

HIS 115A: History of West Africa

The History and Memory of the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Instructor: Devin Leigh

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:00 – 1:00 AM or by appointment

Office: Room 246, the Social Science and Humanities Building

Course Dates: Winter Quarter, 2019; January 8 – March 28

Course Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:40-6:00 PM

Course Room: Hart Hall, Room 1120

Estimated Enrolment: Approximately 25-35 students

CRN#: 54662. **Suggested Prerequisite:** HIS 15A: Survey of Precolonial Africa

Course Description:

Between the first decade of the sixteenth century and the third quarter of the nineteenth century, roughly 12.5 million Africans were forcibly shipped to the Western Hemisphere via the Transatlantic Slave Trade (abbreviated as TAST). Today, most people are at least vaguely aware of how this process shaped the complicated history of the Americas. But what about the history of Africa itself? How did the rise of this violent and unprecedented trade in human bodies shape the history of Africa and Africans? For example, how did the development of the TAST shape structures of political authority in different regions of Africa? How did it disrupt and transform previous commercial networks and social relations? How did Africans deal with the trauma the TAST brought to their communities? How did the trade affect the spread of different African cultural traditions? What were the class, gender, family, religious, economic, and ethnic dimensions of the trade, and how were these dimensions shaped by the time and place in which the trade occurred? Last, what did abolishing the TAST mean in practice for Africans and Africa, what are the legacies of the trade today, and how do Africans remember the history of the trade in popular culture?

This class is designed to explore the above questions. It is an upper-division course on the history and memory of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in West Africa. It has three main components: lecture, lab, and seminar. It is a writing- and reading-intensive course. Students are expected to read approximately 150 pages of text each week and produce a 12-15 page research paper at quarter's end. Please note that many of the readings for this course will be challenging. In addition to being academic, they will feature historical terms that will be unfamiliar because they are no longer in common usage. As such, the readings will likely require more time and attention than usual.

This course will pay particular attention to major economic, social, political, and cultural changes in West Africa. By "West Africa," it is meant the region that stretches from the present-day nation of Senegal to the present-day nation of Equatorial Guinea. The course will deal with coastal and interior parts of this region. From time to time, the lectures and the readings will also make comparisons to West-Central, South, East, and North Africa. During the course, we will study the history of regions in West Africa as they were known to writers of the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries. However, we will also study these regions according to their modern-day political boundaries and national titles. In doing so, we will be conscious of the fact that many Africans do not identify with the historical terms that were in use during the era of the TAST.

This course is structured chronologically and regionally. The first week is designed to serve several functions: introduce students to terminology that will be used in the course; to the social, en-

vironmental, and political geography of the regions that will be discussed; and to the most basic facts and themes concerning West Africa and African slavery. This week is crucial for setting the tone of the course. If you are unable to attend this week for any reason, please make sure that you take the time to do the readings and learn the material that you missed.

Week two provides a look at a few theoretical and conceptual approaches that will be foundational for this class. In week three, we will explore the origins of the TAST in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. Over the next five weeks (weeks 4-8), we will conduct a series of five case studies on specific regions of West Africa. In each of these case studies, we will mix a study of how the TAST operated in the region before the trade was abolished with a study of how people from the nations that now exist in those regions have remembered or not remembered the trade in the latter half of the twentieth century. Week nine will be about the history of TAST abolition and its complications. Finally, week ten will be about approaches to, and challenges of, remembering the TAST in the modern era. Please consult the course calendar at the end of this syllabus for a more-detailed breakdown of each week's topic and assigned readings.

Course Structure:

This class meets twice a week. It meets once on Tuesdays and once on Thursdays. On Tuesdays, the instructor will provide an introductory lecture about the week's topic (40 minutes). Afterward, students will engage in a lab exercise (40 minutes). These will require students to analyze one or more primary sources in small groups. Students will be placed in their small groups on the first day of class, and they will remain with the same group throughout the quarter. All class readings are due on Thursdays. Thursdays will begin with a reading quiz (20 minutes). Afterward, students will have seminar discussion on the readings (1 hour). These readings will all be from secondary sources—that is, sources written by scholars of West Africa. Seminar will be conducted in large group (i.e. the whole class) or in small group. Several films will also be shown in this class. Students should be prepared to take a quiz on the films or discuss them in seminar if necessary.

