

Department of History

HIST*2180: Introduction to African History

Fall 2026

Section(s): 01

Credit Weight: 0.50

1 Course Details

1.1 Calendar Description

This course will introduce students to the history of Africa through a chronological examination of key themes and topics from the earliest times until the recent post-independence period. Highlighting the interdisciplinary methodologies that anchor history, the course will consider archeological evidence, oral traditions, historical linguistics, and written documents in its examination of the most significant developments of the African past. These developments will include the creation of modern human culture, early state building efforts, the introduction of Christianity and Islam, the Atlantic Slave trade, colonialism and nationalism, and Africa's relationship with globalization. The course will enable students to develop an understanding of historical factors that have shaped and continue to influence the history of the African continent.

1.2 Course Description

Using a combination of interesting videos/documentaries and written text materials, this course will introduce students to key themes and topics in the history of Africa from the earliest times until the recent post-independence period. We will examine some of the most significant developments of the African past such as early state building efforts, slavery and the Atlantic Slave trade, colonialism and nationalism, and Africa's relationship with globalization. The course will enable students to develop an understanding of historical factors that have shaped and continue to influence the history of the African continent.

We will make use of role-play and other in-class learning activities to generate and sustain your interest, help bring history alive to you, and to help you understand the multiple perspectives in interpretation of the history of Africa.

1.3 Delivery Method

Face-to-face, classroom.

1.4 Timetable



2 Instructional Support

2.1 Instructional Support Team

Instructor:
Email:
Telephone:
Office:
Office Hours:



3 Learning Resources

3.1 Required course materials:

- Eustace Palmer, *Africa: An Introduction*. 1st ed. London; Routledge, 2022. (E-book on OMNI).
- John Parker, and Richard Rathbone. *African History: A Very Short Introduction*. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. [use OMNI to access the e-version]
- Access all other assigned materials on CourseLink, Course Reserve, or through OMNI search.

3.2 Costs of all mandatory and optional learning materials

\$0.00 No purchases are required

4 Learning Outcomes

4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- be conversant with major themes in the history of Africa.
- examine and apply African perspectives to the historical scholarship on the experiences of the continent.
- critically analyze and synthesize information about Africa from extant sources, including films and videos.
- develop writing and oral presentation skills.

5 Teaching and Learning Activities

COURSE SCHEDULE

Introduction: studying African history

[Sept 10/15]

- Video: [Remember the Time - Michael Jackson](#)
- Read: Parker & Rathbone: Chapter 1, "The Idea of Africa"
- Read: [James Michira, "Images of Africa in the Western media", *Semanticscholar.org*](#) (2002)

Module One: Early African civilizations

[Sept 17/22]: Misperceiving Africa, Constructing Difference

- Video: [Basil Davidson, *Africa: Episode 1 - Different but Equal*](#)
- Read: Eustace Palmer, *Africa*, Chapter 1, pp.15-32.
- Source document: David Hume, "Of National Characters" (1754), footnote 6, in *Essays, Moral and Political*, 2nd ed. (London, 1754). [\[footnote 10 in this online edition\]](#)

[Sept 24/29]: Recovering and Constructing Africa's Past

- Parker & Rathbone: Chapter 1, pp.16-34
- Source document: [A-Bakri's Description of Ancient Ghana](#). See full version in Hopkins & Levtzion, *Corpus of early Arabic sources for West Africa al -Bakri*, "Ghana and the Customs of its inhabitants" pp. 79-85.
- Source document: Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa*, trans. John Pory, ed. [Robert Brown, 3 vols. \(London: Hakluyt Society, 1896\), vol. 3](#), pp. 824–827

Module Two: Slavery and the slave trades in Africa

[Oct 1/6]: Encountering the Slave Trade

- Video: Africa: [Episode 3 - Caravans of Gold \(Basil Davidson\)](#)
- Read: Eustace Palmer, *Africa*, pp.34-49.

[Oct 8:] Explaining the Slave Trade

- Source document: [A Muslim merchant, Ayubah Suleiman Diallo, recalls his capture and enslavement \(1733\)](#)
- Source document: [A European slave trader, John Barbot, describes the African slave trade \(1682\)](#)
- Source document: [A Collection of Letters Written by Afonso I, King of Kongo](#)

Oct. 12-13: Fall Study Break

Module Three: African Experience of colonialism

[Oct 15/20] Making Colonial Africa: From Imperial Ambition to Colonial Rule

- Video: Basil Davidson, [Africa: Episode 6 - This Magnificent African Cake](#)
- Source document: [Berlin Conference General Act \(1885\)](#)

[Oct 22/27] Living Under Colonialism: Land, Labour, Power, and Response

- Parker and Rathbone, *African History, Chapter 5*
- Source documents: Yaa Asantewaa: "[My Undergarments](#)" war speech.
- Source documents: Elspeth Huxley, [White Man's Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya \(London, 1935\), pp. 1, 108-110, 206-208](#). Chatto & Windus, and Frederick A. Praeger.
- Source documents: "[Traité de Bissandougou](#)" 1887 Treaty of Bissandougou: between Samori Toure and the French [Use Google Translate]

