

Purpose: Independent Study Proposal in Work towards a Minor in African History

Course Details:

Designation: HIS 299D – Independent Study

Term: Fall, 2017 (10 weeks)

Weeks: 9/27 – 12/6

Course Title:

West African Ethnographies and Histories of the Eighteenth Century

Course Description and Rationale:

This independent study course is on ethnographies from and histories of eighteenth-century West Africa. It will focus on how writers produced knowledge about African peoples, cultures, societies, geographies, and histories from roughly 1700 to 1800. Additionally, it will focus on how historians produce knowledge about eighteenth-century West Africa today, with a special emphasis on how they engage with and supplement the ethnographic source material from the eighteenth century. My dissertation research focuses on how proslavery writers produced, consumed, and deployed knowledge about African peoples, societies, and histories in the era of British slave trade and slavery abolition (approximately 1780s to 1834). For this reason, with the exception of the final week's readings on comparative material, I have chosen to build this syllabus around British source material and regions of West Africa where the British had a significant involvement. I have chosen to omit discussions of North Africa, Gabon, and West-Central Africa (Kongo-Angola) because the British had minimal involvement in those regions during the eighteenth century. Additionally, my choice to focus upon the eighteenth century reflects the fact that this period saw the rise, height, and demise of the British transatlantic slave trade from Western Africa to the European colonies of the Americas.

Course Structure:

This course consists of ten meetings over eleven weeks. Generally, the readings for each week are designed to balance broad surveys with detailed histories, methodological and theoretical works with specific case studies, and articles with monographs. Selections from *Sources and Methods in African History*, edited by Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, have been scattered throughout the syllabus in an effort to ground the course in an ongoing awareness and discussion of sources, methods, and approach. The course syllabus is organized in five sections:

The first section is called "Approaches to West African Ethnography & History," and it is one week long. This introductory section features a selection of readings that provide a theoretical and methodological context for studying sources on the West African past. The methodological component of this week focuses on oral tradition as a form of historical knowledge.

The second section is called "Primary Sources for West African Ethnography & History." This section consists of two weeks on primary-source material in various formats, including one week on textual or documentary sources and another week on non-textual sources. The non-textual sources highlighted in the second part of this section include archaeological sources, sources on material culture, and oral sources.

The third section is called "Surveys of West African Ethnography & History." This section consists of two weeks, where the goal is to outline British knowledge of West Africa in the

eighteenth century. The first week focuses on classic works and the second week focuses on recent works. Overall, this section is designed as a way to ground the course in surveys on British knowledge about West Africa in preparation for a few case studies. I have supplemented each of the two main texts for these weeks with some articles that discuss a specific historical actor who contributed to British knowledge of West Africa in these years.

The fourth section of the syllabus is called “Case Studies in African Ethnography and History,” and it consists of four weeks. Each week features three sources that explore a particular region of West Africa with which the British had a close involvement in the eighteenth century. I have included a primary source and a couple of secondary sources for each of these regions. The goal here is to juxtapose broad ethnographic portrayals of each region with modern histories of that same region. The articles are designed to offer a more-detailed analysis of a specific locality within each region.

The fifth and final section of the syllabus is called “Beyond African Ethnographies of the Eighteenth Century,” and it features only one week. The goal of this last week is to close out the course—and set a tone for my research moving forward—by taking on a larger perspective. This week is designed as a way to start thinking about how researchers like anthropologists have dealt with, and are continuing to deal with, the legacy of African ethnography in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A case study by Lyn Shumaker is supplemented by a more general discussion from Sally Falk Moore. A final selection from *Sources and Methods* emphasizes contemporary and innovative approaches to African History.

Course Calendar:

Meeting One:

Theme: Approaches to West African Ethnography & History – Theories and Methods

Reading: Introduction, Conclusion, and first half of Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988). Pp. 1-97, 187-200

Additional Readings: Ali A. Mazrui, “The Re-Invention of Africa: Edward Said, V.Y. Mudimbe, and beyond,” *Research in African Literatures* 36:3 (2005), 68-82.

Additional Readings: Introduction, Conclusion, and Chapters 4-7 of Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985). Pp. 94-204.

Additional Reading: Part 4, “Oral Tradition” of Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, eds., *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004). Pp. 239-330.

Meeting Two:

Theme: Primary Sources for West African Ethnography & History – Textual Sources

Reading: Part 3, “Documentary Sources” of Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, eds., *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004). Pp. 169-238.

Reading: Introduction and first 8 Chapters of *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade*, ed. by Philip D. Curtin et al. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967). Pp. 3-216. Also skip the section on Olaudah Equiano, 60-98, because his narrative is featured elsewhere on this syllabus.

Additional Reading: Stephen D. Behrendt, A.J.H. Latham, and David Northrup, Part II of *The Diary of Antera Duke: An Eighteenth-Century African Slave Trader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Part II is called “Extracts from the Diary of Antera Duke,” 133-220.

Meeting Three:

Theme: Primary Sources for West African Ethnography & History – Non-Text Sources

Reading: Read 200 pages of Part II of Melville J. & Frances S. Herskovits, *Dahomean Narrative: A Cross-Cultural Analysis* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1958). Part II is called “The Narratives,” 124-324.

