I

Sep. 27 The case of Ancient Ethiopia
Lecture

Week 5: Africa and the world religions

- Oct. 2 **TEST ONE**
 Encountering Christianity
 Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, Ch. 6
- Oct. 4 Embracing Islam
 Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, Ch. 7

Week 6: Markets, traders, states, and politicians within and outside of an Islamic universe

- Oct. 9 The world of the Swahili
 Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, Ch. 8
 Study Guide for Test 2
- Oct. 11 “Caravans of Gold,” movie
 Mali, Ghana, and the area south of the equator
 Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, 105-112

Week 7: Africa and the Atlantic Slave trade

- Oct. 16 **TEST TWO**
 The opening of the Atlantic Ocean for trade
 Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, pp. 143-151
- Oct. 18 The trade’s origins and expansion
 Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, pp. 151-165

Week 8: Slaves as objects and agents of change

- Oct. 23 Plantations, slave communities, and revolutions
 Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, pp. 165-170
- Oct. 25 Abolition and transformation
 Gilbert & Reynolds, pp. 171-198

Week 9: Living in the shadows of the slave trade

- Oct. 30 North Africa
 Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, Ch. 11
- Nov. 1 West, and East Africa
 Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, Ch. 12
 Study guide for Test Three

Week 10: Imagining and building a different Africa

- Nov. 6 The case of South Africa
 Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, Ch. 13
- Nov. 8 The missionary movement
 Movie: “The Bible and the Gun”
 TEST THREE

Week 11: Africa and the “civilizing mission”

- Nov. 13 Partition and colonial rule
Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, Ch. 14
- Nov. 15 This Magnificent African Cake,” movie
Apartheid in South Africa
Lecture

Week 12: Ending colonialism and imagining a different Africa

- Nov. 20 Decolonization and national liberation
Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, Ch. 18
- Nov. 22 *No Class: Thanksgiving recess*

Week 13: Contemporary Africa

- Nov. 27 Building a post-racial state in South Africa
Reading: Gilbert & Reynolds, Ch. 19
- Nov. 29 The African opportunity
Reading: Mahajan, Chs. 1 & 3

Week 14: Africa revealed

- Dec. 4 Opportunities in Africa’s youth market
Reading: Mahajan, Chs. 4-6
Term project due in class
- Dec. 6 Opportunities in the African diasporas
Reading: Mahajan, Chs. 7, 8 and the Conclusion

FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY 12/13/18, 12 PM