Module Four: Racism/Apartheid in South Africa

[Oct 29/Nov 3]: From Racism to Apartheid

- Video: Euzhan Palcy, *A Dry White Season*
- Read: William Beinart, and Saul Dubow. 1995. *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa*. (Rewriting Histories. London: Routledge), pp.1-24. [use OMNI to access it]
- Source document: [Natives \(Urban Areas\) Act of 1923](#)
- Source document: [1952 Natives Abolition of Passes & Coordination of Doc's Act No.67](#) {new pass law]

[Nov 5/10]: Living Under Apartheid: Experience, Resistance, and Perspectives

- Eustace Palmer, *Africa*, 87-93
- Source document: [Mandela's "I Am Prepared to Die": speech \(1964\)](#). [scroll all the way down for the download link]
- Source document: [The Freedom Charter \(1955\)](#)

Module Five: Gender/Cultural change

[Nov 12/17] Defining & Contesting Tradition

- Video: Sembene Ousmane, *Moolaade*
- Fuambai Ahmadu, "Rites and Wrongs: An Insider/Outsider Reflects on Power and Excision" at <https://thisisnotthat.com/tintdocs/Ahmadu-single.pdf>

[Nov 19/24]: Cultural Change, Human Rights, and Agency

- Eustace Palmer, *Africa*: Chap. 10, pp.191-208.
- Source document: [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR, 1948\)](#)
- Source document: African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981)
- Source document: [The Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on The Rights of Women In Africa \(2003\)](#)
- [\[Assigned Reading 1 & also in Course Reserve\] Ahmadu-Fuambai-Rites and Wrongs. An Insider-Outsider Reflects on Power & Excision](#)

Module Six: Globalization

[Nov 26/Dec 1]: Dependency and Sovereignty

- Video: Abderrahmane Sissako's *Bamako* (2006)
- Source document: [Arusha Declaration \(1967\)](#)

[Dec 3] Globalization, Unequal Power, and African Agency

- Parker and Rathbone, *African History*, pp.129-134 & Chapter 7
- Eustace Palmer, *Africa*: Chap. 10
- Source document: [Lagos Plan of Action \(1980\)](#)
- Source document: [African Union Constitutive Act](#) (2000)

Final Exam

Dec 7 -22

6 Assessments

6.1 Assessment Details

6 Two-week experiential learning activities **(best 4 X 20%)** **80%**

- Students will complete **six (6)** two-week experiential learning activities based on the course syllabus that will integrate simulation and student collaborative analyses. Each module/topic will include pre-classroom preparations (written reading evidence) & in-class activities (simulations & written document interpretation), and after-class hour writing, e.g., exit questions /short essays.)

- There is no make-up for in-class experiential activities missed.

A Final Examination

20%

- It will assess your ability to synthesize course readings, interpret historical evidence, apply competing theories, and write persuasive scholarly arguments.

7 University Statements

7.1 Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

7.2 When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration.

7.3 Drop Date

The final day to drop Fall 2026 courses without academic penalty is the last day of classes: December 4th.

After this date, a mark will be recorded, whether course work is completed or not (a zero is assigned for missed tests/assignments). This mark will show on the student's transcript and will be calculated into their average.

This applies to all undergraduate students except for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Associate Diploma in Veterinary Technology (conventional and alternative delivery) students. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in the Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses: <https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

7.4 Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

7.5 Late Penalty Policy

Assignments submitted late will not be graded, except for sudden emergencies and ill-health.

7.6 Artificial Intelligence Use Policy

The use of ChatGPT, Aria, or other AI systems to mimic independent analysis and generate text for all assignments in this course is strictly prohibited. The unauthorized use of AI systems will be considered a violation of the university's academic misconduct policies. These AI systems must be treated as any other secondary source which, when used, must be cited.

Your course assignments must reflect your own intellectual work and demonstrate the application of critical thinking and analysis.

7.7 Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability. Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to make a booking at least 10 days in advance, and no later than the first business day in November, March or July as appropriate for the semester. Similarly, new or changed accommodations for online quizzes, tests and exams must be approved at least a week ahead of time. For students at the Guelph campus, information can be found on the SAS website.

7.8 Academic Integrity

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The Academic Misconduct Policy is outlined in the Undergraduate Calendar.

7.9 Accommodation of Religious Obligations

If you are unable to meet an in-course requirement due to religious obligations, please email the course instructor within two weeks of the start of the semester to make alternate arrangements.

See the Academic calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Accommodations of Religious Obligations.

7.10 Recording of Materials

Presentations that are made in relation to course work - including lectures - cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

7.11 Resources

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.

7.12 Health and Wellbeing

The University of Guelph provides a wide range of health and wellbeing services at the Vaccarino Centre for Student Wellness. If you are concerned about your mental health and not sure where to start, connect with a Student Wellness Navigator who can help develop a plan to manage and support your mental health or check out our mental wellbeing resources. The Student Wellness team are here to help and welcome the opportunity to connect with you.

7.13 Illness

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., final exam or major assignment).
