

Introduction to Africa (mixed honors / non-honors)

Spring 2019 Dr. Freed

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Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 2-3:30 p.m., Wednesdays 10:30-11:30 a.m.; other times by appointment.

Course Overview: This course introduces students to Africa by taking a historical approach to the continent's diverse geography, politics, economies, and cultures. We also explore connections between Africa and the outside world, and Westerners' evolving perceptions of Africa.

Required Texts:

Curtis Keim, *Mistaking Africa: Curiosities and Inventions of the American Mind* (4th ed.)

Michel Serge, Michel Beuret and Paolo Woods, *China Safari: On the Trail of Beijing's Expansion in Africa*

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (novel)

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (novel)

Mariama Bâ, *So Long a Letter* (novel)

Note: You should complete readings **before** the class period for which they are assigned; see schedule, below.

Moodle site: Check the course Moodle site regularly for announcements, assignments, and other course-related information as well as links to support services on/off campus. Please note that there are occasional Moodle / network outages; I strongly recommend that you do not wait until the last minute to download assignments or access posted readings.

Expectations and Grading: Students who may need academic accommodations are encouraged to see me as soon as possible. If you have performance, military, or other obligations during any scheduled class or exam times, you must notify me in advance (preferably at the start of the semester).

All work you turn in must be your own. Cheating and/or plagiarism (including failure to footnote your sources correctly using Chicago-style footnotes on papers) will earn you a **0** on that assignment, and may result in a **0.0** grade for the course and referral to Student Conduct. I will be explaining my expectations in class and offering pointers and feedback; in addition, the course Moodle site has information and links about footnotes and using sources correctly. You are also welcome (really) to ask me or to the College Writer's Block for help.

Late policy: if you don't turn it in when it's due, your assignment goes to the bottom of my grading pile, and I can make no promises about when I'll get to grading it. Late assignments will also be graded down 1 point for each day an assignment is late (including 1 point for assignments turned in late on the due date); I count starting from when I receive the paper. No work will be accepted after the last day of class, regardless of reason. You may only make up an exam if you have notified me of an emergency before the exam, and gotten my prior permission. **Note:** there are no make-ups for in-class exercises or quizzes.

There are 100 total points possible in this course; they are explained below. Your grade in this class will depend upon how many points you earn based on your achievements in the categories below. It is your responsibility to keep track of assignments and your absences – that's what this syllabus is for, after all – and earn the grade you want or need.

Grading breakdown:

30 pts Participation and attendance.

Note: I expect students to be present and prepared for class, to be attentive and mindful of each other and of the subject material, and to participate fully in all class activities. Showing up will only get you partway; you can earn the 'participation' part of this grade by joining in discussions and speaking up

with relevant questions and comments about the course material. Talking and use of cell phones or internet (except to access course material as directed) are inappropriate: please turn off anything that beeps, buzzes, or rings, and do not expect to leave the classroom during class or exam times. Perfect attendance should be your goal. However, for grading purposes, I will drop your 3 lowest attendance/participation scores. Caution: These are intended to cover sickness or unavoidable conflicts (“excused” absences). Any absences beyond 3 will count against your grade. Any student with 9 or more absences (you’ll need to keep track yourself) will automatically fail the course.

20 pts In-class exercises and quizzes. These will include quizzes about each of the five main assigned books, though other readings and course material are also fair game for quizzes and in-class exercises. Also, Honors students will each lead discussion once during the semester (see moodle for details).

5 pts Map Quiz: will be done in-class during week 4. You have until the end of week 7 to re-take the quiz, if necessary. See moodle for more details.

45 pts Papers.

Non-honors students: you will write 5 papers (each worth 9 pts). Each paper will be a 3-page analysis of one of the main required texts. See syllabus for due dates, and moodle for more assignment instructions.

Honors students: you will write 3 papers (each worth 15 pts). Each of your papers will be a 5-page analysis of one of the assigned novels, incorporating the assigned excerpts of scholarly / primary sources in your analysis. See syllabus for due dates, and moodle for more assignment instructions.