Student Learning Outcomes:

During this course, each student will:

- 1) Compare and contrast the economic, social, political, and cultural contributions and experiences of a variety of people who inhabited West Africa from the 1400s to the 1800s.
- 2) Recognize major economic, social, political, and cultural events and trends that have shaped the history of West Africa during the development of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.
- 3) Learn to analyze primary-source material for information about a particular historical issue.
- 4) Think critically about the unique ways in which West Africans have represented the history and legacy of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the late twentieth century.

Required Texts: *Please note:* There are no required texts for this course. All of the weekly readings will be posted in Canvas in the form of PDFs at least two weeks before they are due.

Grading Components:

- **Seminar and lab participation:** Graded in Canvas on a weekly basis (20%)
- **Quizzes:** Graded in Canvas on a weekly basis, dropping the lowest score (20%)
- **Paper draft/outline:** 6 pages minimum, due by 5 PM in Canvas on February 14 (20%)

- **Final term paper:** 12-15 pages maximum, due by 5 PM in Canvas on 21 March (40%)

Description of the Grading Components:

Seminar and lab participation: Students will have seminar and lab activities. The instructor will assess and record each student's participation grade on a weekly basis so that students may check their grade on demand throughout the quarter. Each lab and seminar activity will be graded on a scale of 0-10 in increments of 2 (with the possible grades being 0, 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10). To receive a good participation grade in seminar, students must have completed all the assigned readings, taken detailed notes, and generally done whatever it is they feel is necessary to prepare them to discuss the material with their classmates. In order to receive a good participation grade for lab, students must be actively involved in the exercise and be contributing to their group's progress.

Reading quizzes: Every Thursday meeting will begin with a 20-minute quiz on the week's readings. The purpose of these quizzes is to make sure that students are prepared for class discussions and to provide an opportunity for them to formulate their ideas in writing beforehand. The quizzes have only three possible grades: 0, 5, and 10. They are intended to be easy for those students who have done the readings closely and have thought about what they mean in the context of the class. The instructor will drop each student's lowest quiz score at the end of the quarter.

Paper Outline/Draft and Final Term Paper: The term paper is the primary assignment for this course. Each student will be expected to select one region of West Africa from a list that the instructor will circulate on the first day of class. Students may choose West-Central, South, East, or North Africa if they have a special interest; however, students who wish to write about one of these regions must speak with the instructor first. Students will be required to write a 12-15 page paper, making use of primary and secondary sources. The paper will address two questions:

- 1) In what ways was the history of the Transatlantic Slave Trade unique in your region?
- 2) How would you characterize the way or ways that Africans in the present-day nations that make up your region have chosen to remember the Transatlantic Slave Trade?

For example, if a student decides to write about the region of the "Gold Coast"/Ghana, then he or she must make two separate arguments in his or her paper. One argument will be about what factor or factors made the TAST on the "Gold Coast" unique in the centuries of its operation. Students can choose to focus on any number of factors. They may discuss many factors or a specific factor—e.g. gender or politics—that interests them. They may also choose to focus on a specific period if they choose. For instance, they may choose to survey the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, or they may choose to focus on just one of these centuries.

The second argument will be about how Ghanaians have approached the history and legacy of the TAST in the second half of the twentieth century. For this part, students may choose to focus on one way that Ghanaians have explored the trade—e.g. festivals or national monuments—or they may survey a variety of ways. Students may also choose how much space they wish to devote to answering each of these two questions. However, every paper must have an argument and a thesis statement, and must engage with both secondary and primary source materials. The instructor will circulate a rubric and short bibliography of sources on each region the first day of class. This will help students get started on their project. Students should commit to their region of choice by the end of week two. If students have any questions or confusion about how they would like to approach this assignment, they should speak with the instructor sooner rather than later.

