

HISTORY 292H.001
Undergraduate Seminar in History: The United States and Africa
Fall 2010
TTh 2:00-3:15, Hamilton 423

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This honors course focuses on the changing relationship between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa. That relationship began with the first group of African slaves who landed at Jamestown in 1619 and continues in international diplomacy, economic relationships, immigration, tourism, activism, and other forms of connection today. It encompassed *people* who traveled from Africa to America or from America to Africa, *ideas* about Africa and its people, *policies* between governments and other institutions, and *activism* on the part of Americans interested in Africa as well as Africans concerned about the United States. We will deal with these chronologically, focusing on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, back-to-Africa movements of the 19th and 20th centuries (including the colonization of Liberia by African Americans), pan-Africanism as an international ideal, US policies toward decolonizing and post-colonial African countries, and modern contemporary issues affecting Africa and America. This course is intended to 1) familiarize you with some of the connections between African and American history; 2) challenge you to consider how Americans have thought about Africa at different points in time, and what that means about America as well as Africa; and 3) introduce you to some of the major American foreign and economic policies that have affected Africans, as well as how Africans have influenced, or attempted to influence, the United States. In addition, this course is designed to give you extensive practice in critical thinking and writing, and in using historical insights to formulate arguments about policy.

Format and Activities of the Course:

Since people learn best through multiple senses and activities, this course is organized around a mixed format of mini-lectures, discussions, film viewings, readings, writing and peer commentary, research projects, and oral presentations. Class meetings will feature a mix of the first three; you will be responsible for the others with guidance from me and your classmates. Here is some more information on your responsibilities:

Readings: Please come to class having read and carefully considered (see below) the assignment listed for that day. If possible, bring the text(s) with you to class. Readings will be drawn from the following books, which are available for purchase at Student Stores and on reserve at the Undergraduate Library:

Curtis Keim, *Mistaking Africa: Curiosities and Inventions of the American Mind* (2nd ed., 2009)
David Northrup (ed.), *Crosscurrents in the Black Atlantic, 1770-1965: A Brief History with Documents*
James Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005*

In addition to these books, we will read articles and other documents available either on the internet or on the class Blackboard site. You can get to the internet documents on your own or via links provided on Blackboard version of this syllabus. The documents in Blackboard are in the "Course Documents" section and are designated below as "BB."

Other Assignments:

1. Class participation: At a bare minimum this means attendance in class; it also includes active involvement in class discussion. By taking part in our class discussions, you will deepen your understanding of the ideas and phenomena we study and you will gain practice and confidence in presenting your thoughts orally. Missing class more than once, using your laptop for something other than class work, and listening passively without adding anything of your own will all adversely affect your participation grade.

2. Journal entries: Nearly every week (as noted on the schedule below), you are asked to produce a 2-page "journal entry" directed towards your classmates, in which you respond to, engage with, and even struggle with the reading listed for that day on the syllabus. I require you to do this for two important reasons: having to write about what you read will stimulate you to closer reading and sharper analysis—in other words, it will help you think more interestingly—and it will give you practice in a skill that should serve you for the rest of your life, effective communication through writing.

These entries should not take the form of a mini-paper. They do not need to display a traditional beginning, middle, and end. They should not necessarily propose a thesis and support it thoroughly and in an orderly manner. Above all, they should not simply summarize the reading, or sound like a book report. Instead, they should represent your *struggle* with the material. You should write about what you do not understand, or about what you *half*-understand, or how this particular reading might connect to one you've done earlier. You can spend the whole two pages on one point or make a new point every other paragraph. You can problematize or extend or complicate or reduce—anything, as long as you direct your intellectual energy towards the reading. Sometimes I will give you a question to consider for some or all of your journal entry, but often where you go with this assignment is up to you.

