



## **HISTORY 225-1, The Global African City**

Professor: Emily Callaci  
ejcallaci@wisc.edu  
Office: 5116 Mosse Humanities Building  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-4  
Course Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:30-3:45pm  
Class Location: Humanities 2251

Writing specialist: Paul Grant  
pgrant@wisc.edu

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

We typically think of globalization as a twenty-first century phenomenon, yet African cities have been global hubs of culture, ideas, and economic exchange for centuries. This course invites students to explore the global histories and cosmopolitan cultures of cities on the African continent over several centuries. During the semester, we will visit a range of places and times, including the fifteenth century Swahili city-states on the Indian Ocean coast; the era of apartheid and revolutions in Johannesburg, South Africa; and the explosion of the Nollywood film industry in Lagos, Nigeria. We will explore the history, culture and everyday life of African cities as experienced and shaped by a range of people, including traders, artists, entrepreneurs, workers, aristocrats, slaves, scholars, and revolutionaries. Along the way, we will encounter various primary historical sources, including archaeological ruins, oral history, fashion, fiction, popular music, art and films.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students in this course will think critically and historically about urbanization and globalization in Africa. Students will use course materials to analyze how African city-builders and urban-dwellers have interacted with the outside world, and how the terms of this engagement changed over time. Thinking comparatively across three in-depth case studies, we will pay particular

attention to the experiences, perspectives and innovations of African city-dwellers themselves. Global connectedness has different implications for slaves and slave traders; for migrant workers and their rural families; for men and women; and for urban youth and middle class property owners. By exploring the everyday lives of people from various walks of life *within* African cities, students will gain an understanding of the uneven social effects of globalization on urban communities.

More generally, this course has the following learning objectives:

1. Media images often give the inaccurate and ahistorical impression that African societies are inherently traditional and unchanging. By contrast, this introductory course invites students to cultivate an *historical* approach to the study of twentieth century Africa. To think historically about Africa is to explore how and why some ideas, practices, material circumstances and identities have endured, and how and why others have changed, over time. In this way, we will seek to develop an appreciation for complexity, dynamism and contingency in the African past.
2. Africa is home to fifty-four sovereign nations and roughly 2,000 different languages. Over the semester, we will visit many of the regions of sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, to gain a comprehensive knowledge of the entire continent's twentieth century history would be an impossible task, and it is not the goal of this class. Instead, this course will offer students frequent opportunities to examine the relationship between the broad historical processes that have shaped communities across the continent, and the local and regional dynamics of specific places and communities. In this way, students should gain a working knowledge of the major trends in African history, while also developing an awareness of the limits of generalization about Africa as a whole.
3. One of the central skills of historical thinking is the ability to imagine the world from the perspective of someone in a circumstance different than one's own. Throughout the semester, students in this course will have opportunities to develop the skills of historical imagination, most often through the close reading and interpretation of primary sources produced by African authors.
4. Students will have the opportunity to hone their skills of historical analysis through the interpretation of primary historical sources. They will gain particular familiarity with the kinds of sources and methods used by historians of Africa.
5. This course will provide students with an historical foundation for thinking about contemporary Africa.

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

##### *Participation:*

This class requires your active participation. Participation means more than simply attending class. You can only participate fully if you have completed the readings and if you are ready to engage with your fellow students for in-class activities, including occasional informal written

assignments. In order to strengthen your historical writing skills, you will be required several times during the semester to engage with either the professor or the writing specialist in advance of a paper assignment. These “pre-assignments” are also part of your participation grade.

#### *Short Essays:*

There will be three short essay assignments due over the course of the semester. In these papers, students will have the opportunity to think in more depth and detail about topics covered in class, and to practice critical skills of historical analysis, interpretation and argumentation.

#### *Take-home Exam:*

In lieu of a final in-class exam, students will write an essay that ties together the broad themes of the course. The essay prompt will be distributed on the final day of class.

#### EVALUATION:

Participation: 30%

##### *Breakdown of participation grade:*

Discussion: 10%

In-class assignments: 10%

Office hours and Writing TA pre-assignments: 10%

Short Essays: 45%

Essay 1, Analysis of Historic Photograph: 15%

Essay 2, Comparison of Two Memoirs of Johannesburg: 15%

Essay 3, Critical Book Review of Abani’s *Graceland*: 15%

Take-home final paper: 25%

#### REQUIRED TEXTS:

The following required texts are available for purchase at the university bookstore.

1. Ibn Battuta, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa*, eds. Hamdun and King, (Princeton: M. Wiener, 1994),
2. Jeremy Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008)
3. Mark Gevisser, *Lost and Found in Johannesburg: A Memoir*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2014).
4. Chris Abani, *Graceland*, (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2005).

Additional texts will be available as pdfs on the Learn@UW page. You can find them under the tab marked “Readings.”

#### RESOURCES AND POLICIES

##### *Office Hours:*

I encourage you all to come to my office hours to discuss any aspect of the course or your academic program. These hours are set aside specifically for your benefit, and I really hope to see you there.

*Technology in the Classroom:*

Studies show that students who take notes by hand learn material more effectively than those who take notes on a laptop. Studies also show that using a laptop in class not only has negative learning outcomes for the individual laptop user, but for other members of the class as well. For these reasons, my policy is that there will be no laptops allowed in this class. I will consider making exceptions for students who feel strongly that having their laptop in class helps them to learn better. If this is the case, please see me individually.

