

Devin Leigh  
History Minor  
15 December 2017

**Justification Paper for HIS 116:**  
Atlantic Africa in the Era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade

**Introduction to the Course**

The purpose of this justification paper is to explain the thought process behind my syllabus in African History. The syllabus is for a course entitled “HIS 116: Atlantic Africa in the Era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade,” and it falls under the designation of Special Themes in African History. The course is an upper-division class that is designed to meet twice a week, once on Tuesdays and once on Thursdays. Although the class is specifically designated as a lecture course, it is designed to be a hybrid of lecture and seminar. I will lecture on Tuesdays about a general topic in the history of Atlantic Africa, and then the students will engage in group discussion on Thursdays about readings which pertain to that subject. A 15-minute reading quiz will precede each discussion to ensure that students are doing the reading and to give them a chance to formulate their thoughts beforehand. Most times the discussions will take place in small groups of about 5 students and sometimes they will take place in one large group. Overall, this is a reading intensive class. On average, students will be expected to read between 150 and 200 pages each week. With the exception of a few weeks, students will be reading both secondary and primary sources for each discussion.

**Objectives of the Course**

For the majority of this justification paper, I am going to walk the reader through my course calendar, discussing the choices that I have made for the weekly lectures and readings. Before I do that, however, I would like to offer some general thoughts on the objectives of the class. First, the class is based on the assumption that young people in the United States today have at least a vague idea that the Transatlantic Slave Trade was integral to the development of the Americas. They may

not know that roughly 12.5 million people were forcibly transported from West and West-Central Africa to the Western Hemisphere from the first decade of the sixteenth century to the third quarter of the nineteenth century, but they probably understand that enslavement formed some part of their country's historical foundations and, thus, influenced their society's present multiculturalism. But what about the history of Africa itself? Do young people have an equal understanding for how the Transatlantic Slave Trade affected African History? How did the trade affect Africans who did not leave the continent? How did the trade affect the history of the African societies from which enslaved persons were taken? How did it affect the history of the African societies that facilitated the slave trade? Finally, how is the trade remembered in academic discourse and popular culture?

I have designed this course to give students a look into the African side of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. By "African side," I do not mean the ways that Africans saw this slave trade, although many of the required readings do focus on the perspectives of African people. Instead, by "African side," I mean the way that the Transatlantic Slave Trade looked from on the African continent and from within African societies. This means seeing the slave trade from a range of experiences, such as that of African, European, and mixed-race slave traders and formerly enslaved people who facilitated and fought against the slave trade. One of the central objectives of this course is to expose students to a diversity of viewpoints on the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its role in shaping African History. This theme is consistent throughout the course calendar. For example, there are primary and secondary sources that explore the views of Africans who became slavers—the diary of Antera Duke and the chapter from *Where the Negroes are Masters* on the Asantehene's frustration with abolition—and there are also sources that explore the views of enslaved Africans who became ardent abolitionists, such as the reading from *Thoughts and Sentiments* by Ottobah Cugoano. These readings will showcase the range of relationships that Africans had with the transatlantic trade.

In addition to focusing on how individuals experienced the Transatlantic Slave Trade, this course will focus on regional differences in the history of that trade and how that trade both shaped African societies and was shaped by African societies. Secondary sources by authors like Boubacar Barry, Rebecca Shumway, Edna Bay, Linda Heywood, John Thornton, and G. Ugo Nwokeji offer students case studies for how the Transatlantic Slave Trade operated in specific regions of Atlantic Africa. These readings focus upon how various categories of analysis—gender, religion, culture—affected the ways that the Transatlantic Slave Trade operated in a given region as well as the ways that the Transatlantic Slave Trade shaped the societies within those regions. Barry’s work on Senegambia, for instance, demonstrates how Africans on the Upper Guinea Coast turned to Islam in the eighteenth century to cope with the trauma that the Transatlantic Slave Trade brought into their communities. Likewise, Shumway investigates how Africans from the Gold Coast imbued groves with sacred meaning in an effort to create local sanctuaries from the Transatlantic Slave Trade. To cite just one more example, Nwokeji shows how cultural ideas about agricultural work shaped the gendered dimensions of the Transatlantic Slave Trade from ports in Biafra. Overall, these readings are designed to show students that, in the words of the historian of Africa Toby Green, “There was not one Atlantic slave trade, but many trades wreaking many different effects...”<sup>1</sup>

Finally, another purpose of this course is to get students to think about how historians study the history of Atlantic Africa today. The tone for this objective is set by the first week of readings. We are going to start by seeing how two historians with dramatically different perspectives—John Thornton and Walter Rodney—interpret the history of Atlantic Africa during the era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. We revisit this theme during the final week of the course, when we read about how another set of historians with dramatically different perspectives—Henry Louis Gates Jr. and

---

<sup>1</sup> Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589* (Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 14.

