

**HIS 115A: West African History**  
The History and Memory of the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Introducing Myself and the Class (Tue. 1-8)





## Why teach African History?

“Undergraduates, seduced, as always, by the changing breath of journalistic fashion, demand that they should be taught the history of black Africa. Perhaps, in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is largely darkness, like the history of pre-European, pre-Columbian America. And darkness is not a subject for history.”

- Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Rise of Christian Europe* (1965)

**Continued with an analysis by Kwame Anthony Appiah:** “I do not deny that men existed in dark countries and dark centuries, nor that they had political life and culture, interesting to sociologists and anthropologists,” he hastened to add. No, the reason that the African past had nothing to teach us was that the discipline of history had “a purpose. We study it... to discover how we have come to be where we are.” In a world entirely dominated by “European techniques, European examples, European ideas,” this high purpose could best be achieved by the study of the European past.

**The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Hegel** said in the *Philosophy of History* (1837) that Africa was not a “historical continent” because it showed no development. As such, Trevor-Roper’s ideas are not new. They shaped the production of African History since the field’s inception, and they have not gone away.

### Statistics on African History in Higher Education (2018-2019)

#### Africa

Number of Faculty: 5

W/O North Africa: 2

Upper Division courses: 7

All Pre-1900 Courses: 1

*HIS 15A: Africa to 1900*

**Conclusion:** One country of Europe gets four classes for its history before 1900. By contrast, the entire continent of Africa gets only 1 class for its history before that same period.

#### Europe

Number of Faculty: 11

Upper Division Courses Offered: 54

Pre-1900 Upper Division Courses: 35

*HIS 151A: England in the Middle Ages*

*HIS 151B: The Early Modern Centuries*

*HIS 151C: Eighteenth-Century England*

*HIS 151D: Industrial England*

**Above:** These statistics were taken from the course catalog and faculty pages of a major public research University in the United States. Africa has the least number of upper-division courses among all of the groups listed: Africa, Asia, Europe, United States, Latin America, Middle East, and World.



### Why teach the Slave Trade?

“Contrary to what may be called entrenched popular perception and belief, the slave trade and its abolition are neglected subjects in the writing of West African history and indeed of the history of Africa as a whole...More importantly, the topic does not occupy a prominent enough place in the teaching programs of many of our colleges and universities. I have come across many history and social science graduates who know next to nothing about the slave trade in Africa and its abolition...”

- Adiele Eberechukwu Afigbo, “Africa and the Abolition of the Slave Trade,” *WMQ* (2009)

**Above:** This article is adapted from the author's keynote address delivered at the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture's conference "'The bloody Writing is for ever torn': Domestic and International Consequences of the First Governmental Efforts to Abolish the Atlantic Slave Trade," Aug. 8-12, 2007, Accra and Elmina, Ghana. Adiele Afigbo (1937-2009) was a Nigerian historian who studied at the University of Ibadan and taught in Nigeria for 45 years.

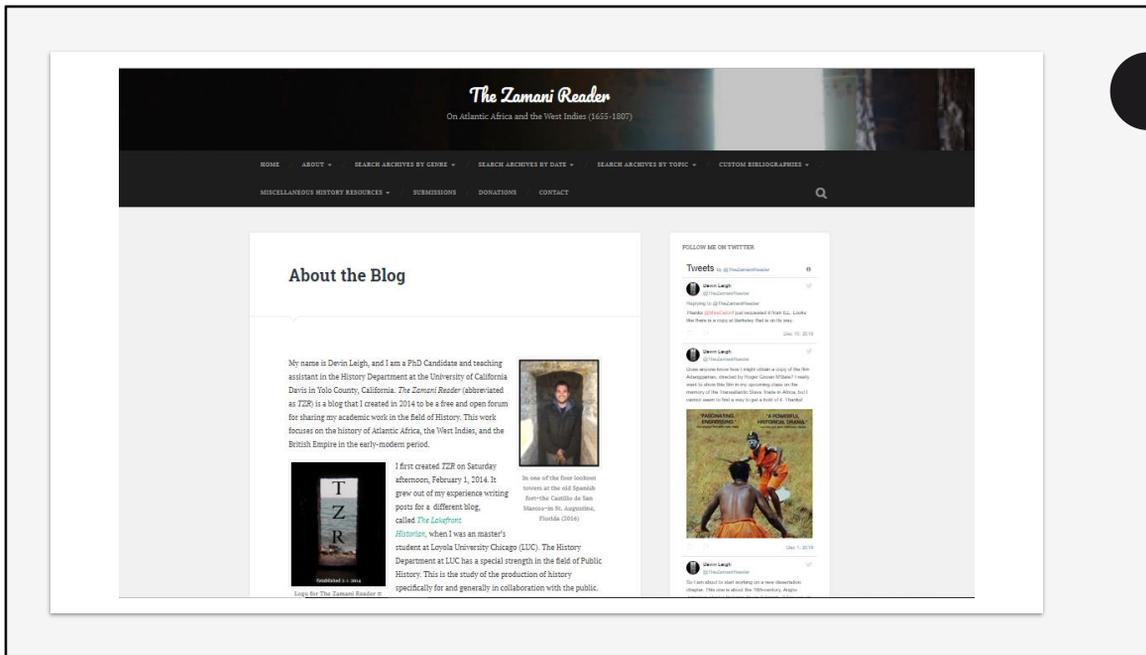


**Above:** With Dr. Ogenga Otunnu at the DePaul University History Department graduation ceremony in Chicago in 2012.

Otunnu got his PhD from York University, and he has taught at the Centre for Refugee Studies at York for 15 years. He has also taught forced migration & refugee studies at Northwestern University and DePaul University. Has traveled the world with the UN. He recently published ***Crisis of Legitimacy and Political Violence in Uganda in 2 Vols. (1890-2016)***. He is an expert in human rights, forced migration, refugee studies, and African History more generally.