Additional Rules:

- 1) **Late Work:** Late work will not be accepted unless in the case of a verifiable medical excuse. Quizzes and lab- and seminar-participation cannot be made up; however, quizzes and participation will be excused if the student produces a verifiable medical excuse.
- 2) **Electronics:** Electronics are permitted in this course, but they may not be used for non-class purposes. If the instructor catches a student using an electronic device for non-class purposes, then he or she may forfeit their participation grade for lab or seminar that day.
- 3) **Medical Excuses:** A medical excuse means a letter from a qualified physician attesting that a debilitating illness or injury has stopped you from fulfilling your duties for the class. Such a letter should not breach medical confidentiality—it should not say what kind of ailment you suffered, just that it was sufficiently severe to prevent you from doing your work.
- 4) **Course Canvas:** This is a web-enhanced course. This means that students will find required materials posted on Canvas. Students will use Canvas to download the readings; access the syllabus, lectures in PPT, lab materials, and resources for the final paper; submit their paper drafts and final papers; and check their grades. Students are expected to check Canvas regularly for information related to the course. Please note that all term papers must be submitted through Canvas and that hard copies will not be accepted without special circumstances.
- 5) **Special Accommodations:** The professor will make special accommodations for all students with disabilities as requested by the staff of the Student Disability Center (SDC). Only SDC staff are qualified to determine the eligibility for accommodation and what accommodations are appropriate. If you think you may need an accommodation, please contact SDC as soon as possible so that they can contact the instructor to make the appropriate arrangements.
- 6) **Academic Honesty:** Academic dishonesty violates university policy. Examples of academic dishonesty include: unauthorized sharing of test answers, copying from someone else's work during exams, turning in papers written for another class, and copying from any source without using proper citations, including cutting-and-pasting from websites and then submitting that information as your own work. All cases of plagiarism or other cheating will be referred to Student Support and Judicial Affairs (SJA). In addition, plagiarized or otherwise ethnically compromised work will receive a penalty grade of zero and may, as judged appropriate by the instructor, earn the student an F for the course. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact either your instructor or the university staff at SJA.

COURSE CALENDAR

Please note that the course calendar can be modified at any time

Wk.	Dates	Topic & Activities	Readings & Assignments (all on Thursdays)
1	T, 1/8 R, 1/10	<p>Intro to Atlantic Africa and Slavery</p> <p>T: Class introductions, assign small groups, syllabus overview, and Lecture 1: Introduction to the Study of the TAST in Africa</p> <p>R: Quiz 1 and Seminar 1: Discuss Readings on Intro to Atlantic Africa and Slavery</p>	<p>R: Philip D. Morgan’s “Africa and the Atlantic, c. 1450 to c. 1820,” in <i>Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal</i> (223-247) and “Defining Slavery, Defining Freedom” in Sean Stilwell’s <i>Slavery and Slaving in African History</i> (1-28)</p> <p>Begin thinking about your paper topic</p>
2	T, 1/15 R, 1/17	<p>Conceptualizing the TAST in West Africa</p> <p>T: Film 1: Watching and discussing segments on TAST from two documentaries: <i>The Africans</i> by Ali A. Mazrui and <i>Africa’s Great Civilizations</i> by Henry Louis Gates.</p> <p>R: Quiz 2 and Seminar 2: Discuss Readings on Conceptualizing the TAST in Africa</p>	<p>R: Selections from Walter Rodney’s <i>How Europe Underdeveloped Africa</i> (73-146) and from John Thornton’s <i>Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World</i> (43-125)</p> <p>Students commit to their paper topics</p>
3	T, 1/22 R, 1/24	<p>The Origins of the TAST in West Africa</p> <p>T: Lecture 2: Overview of the Origins of the TAST in West Africa, and Lab 1</p> <p>R: Quiz 3 and Seminar 3: Discuss Readings on the Origins of the TAST in West Africa</p>	<p>R: Selections from Toby Green’s <i>The Rise of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa</i> (177-276) and from Malyn Newitt’s <i>The Portuguese in West Africa</i> (1-24)</p> <p>Students are doing research for their papers</p>
4	T, 1/29 R, 1/31	<p>First Case Study: “Senegambia” (including southern Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Guinea Bissau, and northern Guinea)</p> <p>T: Lecture 3: Overview of the TAST in Senegambia, and Lab 2</p> <p>R: Quiz 4 and Seminar 4: Discuss Readings on the TAST in Senegambia</p>	<p>R: Selection from Boubacar Barry’s <i>Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade</i> (1-126) and Paulla A. Ebron’s article “Tourists as Pilgrims: Commercial Fashioning as Transatlantic Politics” (910-932)</p> <p>Students are doing research for their papers</p>