Ali Mazrui—discuss their artistic representations of Atlantic Africa during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. In addition, various weeks throughout the course calendar are intended to draw the students' attention specifically to the source material. This is especially true for the case study week on the history of the Kingdom of Dahomey. During this week, students will read about the royal court of King Tegbesu from a few different perspectives. They will read a secondary source by Bay and a primary source by Robert Norris. In addition, an article by Robin Law is designed to help students contextualize Norris' work as a document that is both ethnographic and rhetorical. Hopefully, these readings will help students think as much about the process of studying Atlantic Africa during the era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade as about what happened during that time period.

To summarize, this class has three main goals. The first is to expose students to a range of ways that people in Atlantic Africa experienced the history of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The second is to explore the ways in which African societies and the Transatlantic Slave Trade mutually shaped one another, paying particular attention to regional differences and differences according to various categories of analysis, like gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, geography, or culture. The third is to draw students' attention to the process of studying the history of Atlantic Africa during the era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade—for example, by focusing on the interplay between primary and secondary source materials that pertain to the same case study. Now that I have articulated some of the central goals of this course, I will proceed with a brief discussion of my teaching philosophy. Afterward, I will explain my choices for lectures and assigned readings on a week-to-week basis. I will do this by referring to each of the weeks on the course calendar. To follow along, please refer to the companion syllabus that I submitted along with this justification essay.

### **Discussion of Teaching Philosophy**

Put simply, my teaching philosophy is grounded in the benefits of interaction and exposure. I believe that most students learn the best from each other during discussion sessions, and that the key to facilitating these discussions is for the professor to present students with a thoughtful combination of diverse source material and then to make his or her presence minimal in the classroom. As a discussion leader, I often feel pressure to ensure that students are getting the most out of their education. However, I usually find that discussion sessions work the best when I learn to trust my choice of source material, when I give time for a conversation to develop, and when I get to know my students on an individual basis so that I can better understand how I can form small groups of people that will complement one another in a conversation. Generally, I prefer small groups (between 3-5 people) better than large groups (e.g. the whole class) for discussion. Small groups allow more people to share their thoughts in the same amount of time, and it removes the professor from the equation. In my experience, removing the professor from the conversation is often a good thing because it takes pressure off the students to perform in a hierarchical structure. Usually, I organize small group discussions by providing a list of questions pertaining to the readings. While students discuss, I sit somewhere in the room where I can overhear them but I am not obtrusive.

A main goal of my pedagogy is maximizing the amount of time that students interact with each other. I want students in the course to develop a rapport with one another—especially in their small groups—and this takes time. In a course such as this, students already get a lot of top-down lecturing from the instructor during the Tuesday lecture sessions; and I do not think they need any more of that on Thursdays. Nonetheless, the discussion sessions will only succeed if students have done the reading, have a basic vocabulary for talking about the readings, and are comfortable with one another to share their opinions. The weekly quizzes are designed to enforce the readings so as to improve the quality of discussions. The lectures are designed to situate the readings by providing

students with broader context. To provide just a couple of examples for how this might work, the readings for week 5 are specifically about the Fante, and so here I would lecture on the history of the Gold Coast region more generally. Next, I have assigned no primary sources for the first week on West-Central Africa, and so here I would lecture on the broader history of Portuguese interactions with Atlantic Africa and I would privilege primary source material. Finally, rapport develops by allowing time for small groups to get to know one another from the first week of discussion, by making minor adjustments to small groups when members are not collaborating well, and by driving home the ways in which productive small-group conversations will benefit all members of the group (i.e. helping them to prepare for their geography test, final exam, and paper).

