

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Department of History
Semester I, 1988-89

HISTORY 277

Africa: An Introductory Survey

(cross-listed in Afro-American Studies, Anthropology,
African Languages and Literature, Geography,
Political Science and Sociology)

Instructor: Kenneth Curtis
5102 Humanities 263-1838

Teaching Assistants: Mustafa A. Mustafa 5260 Humanities
Michael Afolayan 263-2386

Course Schedule: MWF, 1:20-2:10, plus one weekly discussion section

Course Description: 277 is a multi-disciplinary course designed to put the resources and expertise of the African Studies Program at the disposal of students interested in a basic introduction to Africans and their continent. The course will touch on many different aspects of the African experience - cultural, social, historical, political and economic. Experts from many different academic disciplines will share their knowledge of Africa with the class in guest lectures. Many of the guest lecturers use slides to give visual reinforcement to their presentations, and we will also view several films for this purpose. The required readings for the course - one text and four novels - were all written by Africans, so the student will also have a chance to see how Africans look at themselves. The goal of the course is not to infuse the student with "expert" knowledge about just one aspect of the African experience, rather it is hoped that he or she will leave the class with a heightened sensitivity to the complexities of this beautiful but troubled continent, and will be in a position to follow more intelligently the future progress of Africa.

Course Requirements:

1. Participation: There is no substitute for regular attendance in this class. Most of the lectures are not based on material found in the textbook, so your presence at all of the lectures is essential. Also, the class is structured in such a way that you will be exposed to a great variety of different material, and sometimes the connections between the various lectures or between the lectures and the readings will not be readily apparent. It is therefore also of great importance that you faithfully attend your weekly discussion section meeting, since your teaching assistant will be of great help in bringing coherence to the material.

2. Required Reading: Since the assigned reading in this course is neither lengthy nor difficult, the student will be expected not to fall behind. This is especially important in regards to the novels: make sure you have finished them before they come up for discussion in your section. The following texts will be used:

(i) Ali A. Mazrui: The Africans: A Triple Heritage. Professor Mazrui is a Kenyan who is currently teaching in the Political Science Department at the University of Michigan. His beautifully illustrated book is very much a personal statement of how an understanding of Africa's "triple heritage" - indigenous African, Islamic and Western - can help explain the history and current development of African society.

NOTE: Professor Mazrui's book was prepared to accompany his PBS television series by the same name. This series consisted of eight one-hour episodes, with each episode covering approximately the material in two chapters of the book. These tapes are available for viewing in the Media Library, Room 279 Van Hise, and it is very highly recommended that you watch the videotapes either before or after you have read the corresponding chapters. It is, of course, not permissible for you to substitute the videotapes for the book; information from the book which is not on the videotape will undoubtedly find its way onto the exam!

(ii) Chinua Achebe: Things Fall Apart. Perhaps the most famous work of African fiction, Achebe's historical novel deals with everyday life in a Nigerian village in the 19th century and the tremendous disruption visited on the people after the arrival of the Christianity and colonial government of the European.

(iii) Ferdinand Oyono: Houseboy. Oyono's book, translated from French, tells of the uneven relations between Africans and Europeans under colonialism, and how a young man, a "boy" to his masters, discovers and asserts his self-respect.

(iv) Mariamu Ba: So Long a Letter. Another book translated from French. Ms. Ba writes of the problems in modern Senegal for an educated Muslim woman living in a society where the men, even her "westernized" husband, are entitled to marry more than one wife.

(v) Ayi Kwei Armah: The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born. A beautiful but sad book about the dissolution of ideals and the disease of corruption in modern Ghana.

3. Written Assignment. In addition to the required reading, the student will select one book from the following list and write a three to five page paper; more detailed instructions on what is required in the papers will be provided later. Both of these books deal with aspects of apartheid in South Africa:

(i) William Finnegan: Crossing the Line: A Year in the Life of Apartheid. Non-fiction. A young American experiences apartheid first hand through his experiences as a high school teacher in South Africa. This book might give you a feeling for how you might see the situation yourself if you were there.

(ii) South Africa: Time Running Out. Non-fiction. An excellent introduction to the apartheid system, written in a very clear and straightforward style. You will not be expected to read the entire work, but only sections of it; more information about which sections will be available.