By "two pages" I mean two *full* pages—about 500 words. You might think of it as "one sentence on page 3." Your entry should be posted in the appropriate place on the Blackboard discussion board by the time class starts. After class, I will read your journal entry, and I will keep track of the fact that you submitted it, but I will not grade it. In fact, I hope that you will come to ignore me as a prospective reader of your journal entries and instead focus on your classmates, who will give you

considerable feedback (see below). Since individual entries will be neither commented on nor graded by your professor, you should feel free to offer trenchant criticism, describe your confusion, or trot out new theories without worrying about what I think or how that will affect your grade.

Your journal grade will be based on your body of journal writing as a whole rather than on individual entries. When I assess your grade I will be looking for three things: 1) the fact that you did all the journal assignments; 2) whether your entries show your engagement with the readings in some way; and 3) whether your ideas got more creative, interesting, and/or sophisticated over the course of the semester. Here's how that translates into grades:

- If you produce a sufficient quantity of prose on a weekly basis in the manner requested, it will be hard for you to get below a B-.
- If, in addition to producing the work, you are engaged, you struggle, you open up, and you deal with the difficult, it will be hard for you to get below a B.
- If, in addition to the above points, you demonstrate significant improvement from the beginning of the semester to its end, it will be hard for you to get below a B+.
- If, in addition to all the above points, you demonstrate intellectual imagination, it will be hard for you to get below an A-.
- If you want an A, do all the above in the extreme.

If at any time you would like to know how you're doing, please come to my office and talk with me. You will probably also get a sense of how you're doing by reading your peers' journal entries, as described below.

3. Journal responses: In addition to writing journal entries, you are asked to respond to the intellectual work of your peers. For the purposes of our journals, you will be placed into groups of three or four, and the groups will be re-shuffled a couple of times in the semester. By the next class period after journal entries are submitted, each group member should post a 1-2 page response to the journal entries of each of the other members of the group. (This means that for most weeks, you will be posting two pages per week of your own journal entries, plus another 2-6 pages per week of responses to your group members.) In these response documents, please don't make comments like those an instructor typically makes—"Good idea, but needs development"—but instead try to create an intellectual dialogue between yourself and the author of the original journal entry. If you think s/he makes an interesting point, tell him/her why, or describe what the point makes you think about. If you think your classmate is missing something important in the reading, tell her/him that too. Perhaps you have a new perspective on the topic after doing the next set of readings: this can be part of your response too. As with the original journal entries, the point is intellectual *engagement*—the process of thinking through new ideas, or old ideas in new ways, and putting your thoughts into written words.

As with the journal entries, I will read your responses and I will note that you did them, but I will not comment on them or assign them individual grades. The style and content of your writing in these assignments should be directed towards your classmates, not to me. At the end of the term, I will

determine your response grade by the same criteria I use for your journal entries: Did you do them? Do they show thought? Do they show improvement?

4. Final paper and group presentation in the "US-Africa Policy Forum." The final project for this course is intended to help develop research and communication skills and to emphasize the link between learning history and analyzing the present. In groups and individually, you will be asked to construct policy recommendations that are grounded in historical understandings of Africa and its relationship to the US, and to present your findings both orally and in more formal writing than the journals. The final paper will be your opportunity to use historical processes to formulate arguments about policy, and the final exam will provide you an opportunity to make your arguments in a public forum. Specific instructions are at the end of this syllabus.

You should be aware that plagiarism will not be tolerated, and all suspected cases of plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Court for assessment. Remember that when writing, taking exams, or performing other assignments you are bound by the Honor Code. For details, see <http://honor.unc.edu/honor/code.html> and <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html>.

Grading:

Your final course grade will be calculated as follows:

Class participation	10%
Journal entries	25%
Journal responses	25%
Final paper	20%
Commentary on group paper drafts	5%
Group project (our "final exam")	15%

Schedule:

Tu Aug. 24: Introductions to the course and each other

- What do we (and other Americans) think about Africa?