Since students in upper-division courses are often self-selecting, I believe that their interests should be taken into consideration when designing course assignments. Students will be more motivated if they feel that the professor acknowledges their individual interests. For this reason, I have structured the final paper with some flexibility. Students are required to compare and contrast two aspects of Atlantic African history in the time period of our course. They are allowed to select these two aspects. These might be two societies (e.g. Fante and Dahomey), two regions (e.g. Senegambia and Biafra), or two time periods (West-Central Africa in the time of Njinga and the time of Kimpa Vita). Students will know about this assignment from the first week of the course, and I will encourage them to think through their paper ideas during their weekly discussions. I will probably even work in some questions that directly connect the students' weekly readings to their final paper in my weekly questions for small group discussion. For the final exam, the students will be required to answer essay questions that relate to other themes from the class. In all likelihood, two of them will be about the relationship between pre-selected categories of analysis—e.g. gender or

culture—and the Transatlantic Slave Trade across regions. The third will be about how historians study Atlantic Africa and interpret its significance for African History more broadly.

### **Week-to-Week Breakdown of the Course**

**Week 1** is entitled “An Introduction to Atlantic Africa and the Transatlantic Slave Trade – Two Perspectives.” This week is designed to set the tone for the course by introducing students to different interpretations of the history of Atlantic Africa during the time of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The secondary sources by Thornton and Rodney pair nicely together since the authors take opposing positions on the foundational question of how the Transatlantic Slave Trade affected the history of Atlantic Africa. The central disagreement here is over whether Atlantic Africa had become “underdeveloped” during the four centuries of the Transatlantic Slave Trade (Rodney’s argument) or whether Atlantic Africa was equal with Europe in development until the colonial period (Thornton’s argument). My goal here is not to support a side of this controversial historiographical question. Rather, my purpose is to expose students to the divergent ways of interpreting the history of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Atlantic Africa. For my lecture this week, I will define the basic terms for this class as well as provide the students with an introduction to the social, political, and physical geography of Atlantic Africa during the trade. The students will be expected to know this foundational material by week four, because they will take a geography test before discussion. To help students start getting acquainted with Atlantic Africa, I have also asked them to visit a website that contains maps of Atlantic Africa from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries.

**Week 2** is entitled “Case Study of an African Kingdom before the Rise of the Transatlantic Slave Trade—Classical Mali.” I wanted to avoid perpetuating the assumption that African History begins with the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and that is one of the reasons that I have included a case study on an African society before the trade. Another reason is that I want students to see a model

of slavery existing in Africa before the Transatlantic Slave Trade. A large part of this course means understanding that slavery is an old institution in Africa, while also appreciating the range of ways that it changed with the rise of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Of course, there are several societies I could have focused on here, but I chose Mali because of its relationship to Greater Senegambia—a region that we will revisit later—and because of the diverse source material. Two African historians, Djibril Tamsir Niane and Madina Ly-Tall, provide our context on the history of “medieval” or “classical” Mali and our primary sources. Then two genres of primary sources, an ethnographic text by Ibn Battuta and an oral tradition, will allow students to think about the society more deeply. Since the history of slavery is fundamental to this course, our discussion will revolve around slavery’s presence in these texts, as well as the presence of other social and political institutions. My lecture for this week will provide background on classical African kingdoms, including Mali.

**Week 3** is entitled “Case Study of an African Kingdom in the First Centuries of the Transatlantic Slave Trade – Ndongo and Matamba.” In general, I wanted this class to focus on the height of the Transatlantic Slave Trade during the eighteenth century. At the same time, I did not want to ignore discussing the first two formative centuries of the trade. I included this week as a case study on the Transatlantic Slave Trade during these centuries. The Transatlantic Slave Trade was mostly dominated by Portuguese traffic to the Spanish colonies of America during these years, and I could have focused on any of the regions of Atlantic Africa where these Portuguese traders had a significant presence (e.g. the Upper Guinea Coast around ports like Cacheu and Bissau or the Bight of Benin). I chose to focus on West-Central Africa for a couple of reasons. First, Linda M. Heywood’s book on Queen Njinga of the Ndongo and Matamba Kingdoms is an accessible work that succeeds at blending narrative intimacy with broader themes like resistance and acculturation. Not only does this biography of a women help to balance out the presence of men in the primary sources—Antera

Duke, Olaudah Equiano, Philip Quaque—but it also provides a nice point of comparison for John Thornton’s biography on Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita, another women from a society in West-Central Africa. Both assigned for this course, these two works will allow us to pose comparative questions about West-Central Africa in such venues as the final exam or paper. My lecture for this week will provide background for these first two centuries of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