Grading Scale: 4.0 = 92-100 points; 3.7 = 88-91 pts; 3.3 = 84-87; 3.0 = 80-83; 2.7 = 77-79; 2.3 = 74-76; 2.0 = 70-73; 1.7 = 67-69; 1.3 = 64-66; 1.0 = 60-63; fail = 59 points & below.

4.0 range = fulfills the assignment in an exemplary way. Is insightful, intelligent, coherent, logical, focused, well-written (minimal if any spelling/grammar mistakes), and intriguing. No factual errors.

3.0 range = fulfills the assignment. Is coherent, logical, intelligent, with no significant mistakes or errors.

2.0 range = mostly fulfills the assignment. Is coherent but may contain serious organizational problems as well as factual errors and many spelling and grammar errors.

1.0 range = minimally acceptable: mostly fails to fulfil the assignment, contains many errors.

0.0 = unacceptable work.

Weekly Schedule:

Week 1

1/23 Africa’s Geography and Climate; course overview.

Week 2

1/28 Notes on studying “Africa.” Read: Keim, *Mistaking Africa* chapters 1-2 (pages 3-32); and Binyavanga Wainaina, “How to Write About Africa,” in *Granta* 92, available online at <http://www.granta.com/Archive/92/How-to-Write-about-Africa/Page-1>.

1/30 Early Africa: Environment and Economy. Read: Keim, chapters 3-6 (pages 35-102).

Week 3

2/4 Early Africa: Social and political organization.

2/6 Africa’s religious history. Read: Keim, chapters 7-10 (pages 105-165).

Week 4

2/11 Oral traditions. [non-honors students: Keim paper due]

2/13 Africa and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Read: start reading Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*. [**Map Quiz**]

Week 5

- 2/18 Africa and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, continued.
2/20 Race and history, 18th-20th century. Read: finish reading Achebe; and excerpt from A.L. Cureau, *Savage Man in Central Africa: A Study of Primitive Races in the French Congo* (on moodle). Also Timeline handout (on moodle).

Week 6

- 2/25 19th century transformations.
2/27 19th century transformations, cont. [all students: Achebe paper due]

Week 7

- 3/4 Discuss *Things Fall Apart*.
3/6 Colonial rule in Africa: introduction and overview Read: start reading Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*.

Spring Break

Week 8

- 3/18 Colonial rule, cont. Start film: "Chocolat" (109 mins)
3/20 Colonial rule, cont. Finish and discuss film: "Chocolat."

Week 9

- 3/25 Gender in 20th century Africa. Read: excerpt from Ken Bugul (pseudonym of Marietou M'Baye), *The Abandoned Baobab: The Autobiography of a Senegalese Woman* (on moodle).
3/27 Struggles for independence. Start film: "Flame" (85 mins) Read: excerpts from *Mothers of the Revolution* (on moodle).

Week 10

- 4/1 Struggles for independence, cont. Finish film: "Flame." Read: finish reading Dangarembga.
4/3 Discuss *Nervous Conditions*. [all students: Dangarembga paper due]

Week 11

- 4/8 Politics since independence. Read: Serge et al., Prologue through chapter 3 (pages 1-60).
4/10 Politics since independence, continued.

Week 12

- 4/15 Postcolonial Economies. Read: Serge et al., chapters 4-6 (pages 61-112).
4/17 Contemporary Africa: World influences. Read: Serge et al., chapters 7-10 (pages 113-182).

Week 13

- 4/22 Contemporary Africa: World influences, cont. Read: Serge et al., chapters 11 through conclusion (pages 183-260).
4/24 Contemporary Africa: Conflict and struggles. [non-honors students: Serge et al. paper due]

Week 14

- 4/29 Contemporary Africa: Cities and urbanization. Read: start reading Bâ, *So Long a Letter*.
5/1 Contemporary Africa: topic TBD.

Week 15

- 5/6 Discuss *So Long a Letter*. [all students: Bâ paper due]
5/8 Conclusions and wrap-up.