**At DePaul University the African survey course taught by Ogenga Otunnu in WQ 2009: *HST 131: The History of Africa to 1800***

Otunnu taught me about colonial, national, and post-colonial historiography. He was the first person to teach me about West Africa and the trans-Atlantic slave trade.



**Informal Scholarship:** I developed a blog, *The Zamani Reader* (abbreviated as TZR) in February of 2014. It is named after a Swahili concept that the Kenyan-born Christian philosopher John S. Mbiti discusses in his book *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969). The blog is dedicated to showcasing my scholarship and to exploring the history of Atlantic Africa, the West Indies, and Britain in the eighteenth century.

The origins of a source: Edward Long, Coromantee slave revolts and *The History of Jamaica*

Devin Leigh

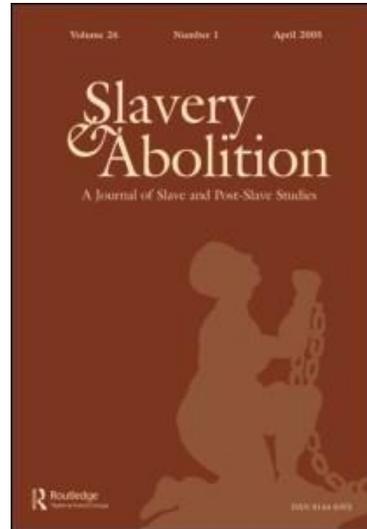
ABSTRACT

Since the 1960s, historians of the early modern era have been writing with colonial sources to uncover the ways that Africans with connections to the Gold Coast – often known as ‘Coromantees’ in the Anglo-American colonies – shaped the history of the Atlantic World. One of the most influential primary sources used in this literature is a 32-page section of the second volume of *The History of Jamaica*, written by the planter-historian Edward Long in 1774. The origins of a source uses Long’s life and works, both published and unpublished, to tell the story of this source’s creation. In doing so, it provides a detailed case study for how a prominent and controversial intellectual acquired knowledge of African culture, and then repositioned and deployed that knowledge as a tool in the abolitionist debate. It argues that the political context of abolition is essential to understanding Long’s writings on the Coromantees.

Introduction

In 1766, the planter-historian Edward Long stood before the Jamaican House of Assembly and proposed a bill that would place an import duty on slaves from the present-day regions of Ghana in West Africa, then known as the ‘Gold Coast’.<sup>1</sup> The bill would ban the importation of Gold Coast Africans – known in the Anglo-American colonies as ‘Coromantees’ – from Britain’s most profitable overseas colony on the belief that they had been responsible for most of its slave revolts. The Assembly rejected the proposal that day, and Long did not forget it. In 1774, he was living in England and working on what would become the most comprehensive study of Jamaican society in the early-modern era, *The History of Jamaica* in three volumes. When he came to a section that he devoted to the ‘History of Negro insurrections in this island’, he returned to his proposal from 1766.<sup>2</sup> At 32 pages, he wrote more than any author before him on connections between slave rebellion and the Coromantees.<sup>3</sup> This time, however, his argument was different than it had been eight years ago. Then it had been a private appeal to fellow planters, inspired by a series of recent

CONTACT Devin Leigh [dleigh@ucdavis.edu](mailto:dleigh@ucdavis.edu) Department of History, University of California Davis, 2218 Social Science and Humanities Building, One Shields Avenue, Davis, CA 95616, USA  
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**Academic Scholarship:** Article in *Slavery & Abolition* (10-22-2018). Chapter of my UC Davis History dissertation project, “Conscripting the Other: The Politics of African History in an Age of Abolition, 1760-1807.” Dissertation tentatively called, “Conscripting the Other: The Politics of African History in an Age of Abolition, 1760-1807.”



**My dissertation research is trans-Atlantic...**

**Right:** Researching at the archives of the West India Committee at Clutha House in Westminster, England, in August 2017

**Left:** Researching in the archives of the Alma Jordan Library at UWI, St. Augustine, in Trinidad & Tobago in June, 2018

**H15: AFRICA TO 1900**  
**STATES AND SOCIETIES, SLAVERY, AND THE SCRAMBLE**  
 WINTER 2018, LEC: TR 12:10-1:30 PM CHEM 179



With 55 countries, thousands of languages, and a geographic area that surpasses the United States, China, and Europe combined, the defining characteristic of Africa is its diversity. History 15 introduces students to key skills in the history of Africa up to 1900, including the foundation of states and societies, the spread of Islam and Christianity, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the onset of European colonialism. Students will examine the continent's past through oral and written primary sources, scholarly debates, music, film, art, and news.

Contact Professor Corrie Decker for more information:  
[cd@ucdavis.edu](mailto:cd@ucdavis.edu)

NEW COURSE OFFERED WINTER QUARTER, 2019

**HIS 115A: West African History**  
 Special Topic: The History and Memory of the Transatlantic Slave Trade



**WQ, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:40 - 6:00 PM, Hart Hall 1120**  
 Enrollment for this class is limited. Register with CEN 54662 to reserve your spot. If you have any questions or you would like to see the syllabus, please contact the instructor, Devin Leigh at [dle@ucdavis.edu](mailto:dle@ucdavis.edu).

**Teaching:** TA'ed for both parts of the African History survey course at UC Davis with Corrie Decker (15A and 15B) and then I developed this class for the satisfaction of my minor field requirement last year (FQ, 2017). I applied to teach this course as an associate instructor in Spring of 2018. This is my first time teaching this course.

**HIS 15A is a prerequisite for this course.** This course builds off of the material presented in "HIS 15: Africa to 1900."