FORDHAM UNIVERSITY
Department of African and African American Studies

Understanding Historical Change: Africa (AFAM 1600)
Summer 2017

TWR 1:00-4:00pm
Prof. Amir Idris
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Office hours: T, W, R 11:00-12:00
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Description

This course is an introduction to basic knowledge and skills in historical analysis and interpretation with a focus on African history. For centuries, Africa was misconceptualized by outside world which promoted many ignorant ideas. To some it was a “dark continent” inhabited by “savages”. To others, it had no history. The course is intended to introduce Africa to students. It presents in a simplified manner different aspects of African history. The course does not generalize about the continent; rather it reconstructs the history of selected societies at different historical periods. We will focus on five key themes: conceptualization of Africa in the history of ideas; the development of African culture and lifestyles; the establishment of kingdoms, empires and cities; the European occupation and colonial rule; the rise of nationalism and the drive for independence. The approach is multidisciplinary and we will have some material touching on society, literature and so on as well as politics and economics. No previous knowledge of African History is presumed

Requirements

Students will be expected to do all of the reading for each topic. You will also be expected to appear in class ready to discuss problems and points of interests in the reading. A significant portion of your mark will arise from continuous assessment of your class participation. In addition, each student will be required to give a presentation according to the class schedule. There will be one written assignment. A 6 page mid-term paper, which will take up the issues addressed by the readings for one of the course topics discussed from May 31 to June 13. In this paper you will be expected to pursue sources beyond those in the course outline. There will not be a mid-term exam. There will be a formal final examination written in the summer examination period.
Marks for this course will be allocated as follows:

A. Participation in class discussions (20%). Students will be asked to relate their questions and comments to the assigned readings in order to facilitate productive discussion and engagement of the course materials. There are several ways to get prepared for class discussions. Here are some tips on how students can enrich discussion of the course materials: (1) Spend time before each class preparing for discussion by making notes in your texts or on a separate sheet of paper pertaining to specific passages from the readings that you want to discuss. (2) During class discussions, when raising a question or point about the assigned readings, make specific references to texts, authors and page numbers in question.

B. Class presentation (20%). Students are encouraged to be creative and/or provocative in their presentations. Presentation should be no less than 10 minutes.

C. Mid-term paper (30%) (due June 14)

D. In Class Final exam (30%) (June 29)

A Note Regarding Papers:

Papers deadlines will be strictly enforced. Papers turned in after the due date will incur a grade cut of one point for every late day.

Texts:

The following texts are all required and should be available at the bookstore and on reserve:

Listed in order of use:

Maria Grosz-Ngate, John H. Hanson, and Patrick O’Meara, eds., Africa (4th ed. 2014)

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

(May 30) Introduction and Organization

I. Africa: Perceptions and Realities

(May 31) Western misinformation and African realities
Readings:
Bohannan, pp. 1-15, 152-156; Grosz-Ngate, pp. 32-47

(June 1) basic geography: climate, soil, health
Bohannan, 17-32, 41-45; Grosz-Ngate, 7-31

(June 6) Social, legal, and other cultural norms
Readings:
Bohannan, 95-113; Grosz-Ngate, 56-82

II. Africa Mostly on its own

(June 7) the Iron Age and the Bantu migration; language distribution
Readings:
Bohannan, 33-41, 144-149; Shillington, 36-61

(June 8) ‘stateless’ societies and their traditional social and religious norms
Readings: Achebe, Things Fall Apart; Bohannan, 63-75, 87-95, 115-125

(June 13) cities and States, Aksum to Ethiopia, Ghana to Great Zimbabwe
Readings: Bohannan, 151-164; Shillington, 62-71, 107-111, and 78-89, 122-128, 146-153
Video: Gates’ Lost Cities

Mid-term paper due June 14

(June 14) Islam crosses the Sahara
Grosz-Ngate, 114-122; Shillington, 71-77, 90-94, 111-115

III European Occupation 1450-1950

(June 15) cities, kingdoms, and empires through the 16th C.
Readings: Shillington, 94-106, 128-131, 184-188

(June 20) the slave trade period and its states
Readings: Bohannan, 179-190; Shillington, 157-164, 167-169

(June 21) the Western European scramble for colonies, 1875-1905
Readings:
Grosz-Ngate, 47-55; Bohannan, 217-227; Shillington, 286-316, 321-329, 340-343

(June 22) colonial economic exploitation
Grosz-Ngate, 48-51; Shillington, 332-339, 343-354
(June 27) colonialism and gender
Amadiowe, 27-41, 119-123,134-143 (the required readings are available on electronic reserve)

IV. Nationalism, Decolonization and the Road to Independence

(June 28) African Nationalism and the Colonial state
Bohannan, 229-238; Shillington, 317-321, 329-331, 354-357
Bohannan, 239-249; Shillington, 357-360, 363-372
Video: The Rise of Nationalism by Basil Davidson

(June 29) Final Exam.