*Writing Resources:*

A writing specialist, Paul Grant, will be available to advise you on writing assignments for this course. Additionally, I encourage you to make use of the resources and services available at the Writing Center. More information about this can be found here:

<http://www.writing.wisc.edu/>

*Academic Honesty:*

The University of Wisconsin takes matters of academic honesty very seriously. Plagiarism in particular is a very serious offense that can pose a real threat to your success and to the integrity of our broader learning community. I will strictly enforce the university policies on academic honesty. The rules about plagiarism can sometimes be confusing. If you are unsure about them, please be on the safe side and check. You can start here:

[http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA\\_plagiarism.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html)

If you are still unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, and whether you are committing plagiarism, please be on the safe side and come speak to me during office hours. Ignorance about definitions of plagiarism will not be an acceptable excuse. More detailed information about student codes of conduct may be found here:

<http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html#points>

*Disability:*

Disability guidelines for course accommodations may be found at the UW McBurney Disability Resource Center site: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>

SCHEDULE:

**Week 1: Introduction**

Wed, 1/21: Introduction to Course and Opening

Thoughts **Week 2:**

Mon, 1/26: Aksum and Timbuktu

Wed, 1/28: Ibn Battuta and the Global World of the Sahara

Reading:

*Ibn Battuta in Black Africa*, "Introduction" and "The West African Journey"

### **CASE STUDY #1: THE SWAHILI COAST**

#### **Week 3:**

Mon, 2/2: Cosmopolitanism and Consumerism

Reading:

Kwame Anthony Appiah, "The Case for Contamination," *New York Times*, January 1, 2006

Due, pre-assignment #1: Half of students must make an appointment to meet with professor during office hours to discuss first paper topic. Bring a hard copy of your completed photo analysis questionnaire to the meeting.

Wed, 2/4: Introduction to the Swahili Coast

Reading:

Jeremy Prestholdt, "Introduction," *Domesticating the World*

Ibn Battuta, "The East African Journey"

#### **Week 4:**

Mon, 2/9: guest: Akshay Sarathi, on the archaeology of the Swahili coast

Due, pre-assignment #1: Second half of students must make an appointment to meet with professor during office hours to discuss first paper topic. Bring a hard copy of your completed photo analysis questionnaire to the meeting.

Wed, 2/11: Consumerism in East Africa

Reading:

Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World*, Chapters 1, 2 and 3

#### **Week 5:**

Mon, 2/16: Zanzibar Consumer revolution and abolition

Reading: Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World*, Chapter 4

Wed, 2/18: Cosmopolitanism in Crisis?

Reading:

1. Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World*, Chapters 5 and 6
2. Andrew J. Eisenberg, "Hip-Hop and Cultural Citizenship on Kenya's 'Swahili Coast'," *Africa* 82, no. 04 (2012).

Due, pre-assignment #2: send first paragraph and outline to writing TA

## **CASE STUDY #2: JOHANNESBURG**

### **Week 6:**

Mon, 2/23: Segregation

Reading:

1. Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, "Segregation and the Making of the Underclass," in *The Urban Sociology Reader*, 192-202
2. Alex Arriaga and Chantal Cowie, "UW Widens City Segregation," *The Badger Herald*, April 3, 2014

Wed, 2/25: Race and Segregation in Colonial Africa

Reading:

1. Carl H. Nightingale, "Introduction", *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities*, (Chicago, 2012), 1-16.
2. Bill Freund, Chapter 3 "Colonialism and Urbanisation," in *The African City: A History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 65-104.

### **Week 7:**

Mon, 3/2: NO CLASS

Wed, 3/4: Gold and the Birth of Johannesburg

Reading:

Start reading Gevisser, *Lost and Found in Johannesburg*

### **Week 8:**

Mon, 3/9: Antecedents to Apartheid in South Africa

Wed, 3/11: Art and Everyday Life in Sophiatown  
In-class: Watch *African Jim*

Reading:

Bloke Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, 5-69; 92-152; 205-229

**Week 9:**

Mon, 3/16: SOWETO

Wed, 3/18: Resistance and Revolution

Reading:

Gevisser, *Lost and Found in Johannesburg*, 1-151

Due, pre-assignment #3: email a summary of your paper to writing TA

**Week 10:**

Mon, 3/23: Segregation and Inequality in Post-apartheid South Africa

Wed, 3/25: Final Discussion

Reading:

Finish Gevisser, *Lost and Found in Johannesburg*

Due: Paper #2

SPRING BREAK

**Week 11:**

Mon, 4/6: "City of the Future" vs. "Planet of Slums"

In-class: watch excerpts of Koolhaas, *Lagos Wide and Close*

Reading:

1. Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*, (London: Verso, 2004), 1-69
2. AbdouMaliqim Simone, "People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg," *Public Culture*, Volume 16, Number 3, Fall 2004, pp. 407-429

Wed, 4/8: Informality

Read:

1. Karen Tranberg Hansen and Mariken Vaa, "Introduction" to *Reconsidering Informality: Perspectives from Urban Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2004), 7-20.
2. George Packer, "The Megacity: Decoding the Chaos of Lagos," *The New Yorker*, November 13, 2006

### CASE STUDY #3: LAGOS

#### **Week 12:**

Mon, 4/13: Lagos and the Atlantic World

Wed, 4/15: Ethnicity and Urban Migration

Reading:

1. Chris Abani, *Graceland*, 1-81

#### **Week 13:**

Mon, 4/20: The Oil Boom

Wed, 4/22: Squatters, Shanties, Slums

Reading:

1. Abani, *Graceland*, 82-206

Due, pre-assignment #4: email thesis statement and outline to writing TA

#### **Week 14:**

Mon, 4/27: Nollywood

Wed, 4/29: Discussion

Reading:

1. Abani, *Graceland*, 207-end

### GLOBAL CITIES IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICA

#### **Week 15:**

Mon, 5/4: Globalization

Due: paper #3

Reading:

1. Frederick Cooper, "Globalization," in *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 91-112.

Wed, 5/6: Closing Discussion

Monday 5/11: Final Take-home exam due