

## History of Modern Africa

Dr Jon Earle  
HIS 352 (Fall 2018)  
Time: M/W/F 910–1010am  
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Office Hours:  
Tuesday: 230 to 4pm  
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Thursday: 1130am to 1230pm



Tanganyika, 1961  
British National Archives, CO 1069-166-23

**PLEASE read the syllabus carefully. Being fully cognizant of its contents is the responsibility of the student. While the central structure of the course is set, the professor reserves the right to change any aspect of the syllabus for the purpose of facilitating more useful, transformative interaction.**

The noise brought Babamukuru and Maiguru running. They could do nothing, could only watch. Nyasha was beside herself with fury. She rampaged, shredding her history book between her teeth (“Their history. Fucking liars. Their bloody lies.”), breaking mirrors, her clay pots, anything she could lay her hands on and jabbing the fragments viciously into her flesh, stripping the bedclothes, tearing her clothes from the wardrobe and trampling them underfoot. “They’ve trapped us. They’ve trapped us. But I won’t be trapped. I’m not a good girl. I won’t be trapped.”

~Nyasha, in Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

Welcome! This is a course about the making of modern Africa. It begins by exploring Africa's varied pasts from the eighteenth century onward, before examining important subfields in the discipline of African history, including gender, decolonisation and the state in postcolonial Africa. More than anything, this is a course about Africans' competing intellectual histories and historical imagination. By accentuating local histories and vernacular political debates, it shows how communities throughout the continent—and the colonial empires and postcolonial states that sought to govern them—used the past differently to imagine competing political futures. In doing so, this course offers an approach to understanding contemporary Africa that complicates both contemporary political science and the international community's persistent and problematic preoccupation with democratisation and the metrics of liberalism.

### Learning Objectives

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- to engage principal themes and debates in the discipline of African history
- to identify social and political variance and change across periods and regions in Africa
- to learn how to use the historian's approach to study modern Africa
- to be able to illuminate local histories to challenge and complicate popular perceptions and Eurocentric histories of Africa
- to learn how to think critically alongside primary sources and African filmography
- to fuel a passion for the study of African history

### Required Readings

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1. John Parker & Richard Rathbone, *Africa History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford UP 2007)
2. Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (Lynne Rienner 2004)
3. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Weep Not, Child* (Penguin 2009)
4. Course Packet: Located in course Moodle

### Students with Disabilities

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Students with physical impairment and/or learning disability will sometimes need accommodations to help them have an equal opportunity to learn. These can include seating preference, permission to tape lectures, and extra time on tests and other assignments—at Centre, time-and-a-half is customary. Accommodations should be the result of a discussion between the student and the College's coordinator for disabilities, Dr Mary Gulley ([mary.gulley@centre.edu](mailto:mary.gulley@centre.edu)), who will then prepare a signed Accommodation Notice for the student to show the professor. The instructor must then sign the Notice before accommodation takes effect. It is the student's responsibility to discuss any accommodations with Dr Gulley and to complete the process through her office.

### Academic Integrity

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It is imperative that you review the Academic Honesty section of your Student Handbook, where academic expectations are clearly illuminated. You will also find important discussion on plagiarism and the adverse impact of academic dishonesty. Without say, academic dishonesty is unacceptable in any form and will most certainly result in course failure. While Wikipedia is a useful resource to informally gather quickly needed information, it is not an academic source and may not be employed to develop argumentation or citation.

### Classroom Etiquette

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The use of cell phones and all forms of texting are strictly prohibited. Usage—including disruption by tone or vibration—will adversely impact your grade. Unless you are ill, it is unacceptable to leave the classroom once we've begun. Provided you can consume without interruption, food and drink are perfectly acceptable. **Laptops and electronic devices may not be used, except with permission.**

### Communication

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E-mail is the most efficient way to reach me. However, please feel free to use my office line (found above). If I am unavailable, please leave a message. I typically respond to e-mail and voicemail within twenty-four hours. During

posted office hours, you're more than welcome to stop by unannounced. If you need to meet beyond these hours, please send an e-mail to make an appointment.

## The Writing Center

If you need help learning to write or simply want to build upon existing skills, the College houses an active Writing Center, which is equipped to help you learn to write powerfully. For more information, please contact Dr John Kinkade ([john.kinkade@centre.edu](mailto:john.kinkade@centre.edu)), and visit the Center's website: <https://sites.google.com/a/centre.edu/writing-center/>. Services are free of charge, and well worth your time.