**Week 4** is the first in a series of five case studies on specific areas of Atlantic Africa at the height of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It is about the region known as “Senegambia.” The reading by Boubacar Barry provides context on the relationship between the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the region during the period, with a perspective that students should recognize as being similar to Walter Rodney’s. The primary sources for this week are interesting for many reasons, but I selected them for specific purposes. Thomas Bluett’s narrative rendering of Suleiman Diallo’s life is interesting because Diallo was a slave trader, he was enslaved and sent on the Middle Passage, and then he returned to the Senegambia region and continued working as a slave trader. As Barry describes in his work, Diallo’s life is a testament to how deeply ingrained slavery had become in Senegambia by the eighteenth century. His story provides an interesting counterpart to more famous and widely read examples of Africans, like Cugoano, who experienced the Transatlantic Slave Trade and then fought for its abolition. The selections from Mungo Park’s *Travels* pertain to his views on slavery. In discussion, we will make the connection that Park is seeing slavery at a specific moment in the history of Senegambia, even though he interprets the forms of slavery that he sees as natural to the region. We will also talk about how Park’s journey across Senegambia is structured by the region’s routes to enslavement—how Park travels with slavers and even trades in slaves himself.

**Week 5** is the second in a series of five case studies on Atlantic Africa at the height of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It is about the region known as the “Gold Coast.” The reading by Rebecca Shumway provides a context on the relationship between the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the region during this period. I chose Shumway’s book because it provides the clearest articulation of the history of Fanteland during this era. The book is short, succinct, and it distills recent scholarship. What is unique about the Fante is how they created what writers called a “republic” in the eighteenth century, and what scholars now describe as a “decentralized” state or a “Coastal Coalition” (the latter is Shumway’s phrase). Ideally, students will see a comparison between the decentralized nature of the Fante polities and the centralized states that Barry argues are the typical result of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. More generally, it is my hope that students will begin to see the diversity of political formations that resulted from the era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. In this work, Shumway also has a great chapter on Gold Coast Africans’ creation of sacred groves to cope with the era’s trauma. Finally, the primary source for this week is similar to the source on Suleiman Diallo because it has the potential to play with students’ expectations. While Philip Quaque is ethnically Fante, his letters reveal that he has become acculturated to British values through the Transatlantic Slave Trade and that he has come to disdain many aspects of Fante culture.

**Week 6** is the third in this series of five case studies on Atlantic Africa at the height of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It is about the region known as the “Slave Coast” or the “Bight of Benin.” This week builds directly off of the previous week in terms of discussing political formations during the era of the trade. We are moving from discussing a decentralized state to taking the only deep dive of our class into the history of a centralized state, empire, or monarchy during the trade in West Africa. Since our class does not have any readings specifically devoted to Futa Toro, Futa Jallon, Asante, Oyo, or Benin, this week on Dahomey is our only session about a slaving monarchy

outside of West-Central Africa. The readings are designed to give us a glimpse into the Dahomean King's royal court at Abomey from varying perspectives. Bay's *Wives of the Leopard* should challenge the students' preconceived ideas about monarchy by focusing on the power of court officials and royal kin, particularly those positions that were held by women. These include the royal wives and the queen mother or *kpojito*. This work is especially great for our purposes because Bay scrutinizes our primary source, Robert Norris' "A Journey to the Court of Bossa *Ahádee*" in his work *Memoirs of the Reign of Bossa Ahádee*. With this pairing, students will get to see firsthand how an historian reads against the grain of an ethnographic source for valuable information. Last, the piece by Robin Law will help students put Norris' writings on Dahomey in their proper political context. Norris was writing, in part, to defend the Transatlantic Slave Trade against abolitionists.