4. Map Quiz: You will be expected to learn the names and locations of all the African countries and to demonstrate this knowledge by filling in their names on a map which has the boundaries drawn but the names left blank. This is a pass/fail quiz (you are allowed two mistakes) and you may take it as many times as necessary to pass. However, you must pass the quiz by the date of the first examination. If you have not passed the quiz by this date, your first exam score will be docked 1/2 letter grade (e.g. your B will become a BC!) The quiz will be given in discussion sections in the third week of the course, if you fail it is up to you to schedule re-tests with your teaching assistant.

5. Three examinations. There will be six-week, twelve-week and final examinations in this course; the format will be discussed in advance of the exam date.

6. Current Events. Although not a formal requirement, I expect you to take a sufficient interest in current African affairs to be on the look out for newspaper and magazine articles related to the continent. To make this easier for you, I will clip all Africa related articles from the New York Times and other sources and keep them in a folder outside my office. I will start a new folder every week. There is a bench nearby, so you can browse in reasonable comfort. Feel free to add clippings or photocopies of material you run across, but do not, under any circumstances, remove the folders from their place outside my office.

Grading System

Participation: 10%
First Exam: 20%
Second Exam: 20%
Final: 30%
Paper: 20%

STUDENTS WHO HAVE REGISTERED FOR
HONORS CREDIT: Please get in touch
with me as soon as possible.

HISTORY 277
AFRICA: AN INTRODUCTORY SURVEY
Semester I, 1988-89

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Note: You are expected to have completed reading the novels before your discussion section meeting of the weeks under which they are listed)

Week I:

9/7 Introduction
9/9 Film: Africa: A New Look

Reading: Mazrui, pp. 11-39

Week II:

9/12 Natural History of Africa (Beals)
9/14 Geography (Little)
9/16 The Question of Race (Vansina)

Reading: Mazrui, pp. 41-62

Week III:

9/19 Pre-Colonial African History (Curtis)
9/21 Europe and Africa before 1900 (Curtis)
9/23 African Languages (Hunter)

Reading: Mazrui, pp. 63-80
Chinua Achebe: Things Fall Apart

Week IV:

9/26 OBNOXIOUS TERMS IN REFERENCE TO AFRICA (Afelayan)
9/28 Traditional Social Organization (Adams)
9/30 The Era of Colonialism (Curtis)

Reading: Mazrui, pp. 81-114

Week V:

10/3 Film: White Man's Country
10/5 Paths to Independence (Curtis)
10/7 African Art: Past and Present (Tesfagiorgis)

Reading: Mazrui, pp. 115-134

Week VI:

10/10 Exam
10/12 Urbanization (Southall)
10/14 TBA

Reading: Mazrui, pp. 135-158
Oyono: Houseboy

Week VII:

10/17 Education I (Koehl)
10/19 Education II (Koehl)
10/21 Islam (Humphries)

Reading: Mazrui, pp. 159-178

Week VIII:

10/24 Religion in Africa (Hauner)
10/26 Conservation (McCormack)
10/28 Economics I (Adams)

Reading: Mazrui, pp. 179-212

Week IX:

10/31 Economics II (Adams)
11/2 Film: Atumpan
11/4 Traditional African Music (Anderson)

Reading: Mazrui, pp. 213-238

Week X:

11/7 Exam
11/9 Legal Systems of Africa (Thompson)
11/11 Land Tenure (Bruce)

Reading: Mazrui, pp. 213-238
Ba: So Long a Letter

Week XI:

11/14 *Agriculture (Pesnez)*
11/16 Mass Communications in Africa (Hachten)
11/18 African Politics (Hayward)

Reading: Mazrui, pp. 239-260

Week XII:

11/21 African International Relations (Dresang)
11/23 No Class

Reading: Mazrui, pp. 261-274

Week XIII:

11/28 Democracy in Nigeria (Beckett)
11/30 Regional Autonomy in Southern Sudan (Sulton)
12/2 Film: Witness to Apartheid

Reading: Mazrui, pp. 275-294
Armah: The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born

Week XIV:

12/5 Historical Background to Apartheid (Corry)
12/7 Apartheid and Resistance in South Africa (Curtis)
12/9 Film: Generations of Resistance

Reading: Mazrui, pp. 295-315

Week XV:

12/12 Apartheid: The International Dimension (Curtis)
12/14 Course Summary and Conclusion

Reading: review