## Course Evaluation

Academic citizenship	10%
Tutorials	30%
Map quizzes	20% (10%/10%)
Midterm	20%
Final	20%

A: 100–94%    A-: 93–90%    B+: 89–86%    B: 85–82%    B-: 81–79%  
C+: 78–76%    C: 75–72%    C-: 71–69%    D: 68–66%    U: 65% or below

Generally, my philosophy of grading implies:

- A: exceptional work (above and beyond); it is impossible to receive an 'A' on material that is grammatically poor and clunky
- B: strong work, yet fails to demonstrate stellar analysis or engagement
- C: good work, but *just* (average)
- D: decent work, but requires considerable revision
- U: clearly insufficient; very weak grammar and structuring

## Academic citizenship

10%

It is important to not simply 'show-up' to class—you will need to be an active, informed participant. Indeed, in this course, **informed discussion is preferred over lecture**. Academic inquiry and learning is fully actualised through creative thinking and rigorous discussion. If you simply attend classes without consistent, apparent engagement with the reading material and classroom discussion, you will earn no higher than a C in this evaluative measure.

You are allowed up to three unexcused absences throughout the semester. You may only earn full percent if you are without unexcused absence. Unless I hear from you **before class**, an absence will be considered unexcused. All assignments are due at the **beginning** of class (the first two minutes), and you will be unable to earn higher than a C on late assignments. **No assignments will be accepted twenty-four hours beyond the posted deadline.** Multiple page assignments **must be stapled** before class. Legitimate civil and religious functions constitute excused absence (e.g., weddings, family reunion, a sibling's childbearing, baptism, akika, bar/bat mitzvah, samskara, etc.). It is the responsibility of the student to secure material from a missed class.

## Tutorials

30%

What is a tutorial? Tutorials are historically associated with European universities, especially Cambridge and Oxford. They provide an intimate setting where students are allowed to expand their understanding of a subject and improve oral, written and analytic skills. Supervisions provide a context where students can engage more closely with an expert in the field, which in turn allows the professor to facilitate academic evaluation more closely. In short, tutorials are a formal (though relaxed) context where personalised education is made possible. More broadly, supervisions provide you with skills that will prove invaluable in life regardless of your vocational interests: critical thinking, communication skills, group and teamwork skills, and self-direction in learning and personal growth.

More than anything, the core objective of this course is to teach you how to think *historically* about modern Africa. History is not about learning chronologies and ‘facts’. Historical claims are always contested. History is best defined as the creative space within which individuals and communities use perceptions of the past to create practices of political belonging and dissent. Appropriately, then, history is about learning how to explore the long history of societies and discourse, and how to use evidence to build convincing analytic argumentation.

To help you learn to begin to think historically about Africa’s modern history, this course provisions **five tutorials** (or supervisions), during which broad themes in historical argument and practice are explored. **Each tutorial constitutes 6% of the total course evaluation (total: 30%).**

Tutorial sessions will be comprised of two groups containing half of the enrolment. Each group will meet in the regular classroom during a scheduled day and time (please see course schedule). You will be assigned a group early in the semester, and groups will most likely be reorganised following midterm. Supervisions will focus on a single research question, resulting in a **one-page paper (two-page maximum)** [single line spacing; 12-point font (New Times Roman or Garamond); 1-inch margins]. Building on your written work, supervisions will be structured to encourage debate and brainstorming, student-led discussion, group problem solving, and review.

From each one-page paper, I am looking for four areas of development: 1) the paper clearly **addresses the central prompt** with elegance and parenthetical citation; 2) the paper **uses the assigned reading** of the tutorial to frame the central reflection of the paper; 3) the paper **supports** the central reading/film/reflection **with material from the lectures and readings**; 4) the work of the paper is used to **engage in discussion** during the tutorial.

Tutorial Modules:

**TUTORIAL 1. AFRICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY.** Prior to the 1960s, students could not have studied African history in the university. In other words, institutions such as Centre, Harvard, Princeton, the University of Chicago, Berkeley, Columbia, Cambridge or Oxford did not offer courses in African history. In turn, during the 1958 to 1959 academic year, a survey conducted by the American Historical Association showed that out of a total of 1,735 graduate students in the American academy, only 1 was concentrating in African history. In leading works such as William McNeill’s *The Rise of the West* (1963), Africa was cast as a place without civilization. It was, to use McNeill’s words, a land for ‘barbarians’. Where ‘civilizations’ did exist, in places such as Ethiopia, Northern Africa or central Rwanda, it was believed, by many western historians, that there had been Eurasian migration into the continent: the bearers of civilization and progress.

It is not a coincidence that African history—as an academic subject—was invented in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This was the period of African nationalism, a moment in the continent’s history when newly formed states were securing Independence from their former colonial rulers. African statebuilders and urban elites throughout the Continent, in universities in Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, and Tanzania (among other places) were challenged to create useful political histories—to create pasts for the purpose of moving forward after Independence.

We shall use this first tutorial to discuss the development of African historiography.