Part I: the United States and the Slave Trade from Africa

Th Aug. 26: Introduction to the Atlantic Slave Trade

- "Priscilla's Homecoming," at <http://www.yale.edu/glc/priscilla/index.htm>
- Keim, *Mistaking Africa*, chapters 1-2, "Changing our Mind about Africa" and "How We Learn," pp. 3-32
- In-class film, "The Language You Cry In" (52 minutes)

Tu Aug. 31: Statistical History of the Slave Trade

- Campbell, prologue, "Ayuba's Journey," pp. 1-14 in *Middle Passages* (and look at the book's "Epilogue" too)
- Journal entry due to peer group
- Class activity: using the Slave Trade Database, at www.slavevoyages.org

Th Sept. 2: the United States and the Atlantic slave trade

- Ira Berlin, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 53 (1996): 251-258, online at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2947401>
- Journal responses due to peer group

Tu Sept. 7: Africans in the early United States

- "The Life of Omar ibn Said, written by Himself" (1831), in Marc Shell and Werner Sollors, *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature: A Reader of Original Texts with English Translations*, pp. 58-93 (BB)
- Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (New York: Author, 1849), pp. 25-28, online at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bibb/bibb.html> (you have to scroll to p. 25)
- Journal due to peer group: To what (if any) extent were mid-19th century American slaves culturally "African"? And what would such a thing mean in practice?

Th Sept. 9: Slavery and Emancipation in the 19th century US

- Ira Berlin, "The Migration Generations," in *Generations of Captivity: A History of African American Slaves* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 160-209 (BB)
- Journal responses due to peer group

Part II: Back to Africa?

Tu Sept. 14: American Slavery, African Freedom? The Founding of Sierra Leone and Liberia

- Campbell, *Middle Passages*, ch. 1, "Windward Coast," pp. 15-56
- Journal entry due to peer group
- In-class video: part of "Liberia: America's Stepchild" (Nancee Oku Bright, 2002)

Th Sept. 16: The American Colonization Society and the Ambiguities of Emigration

- Campbell, ch. 2, "Representing the Race," pp. 57-98
- American Colonization Society, *Annual Report* (1850) and Martin R. Delany, *Changing Views of the Wisdom of African American Emigration* (1859), both in Northrup, *Crosscurrents*, pp. 48-54
- Journal responses due to peer group

Tu Sept. 21: Race, Reconstruction, and the Image of Africa in the late 19th century

- Campbell, ch. 3, "Emigration or Extermination," pp. 99-135
- Rev. Bishop H.M. Turner, "The American Negro and His Fatherland," 1895 (BB)
- Booker T. Washington, "Cast Down Your Bucket Where You Are," (1895) at <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/88/>
- Journal entry due to new peer group

Th Sept. 23: Colonialism in Africa

- Campbell, chapter 4, "Mundele Ndom," pp. 136-187
- George Washington Williams, *A Report on the Congo Free State to President Benjamin Harrison* (1890), in Northrup, *Crosscurrents*, pp. 68-74
- Optional: Keim, chapter 3, "The Origins of "Darkest Africa"" and Chapter 4, "'Our Living Ancestors'," pp. 35-62
- Journal responses due to peer group

Tu Sept. 28: The Harlem Renaissance and Africa

- Campbell ch. 5, "So Long, So Far Away," pp. 188-225
- Keim, ch. 5, "Real Africa, Wise Africa," pp. 63-81
- Journal entry due to peer group

Th Sept. 30: The Pan-African Visions of WEB DuBois and Marcus Garvey

- Campbell ch. 6, "The Spell of Africa," pp. 226-267
- Marcus Garvey, *Speech in Philadelphia* (1919) and Universal Negro Improvement Association, *Declaration of the Rights of the Negro People of the World* (1920), in Northrup, *Crosscurrents*, pp. 87-95
- Journal responses due to peer group
- In-class video: part 2 of "WEB DuBois: A Biography in Four Voices" (30 mins.)