5	T, 2/5 R, 2/7	<p>Second Case Study: The “Windward Coast” (including southern Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia)</p> <p>T: Lecture 4: Overview of the TAST on the “Windward Coast,” and Lab 3</p> <p>R: Quiz 5 and Film 2: <i>Watching Ghosts of Amistad: in the Footsteps of Rebels</i></p>	<p>R: Selections from Marcus Rediker’s <i>The Amistad Rebellion</i> (13-64) and from Rosalind Shaw’s <i>Memories of the Slave Trade</i> (1-25, 263-268)</p> <p><i>Students are writing up paper drafts/outlines</i></p>
6	T, 2/12 R, 2/14	<p>Third Case Study: The “Gold Coast” (including eastern Ivory Coast and Ghana)</p> <p>T: Lecture 5: Overview of the TAST on the “Gold Coast,” and Lab 4</p> <p>R: Quiz 6 and Seminar 5: Discuss Readings on the TAST on the “Gold Coast”</p>	<p>R: Selections from Rebecca Shumway’s <i>The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade</i> (25-156) and Brempong Osei-Tutu’s article “The African-American Factor in the Commodification of Ghana’s Slave Castles” (115-133)</p> <p><i>Paper drafts/outlines due by 5 PM in Canvas</i></p>
7	T, 2/19 R, 2/21	<p>Fourth Case Study: The “Bight of Benin” (including south-eastern Ghana, Togo, the Republic of Benin, and western Nigeria)</p> <p>T: Lecture 6: Overview of the TAST on the “Slave Coast,” and Lab 5</p> <p>R: Quiz 7 and Seminar 6: Discuss Readings on the TAST on the “Slave Coast”</p>	<p>R: Selections from Robin Law’s <i>The Slave Coast of West Africa</i> (116-343) and Ana Lucia Araujo’s article “Welcome the Diaspora: Slave Trade Heritage Tourism and the Public Memory of Slavery” (145-178)</p> <p><i>Students continue to work on their papers</i></p>
8	T, 2/26 R, 2/28	<p>Fifth Case Study: The “Bight of Biafra” (including eastern Nigeria, Cameroon, and Equatorial Guinea)</p> <p>T: Lecture 7: Overview of the TAST on the “Bight of Biafra,” and Lab 6</p> <p>R: Quiz 8 and Seminar 7: Discuss Readings on the TAST on the “Bight of Biafra”</p>	<p>R: Selections from G. Ugo Nwokeji’s <i>The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra</i> (53-178) and Davis Lishilinimle Imbua’s article “Slavery and Slave Trade Remembered: A Study of the Slave History Museum in Calabar, Nigeria” (112-136)</p> <p><i>Students continue to work on their papers</i></p>
9	T, 3/5 R, 3/7	<p>Abolition of the TAST & its Complications</p> <p>T: Lecture 8: Overview of TAST Abolition and its Complications, and Lab 7</p>	<p>R: “Things Fall Apart” from Randy Sparks’s <i>Where the Negroes are Masters</i> (211-240), intro to Robin Law’s <i>From Slave Trade to ‘Legitimate Commerce’</i> (1-32), and Patrick Brantlinger’s article “Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of</p>

		<p>R: Quiz 9 and Seminar 8: Discuss Readings on Abolition and its Complications</p>	<p>the Myth of the Dark Continent” (166-203), and Casey Quackenbushe’s article on the Slave Trade in Libya Today from <i>Time</i> (1-5)</p> <p><i>Students continue to work on their papers</i></p>
10	T, 3/12 R, 3/14	<p>Remembering the TAST in West Africa Today – Special Topic, Film</p> <p>T: Film 3: Relax and watch <i>Andaggaman</i> with food and drinks (1 hr. 30 minutes)</p> <p>R: Quiz 10 and Film 4: Segments from Part I of <i>Roots</i> (first 1977 and then 2016)</p>	<p>R: Robert Harms’s “The Transatlantic Slave Trade in Cinema” from <i>Black and White in Colour</i> (59-81), chapter 2 of Robert A. Rosenstone’s <i>Visions of the Past</i> (45-79), and Donald R. Wright’s article “The Effect of Alex Haley’s Roots on How Gambians Remember the Atlantic Slave Trade” (295-318)</p> <p><i>Students continue to work on their papers</i></p>
11	R, 3/21	<p>Finals Week</p>	<p><i>Final paper due by 5 PM in Canvas</i></p>