## **TUTORIAL 2. OCEANIC HORIZONS**

**Option 1. THE BLACK ATLANTIC.** As noted by the African and African American Studies program of Centre College, ‘The trans-Atlantic slave trade initiated a centuries-long exchange of foodways, religious practices, music, language, and populations that fundamentally changed the world.’ In ways that were complex and contradictory, African statebuilders and African activism were central to both the development and decline of the Middle Passage. Following Paul Gilroy’s seminal work on the Black Atlantic (*The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*, 1995), Derek Peterson and Philip Morgan have argued that abolitionism during the late 1700s and 1800s was a theatre in which a variety of actors—enslaved western Africans, African rulers, Caribbean planters, working-class

radicals, African political entrepreneurs, and Christian evangelicals—constituted an Atlantic echo chamber in which abolitionist symbols, ideas, and evidence were generated from a variety of points’ (*Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa and the Atlantic*).

Use this tutorial to examine the impact of African agency and African states on the development and decline of the Middle Passage.

**Option 2. KINGDOMS & COSMOPOLITANISM.** From the end of the 1700s, Indian Ocean commerce developed around the port Island of Zanzibar, a process that expanded under the leadership of Sultan Sayyid Said, a prominent Omani Sultan who actually moved Oman’s capital to Zanzibar in the 1830s. Under Said’s governance, the Omani-Zanzibar sphere of influence increased substantially; and began to penetrate beyond the coast into the interior. The expansion of Omani trade heightened political violence in the interior, and also fostered a number of political uprisings aimed to challenge the power and rule of the sultanate of Zanzibar. The expansion of oceanic trade into the interior of eastern Africa provided new accessibilities and mobilities with which to recast society in many of Uganda’s precolonial kingdoms, and additional communities throughout the region.

The aim of this tutorial is to explore how competing actors in nineteenth-century eastern Africa used new global accessibilities to shape local political and social practices.

**TUTORIAL 3. COLONIALISM: CONTINUITIES & CHANGES.** The decline of the Middle Passage resulted in the drive for ‘legitimate commerce’: raw materials that Europeans would acquire to propel industrializing economies. In time, this translated into the Scramble, Conquest and Colonisation of Africa. But what Europeans imagined on paper, rarely, if ever, played out on the ground.

Use this tutorial to reflect on the ways in which local communities were actively shaping and challenging the processes of formal colonisation.

**TUTORIAL 4. GENDER & SEXUALITY.** The practice of gender and sexuality constituted an intense and intimate sphere of debate and dissent in colonial society. For many women and LGBT+ communities, Africa’s colonial orders brought with it considerable rigidities that did not exist in precolonial societies (M. Epprecht, *Heterosexual Africa?*, 2008). Contrary to contemporary arguments, sexual mobilities existed throughout premodern Africa: female kings in Nigeria became male powerbrokers; female priests surrounding the Great Lakes became male gods; male kings practiced same-sex fellatio in the royal courts of Buganda; and Teso communities in early colonial eastern Uganda and western Kenya sang about ambiguous genitalia.

Use this tutorial to explore the intersectionality of gender, sexuality and political commentary in modern Africa. In particular, draw from *Xala* to think more expansively about the relationship between sexual potency and social power.

**TUTORIAL 5. END OF EMPIRE AND THE POSTCOLONIAL STATE.** Scholars have offered competing ways of thinking about the condition of the state in postcolonial Africa. These approaches often emphasize different historical periodisations (precolonial violence versus colonial ruptures, for example) and different areas of study (for instance, modern health and medicine as opposed to precolonial healers). In the final weeks of class, we will discuss some of the more substantial areas of conversation that have preoccupied scholars of contemporary Africa: Apartheid, genocide, HIV/AIDS, China and development, and youth and urban creativity.

Use this final tutorial to think about the role of local activism in shaping and resolving a conflict that is often addressed in the European and American press through the lens of western interventionism, the latter of which often suggests that unless the West intervenes, African communities and states cannot mediate their own affairs.

**Map quizzes** **20% (10% // 10%)**

Two map quizzes will be administered: one on colonial partition, the other on postcolonial states. The maps upon which these quizzes are based can be found on Moodle.

**Midterm** **20%**

To provide the opportunity to synthesize the material, a required mid-term will be offered. Format: TBA

**Final exam** **20%**

To provide the opportunity to synthesize the material, a required final will be offered. Format: TBA

Schedule and Discussions

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- M. 27 August            Syllabus

**MODULE 1: The Invention of Africa & African Historiography**

- W. 29 August            Introductions
  - Reading            Parker and Rathbone, Chapters 1–2
- F. 31 August            Genealogies of African History
  - Reading            Parker and Rathbone, Chapters 3–7
- M. 3 September        TUTORIAL 1A
  - Reading            Earle, ‘African Intellectual History’ (Moodle)
- W. 5 September        TUTORIAL 1B
  - Reading            Earle, ‘African Intellectual History’ (Moodle)