Tu Oct 5: Flash Forward I: Cultural Encounters in the 1950 and '60s

- Campbell, ch. 8, "Black Star," pp. 315-364
- Era Bell Thompson, *An African American in Africa* (1953) and Maya Angelou, *An African American in Ghana* (1963), both in Northrup, *Crosscurrents*, pp. 156-165
- Journal due to peer group: Why did Thompson, Angelou and others travel to Africa in the mid-20th century? To what extent did they find what they were looking for? How do their aspirations and experiences reflect their position(s) in the United States?

Th Oct. 7: Flash Forward II: Cultural Encounters in the 1970s

- Alan Cowell, "Mobutu's Zaire: Magic and Decay," *New York Times Magazine* (April 5, 1992), at <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/05/magazine/mobutu-s-zaire-magic-and-decay.html?pagewanted=1>
- Journal responses due to peer group
- In-class film excerpt: *When We Were Kings* (Leon Gast, 1996)

Part III: Africa and the Cold War

Tu Oct. 12: The US and Africa after WWII

- Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), ch. 1, "The Empire of Liberty: American Ideology and Foreign Interventions," pp. 8-38.

Th Oct. 14: Library visit

Tu Oct. 19: NO CLASS ***but* email due describing your group project and who will do what**

Th Oct. 21: FALL BREAK—NO CLASS

Tu Oct. 26: The Congo Crisis

- Read the Church Commission report (1975) sections on the Congo, pp. 13-70 (you can stop at p. 20), at http://history-matters.com/archive/church/reports/ir/html/ChurchIR_0014a.htm
- Stephen R. Weissman, "U.S. Role in Lumumba Murder Revealed," (July 22, 2002) at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200207220024.html>
- Journal entry due to new peer group
- In-class film excerpt: *Cuba: An African Odyssey*, part 1 (2007, 30 of 90 minutes)

Th Oct. 28: Apartheid in South Africa

- African National Congress, "The Freedom Charter," 1955 (BB)
- Steve Biko, "American Policy towards Azania" (1976) in *I Write What I Like*, pp. 138-142 (BB)
- Journal responses due to peer group

Tu Nov. 2: The US and Southern Africa

- Odd Arne Westad, "The Crisis of Decolonization: Southern Africa," in *The Global Cold War*, pp. 207-249 (BB)
- Journal entry due to peer group

Th Nov. 4: Americans and Apartheid

- Oliver Tambo, "Make South Africa Ungovernable" (1985) and "Strategic Options for International Companies" (1987), pp. 151-163 and 245-255 of *Oliver Tambo Speaks* (BB)
- Journal responses due to peer group
- In-class film excerpt: *Apartheid and the Club of the West* (Connie Field, 2007, 89 mins.)

Part IV: Africa in an International Economy

Tu Nov. 9: Neocolonialism?

- Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism* (1968), read the Introduction and then skim chapter 6 (BB)
- Frederick Cooper, "Development and Disappointment," chapter 5 of his *Africa Since 1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 91-118 (BB)
- Journal entry due to peer groups.

Th Nov. 11: Oil from Nigeria

- Madelaine Drohan, "Shell in Nigeria," in *Making a Killing: How Corporations Use Armed Force to do Business* (Guilford, Conn. : Lyon's Press, 2004), pp. 163-188 (BB)
- Journal responses due to peer groups.

Tu Nov. 16: Invasion of the Acronyms: SAP and NGOs

- Keim, ch. 6, "We Should Help Them," pp. 83-102.

Th Nov. 18: Africa in the 1990s

- Campbell, ch. 9, "Counting the Bodies," pp. 365-404
- Video: "Foresaken Cries" (Amnesty International, 1996, 35 mins.)