Additional Reading: Part 1, “Archaeological Sources” of Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, eds., *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004). Pp. 3-104.

Additional Reading: Christopher R. Decorse and Sam Spiers, “A Tale of Two Polities: Socio-Political Transformation on the Gold Coast in the Atlantic World,” *Australasian Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 27 (2009): 29-42.

Additional Reading: Jeremy Coote, “The Complete Accoutrements of an Inhabitant of the Mandingo Country’: An Eighteenth-Century Collection from West Africa at the Pitts Rivers Museum,” *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, No. 24 (2011): 150-166.

Meeting Four:

Theme: Surveys of West African Ethnography & History – Part 1, A Classic Works

Reading: All of Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850*, Vol. 1, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964). Pp. 287.

Additional Reading: Robin Law, “The Slave-Trader as Historian: Robert Norris and the History of Dahomey,” *History in Africa*, Vol. 16 (1989): 219-235.

Additional Reading: I.A. Akinjogbin, “Archibald Dalziel: Slave Trader and Historian of Dahomey,” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1966): 67-78.

Additional Reading: Margaret Priestly, “Richard Brew: An Eighteenth-Century Trader at Anomabu,” *Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society* Vol. 4, no. 1 (1959): 29-46.

Meeting Five:

Theme: Surveys on West African Ethnography & History – Part 2, A Recent Work

Reading: Tcho Mbaimba Caulker, *The African-British Long Eighteenth Century: An Analysis of African-British Treaties, Colonial Economics, and Anthropological Discourse* (New York: Lexington Books, 2009). Pp. 216.

Additional Reading: Part 2, “Africa and the Atlantic World” of Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, eds., *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004). Pp. 105-168.

Additional Reading: George E. Boulukos, “Olaudah Equiano and the Eighteenth-Century Debate on Africa,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Winter: 2007): 241-255.

Meeting Six:

Theme: Case Studies in African Ethnography and History – Part 1, “Senegambia”

Reading: All of Mungo Park’s *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa: Performed Under the Direction of Patronage of the African Association in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797* (London: W. Bulmer and Company, 1799). Pp. 1-484

Additional Reading: Selections from Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Part II, “Senegambia in the Eighteenth Century: the Slave Trade, *Ceddo* Regimes, and Muslim Revolutions.” Pp. 55-126.

Additional Reading: Michael Gomez, “Bundu in the Eighteenth Century,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1987): 61-73.

Meeting Seven:

Theme: Case Studies in African Ethnography and History – Part 2, “Gold Coast”

Reading: First 17 letters from Willem Bosman’s *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, Divided into the Gold, the Slave, and the Ivory Coasts* (London: J. Knapton, 1705). First published in Dutch in 1703 as *Nauwkeurige beschrijving van de Guinese Goud- Tand- en Slavekust*. These letters cover the Gold Coast. Pp. 1-322.

Additional Reading: Margaret Priestley, “The Ashanti Question and the British: Eighteenth-Century Origins,” *Journal of African History* 2, No. 1 (1961): 35-59.

Additional Readings: Chp. 6 of Ann Brower Stahl, *Making History in Banda: Anthropological Visions of Africa’s Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001). “The Changing Social Fields of Banda Villagers, c. 1725-1825.” Pp. 107-188.

Meeting Eight:

Theme: Case Studies in African Ethnography and History – Part 3, “Slave Coast”

Reading: Books I & II from William Snelgrave’s *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea, and the Slave Trade* (London: James, John, & Paul Knapton, 1734). These books cover his experiences in Dahomey, Whidah, and Jakin. Pp. 1-191.

Additional Reading: First half of Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving 'Port,' 1727-1892* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004). The first half covers Ouidah during the eighteenth century. Pp. 1-154.

Additional Reading: Silke Strickrodt, "In Search of a Moral Community: Little Popo and the Atlantic Trade in the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New Series, No. 14 (2012): 105-130.

Meeting Nine:

Theme: Case Studies in African Ethnography and History – Part 4, "Biafra"

Reading: Chps. 1 & 2 of Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, Vol. 1 (London: The Author, 1789). Selections cover his youth in Igboland. Pp. 1-88.

Additional Reading: All of G. Ugo Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra: An African Society in the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Pp. 305.

Additional Reading: Chp. 1 of Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007). Pp. 23-50.

Meeting Ten:

Theme: Beyond African Ethnographies of the Eighteenth Century – Comparative Models

Reading: All of Lyn Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology: Fieldwork, Networks, and the Making of Cultural Knowledge in Central Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001). Pp. 260.

Additional Reading: Sally Falk Moore, "Changing Perspectives on a Changing Africa: The Work of Anthropology," in *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contributions of Research in Africa to the Social Sciences and Humanities*, ed. by Robert H. Bates, V.Y. Mudimbe, and Jean F. O'Barr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Pp. 3-57.

Additional Reading: Part 5, "Innovative Sources and Methods" of Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, eds., *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004). Pp. 331-393.