**Week 7** is the fourth in the series of five case studies on Atlantic Africa at the height of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It is about the region known as the "Bight of Biafra." Perhaps this week is the most special of the whole course since students get to read the diary of Antera Duke, an Efik-speaking slave trader from the Cross-Rivers Region of Southeastern Nigeria. This work is the only surviving diary written by an African slave trader in his own hand. The text is an invaluable primary source on the creolized-African trading culture of Biafra, where Igbo slavers spoke in pidgin English and negotiated what historians have defined as a "moral community" with European slave traders through a combination of African and European institutions such as pawning and the palaver. How African and European traders created and then negotiated this unique commercial system in the absence of any strong, centralized state is what makes the trade in Biafra so fascinating. That is also the main subject of Paul Lovejoy and David Richardson's article, which uses Duke's diary as a primary source while also helping readers understand it as a part of Biafran society. The reading by Equiano will fit nicely here, as it will provide students the perspective of a person who was

caught up in the slaving networks run by traders like Duke. It is also the only reading of the course in which a former slave describes the process of being enslaved and sold in Atlantic Africa. Lastly, Nwokeji's reading will give us a much wider perspective on Biafran slaving networks. It will take us beyond the coast and help us understand some of the cultural dynamics of the trade.

**Week 8** is the fifth in the series of five case studies on Atlantic Africa at the height of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It is about the region known as “West-Central Africa” or “Kongo-Angola.” The last time that we checked in with this region was when we were reading about Njinga's resistance against early Portuguese colonialism in mid-seventeenth century Angola. Now, we turn to the neighboring kingdom of Kongo to see resistance from the perspective of a martyred African woman named Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita. Vita led a brief prophetic religious movement in reaction to the Kongo's decline at the end of the seventeenth and start of the eighteenth centuries. Combined with Heywood's book on Njinga, Thornton's book will offer students a somewhat continuous narrative of resistance to Portuguese colonialism in West-Central Africa, while also presenting them with a detailed portrait of an Africanized expression of Christianity. Vita's creolized religious culture will fit nicely in our class after reading about the creolized trade cultures of Biafra. This week will also advance the third main goal of our course, as students will get to witness how an historian of Atlantic Africa reads against the grain of missionary records from Capuchin priests. What is so important about Thornton's book in the structure of this course, however, is that it provides an in-depth look at the history of a local social movement—the Kongolesse Antonian movement—which was directly inspired by the social crises brought about by the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

**Week 9** is entitled “Atlantic Africans in the Diaspora – Survivals *and* Inventions.” The title references perhaps the most longstanding historiographical debate in the field of the African diaspora to the Americas. This is the debate over whether and to what degree African cultures survived

the Middle Passage and took root in the Americas. Some historians argue specific African cultures are recognizable in the diaspora. Historically, these have been described as “survivals,” “Africanisms,” or “retentions.” Other historians argue enslavement destroyed African cultures, in a process that was often called “Social Death,” and reconstituted them as “creole” societies that, while drawing on pan-African influences, were not really expressions of any specific traditions. The readings assigned for this week break from this stale and outdated historiographical debate and follow what Kristin Mann describes in her contribution for this week as the Nigerian Hinterland Project (NHP). Simply put, this interpretation asks historians to begin their investigations of the diaspora *in* Africa and attempt to trace African cultural traditions from real populations. The rest of the readings for this week provide a case study in this historiographical approach. Texts by Walter Rucker explore ethnogenesis in the Gold Coast diaspora, emphasizing a very nuanced relationship between change and continuity. The primary sources are ethnographic pieces from Jamaica, in which white authors discuss the exact same Gold Coast identity marker that Rucker unpacks in his book. Students will be asked to compare these readings and think about the complex relationship between change and tradition—between “Social Death” and what Rucker defines as “Social Resurrection.”

**To continue my discussion of week 9,** I know that this is not a class on the Atlantic World or the African Diaspora. Regardless, I wanted to include at least one week about Atlantic Africans in the diaspora if only so that students would become aware of the fact that researching the diaspora is one way that historians try to learn about African cultures. I wanted to emphasize the great work of the NHP—the hallmark of which is really this dynamic interplay between primary sources from Africa and the Americas. Most importantly, I am hoping that this week will also play with students’ expectations about Africa and the diaspora. Many classes on the African diaspora privilege writing

by famous African individuals who became acculturated to “Western” society, like Phyllis Wheatley, Equiano, Cugoano, Quaque, Ignatius Sancho, or even Francis Williams. While these writings are superb for getting at how Africans embraced Euro-American cultures, they are not so great at helping us see how African cultures lived on and developed in the Americas. They tend to privilege people who assimilated and acculturated to Euro-American values instead of people who reimagined or recreated their African values in the Americas. Our week on the Gold Coast diaspora within the context of the NHP will place the focus back upon African communities rather than individuals, and it might even play on preconceived ideas about what assimilation means. It will offer a model for seeing how some people moved toward African culture in the diaspora rather than away.