Tu Nov. 23: NO CLASS ***but* working drafts of papers (see instructions) are due to group members**

Th Nov. 25: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Tu Nov. 30: Blood Diamonds: Liberia and Sierra Leone revisited

- Helene Cooper, "In Search of a Lost Africa," *New York Times Magazine* (April 6, 2008), at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/06/magazine/06Liberian-t.html>
- Campbell, Epilogue, "The Language We Cry In," pp. 405-439
- Journal entry due to peer group

Th Dec. 2: Africans in the US

- Doreen Baingana, "Lost in Los Angeles," in *Tropical Fish: Stories out of Entebbe* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), pp. 95-119 (BB)
- Journal responses due to peer group

Tu Dec. 7: paper and policy group workshop

- **Peer comments on paper drafts are due**

Final Papers Due: Friday, Dec. 10 by 5:00pm

Final Exam (Africa Policy Forum): Thursday, Dec. 16 4:00pm

FINAL PROJECT: THE US-AFRICA POLICY FORUM

The final project for this class is composed of two parts: an individual research paper and a group presentation. The group presentation will build upon, but not replicate, the individual papers of members of the group. Both assignments are intended to bring historical thinking to bear on current policy issues and to hone your skills in research and formal communication.

Here is our scenario: the Obama Administration is undertaking an overhaul of American relations with Africa. To this end, the State Department has commissioned research committees to report on various aspects of these relations, their historical background, and their implications for American policies. Each group will focus on one of the following types of relations: cultural and demographic, economic, political and strategic, and charitable or activist. Working together, members of the groups will prepare a concise oral report (no longer than 25 minutes) containing an overview of their aspect of the US-African relationship, specific geographic or topical examples, and two or three policy recommendations for the Obama Administration.

At our “US-African Policy Forum” meeting, which will take place during our final exam period, each group will present its findings, using PowerPoint, to an imagined audience of high State Department and Administration officials. The groups should also distribute to audience members a 1-page handout with bullet points highlighting their key findings. At the end, the audience will prioritize the policy recommendations for President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton.

In preparation for the group activity, each student will research and write a paper of 8-10 pages on one aspect or example of her/his group’s topic. For example, members of the “economic” group might focus on a particular trade commodity (like oil) linking the US and specific parts of Africa, or on a particular initiative like the African Growth and Opportunity Act of 2000. Members of the “cultural” group could write about African immigration to the US, either in general or in specific instances (like Somalis immigrating to Minnesota), or about American tourism in Africa. Group members should choose their topics in coordination with each other and with me, so that each person’s individual research may productively feed into the presentation the group will make at the end. Regardless of the topic, the paper should identify the key contemporary issues involved and their historical context. It should also offer at least some tentative policy recommendations. You should double-space your paper and cite your sources in either footnote or parenthetical form.

In mid-October, shortly before you will have to declare your topic, we’ll pay a visit to the Davis Library and learn about resources useful for your research. You’ll then need to start researching your topic on your own.

By Nov. 23, you are required to submit to the other members of your policy group a working draft of your paper. By “working draft,” I do not mean a “rough draft.” It should be only about 2/3 of the length of the final essay. It can be cobbled together from many starts and stops. It will probably lack an opening and closing paragraph. It may be dotted with square brackets—[]—containing comments and questions from you to the others in the group. Examples: [“Have I gone into enough detail here

for you to understand my point?”] [“Do you think this connects well enough with Part II that precedes it?”] [“I’m having trouble squaring this with the point I made on the top of p.3. Any suggestions?”] I’ll collect a copy of your working draft to make sure you’ve done it, but you’ll receive comments from members of your policy group, not from me.

By Dec. 7, the last day of class, each group member is required to provide three other members of his/her group with five (full, double-spaced) pages of written comments on the previously-submitted working drafts. (Please give me a copy as well—it’s worth 5% of your grade.) This commentary should be in the spirit of the journal responses done throughout the semester, with intellectual engagement and helpful suggestions. That day in class, you will work with your groups to go over drafts and begin formulating your presentations. You’ll then have three days to finish your papers before turning your attention to finalizing your group presentations.