**MODULE 2: Oceanic Horizons**

- F. 7 September        **Transatlantic Slavery and the Black Atlantic**
  - Reading            Middle Passage: Origins and Expansions (Part 1)  
*Adanggaman* (film) (closed reserve)
- M. 10 September      Middle Passage: Origins and Expansions (Part 2)
  - Reading            Olaudah Equiano, Biographical Introduction + *Interesting Narratives*, Chapters 1, 2 (Moodle)
- W. 12 September      **Long-Distance Trade and Cultural Change in Eastern Africa**
  - Reading            *Wonders of the African World: The Swahili Coast* (film) (closed reserve)
- F. 14 September      Eastern African Statebuilding: Bunyoro and Buganda
  - Reading            J. Prestholdt, ‘On the global repercussions of east African consumerism’ (Moodle)
- M. 17 September      The Historical Imagination of Hamu Mukasa (Moodle)
  - Reading            Biographical Introduction + Hamu Mukasa, *Notes on Muteesa* (Moodle)
- W. 19 September      TUTORIAL 2A
- F. 31 September      TUTORIAL 2B

### MODULE 3: Religious Power and Colonial Change

- M. 24 September Religion and Political Power
  - Reading CP: Ellis & ter Haar, 'Religion & Politics: Taking African Epistemologies Seriously' (Moodle)
- W. 26 September Long history of modernization and Islamic Reform in northern Africa
  - Reading Julia Clancy-Smith, 'North Africa and France: Imperialism, Colonialism, and Women, 1830–1962' (Moodle)
- F. 28 September Islamic statebuilding in western Africa
  - Reading *Ceddo* (film): <https://youtu.be/9ipcync79CI>
  - MAP QUIZ 1
- M. 1 October From 'Legitimate Commerce' Toward Colonial Scramble
  - Reading 1) *This Magnificent African Cake* (film) (closed reserve)  
2) Thiong'o, *Weep Not, Child*, Introduction + Chapters 1–6
- W. 3 October Colonial Administrations
  - Reading Thiong'o, *Weep Not, Child*, Chapters 7–12
- F. 5 October Colonialism in the Everyday
  - Reading Thiong'o, *Weep Not, Child*, Chapters 13–18
- M. 8 October TUTORIAL 3
  - Reading *Afrique, je te plumerai* (film) (closed reserve)
- W. 10 October MID-TERM
- FALL BREAK

### MODULE 4: Gender & Sexuality

- M. 15 October Gender and Social Change
  - Reading Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, Introduction–Chapter 3
- W. 17 October Masculine Authority
  - Reading 1) Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, Chapters 4–6  
2) *Xala* (film) (closed reserve)
- F. 19 October Sex in the Colonial City
  - Reading 'Gender and Colonialism in Zimbabwe' (podcast)  
<http://afripod.aodl.org/2011/01/afripod-47/>
- M. 22 October TUTORIAL 4
  - Reading Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, Chapters 7–9

## MODULE 5: End of Empire and the Postcolonial State

- W. 24 October Moral Economies: Precolonial Kingdoms and Postcolonial Republics
  - Reading J. Hess, 'Exhibiting Ghana' (Moodle)
- F. 26 October Borders and Secession
  - Reading Derek Peterson, 'Contests of Time in Western Uganda' (Moodle)
  - Reading 'Nigerian Homefront in WWII, the Biafran War, and Igbo Identity' (podcast)  
<http://afripod.aodl.org/2014/03/afripod-81/>
- M. 29 October Négritude and Pan-Africanism
  - Reading Frederick Cooper, 'Politics of Decolonization in French and British West Africa' (Moodle)
- W. 31 October Southern Africa's Industrial Revolutions
  - Reading *Amandla!* (film) (closed reserve)
- F. 2 November MAP QUIZ 2
- M. 5 November Southern Africa's Liberation Struggles
  - Reading Biko, 'I Write What I like' (Moodle)
- W. 7 November Rwandan Genocide: The *longue durée*
  - Reading DN, 'Understanding Genocide' (Moodle)
- F. 9 November Rwandan Genocide: The State and Public Memory
  - Reading Excerpts from *Intimate Enemy* (Moodle)
- M. 12 November Medical Knowledge and Global Health: HIV/AIDS in Africa
  - Reading NR, 'Faith in God, Not in Condoms' (Moodle)
- W. 14 November Development: China in Africa
  - Reading CA, 'China in Africa' (Moodle)
- F. 16 November The State in Africa: Competing Approaches
  - Reading Julius Nyerere, 'Socialism and Rural Development' (Moodle)
- M. 19 November (Last Day of Classes): Africa's Futures in Africa's Pasts: History & Hip Hop
  - Reading *African Underground: Democracy in Dakar* (film) (closed reserve)
- THANKSGIVING BREAK
- M. 26 November TUTORIAL 5A
- W. 28 November TUTORIAL 5B