**Week 10** is entitled “An Ambiguous Victory – The Meanings of ‘Abolition’ for Africa and Africans.” Obviously, in a course structured around the history of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Africa, it is most crucial to avoid perpetuating the assumption that the termination of this trade by Western powers resulted in the end of slavery in Africa. With this in mind, this week is essentially devoted to troubling the typical periodization of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the United States. There is a great and expansive literature that approaches this subject from the Americas—showing how the Slave Trade continued in the Americas through disguised channels or showing how those who abolished the trade worked in the name of capitalism disguised as humanitarianism. However, most of this research puts the focus on Europe and the Americas, and I want this week (as with the rest of the course) to stay focused on what abolition meant for Africans. The primary sources will give students a more typical image of the abolitionist moment. They will see the Fante-born author, Ottobah Cugoano, writing vehemently in favor of ending the Transatlantic Slave Trade. This is the only reading in the class devoted to an Atlantic African’s polemical writings against the trade, and it is made all the more significant because Cugoano came to Britain through that trade. In addition,

I have required students to skim through the first set of laws passed against the trade. The elevated language of these declarations will juxtapose nicely with our secondary readings.

**To continue my discussion of week 10**, the introduction of *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce* will provide students with context on the time of the Transatlantic Slave Trade's "abolition" in Atlantic Africa. I am that hoping that this chapter will play on students' expectations, as they will start to see the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade being depicted as a crisis for Africans rather than as a victory for the West. We follow up this piece with two chapters that take us inside specific Atlantic African societies during and after the moment of the trade's abolition. The first one shows us some of the ways that terminating the Transatlantic Slave Trade negatively affected elites; students will read about the Asante King's complaints about abolition, and how he views abolition as an attack against his sovereignty. The second one offers us a much longer view of how ending the Transatlantic Slave Trade resulted in the expansion of domestic slavery and the increasing militarization of Biafra over the course of the nineteenth century. Once again, this reading will provide a case study to back up the central arguments set forth in the introduction to *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce*. The reading should also help us think beyond the centuries that we have focused on so far. Nwokeji takes his analysis through most of the nineteenth century, which will help us start to make some very tentative connections to the colonial period. At the very least, this will help reinforce ideas about the legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

**Week 11** is entitled "The History of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Public Memory." This week is designed to help students start to think critically about modern representations of the history we have just explored. The purpose of the reading by John Kiarie Wa'Njogu is to help students think broadly about representations of Africa in the media of the "West." Of course, the "West" is where many of the students will be from, so hopefully they will be familiar with some of the tropes

described by Wa’Njogu. The main primary sources for this week are two cinematic interpretations of the same part of Alex Haley’s book *Roots*. Both of these episodes take place in the Senegambia; however, they were made 40 years apart after major advancements in the field of African History. Students will be asked to think about how the filmmakers chose to represent Senegambia and the Transatlantic Slave Trade in 1977 and 2016, whether any of Wa’Njogu’s stereotypes apply to these interpretations, and whether and to what degree these interpretations reflect the historiography of Atlantic Africa. The article by Donald Wright is designed to help students see that representations of Africa by the “West” do not necessarily stay in the “West.” As Wright shows, Africans in Gambia have been strongly influenced by the artistic portrayal of their home region in *Roots*. Lastly, I like the short readings by Gates and Mazrui because they provide a nice bookend to our discussion by Rodney and Thornton. Here we have two historians and filmmakers—one from Africa and one from America—who disagree over how to talk about African slavery and History.

**As a final reading for week 11 and a concluding note for the course**, I have asked students to read a very short online article by Theodore R. Johnson III. This piece is called “Africans have Apologized for Slavery, So Why Won’t the US?” As the title suggests, Johnson discusses the fact that many African local and national governments have issued formal apologies for their roles in facilitating the Transatlantic Slave Trade, but that the United States has still not done so. Hopefully, this reading will help students think about what it means to acknowledge or deny the histories that they have just spend the quarter learning about. What does it mean to have the power to choose to embrace or remember this history? What are the political implications of embracing these histories in Africa today? What are the political implications of ignoring them in the West?