

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Department of History
Spring, 1983

HISTORY 377
Africa Since 1800
MWF

5108 HUMANITIES
(608) 263-1842
Mr. Brown

FEAST AND FAMINE:
DEVELOPMENT AND DEGRADATION
IN MODERN AFRICA

This Spring, History 377 addresses the transcendent issue in Black Africa today: literally life or death for millions of malnourished, under-nourished, starving and uprooted human beings - the vast majority of them women, small children, and the elderly.¹

This course will analyze the conjunctures, policies, personalities, choices, accidents, and class/mass actions or immobility . . . or passivity that have transformed a black continent, which was self-sufficient and poised on the margins of world economy in 1800, into a reeling giant lurching toward massive accumulation in a chaotic and spasmodic global marketplace here, while stumbling backwards into hunger, homelessness, tyranny, and despair there.

We study Africa because it is the reputed birthplace of humanity, the second largest land mass on earth, the last and perhaps greatest store house of barely explored or exploited mineral and vegetable wealth, source of one-tenth of the U.S. population and one-half of our North American popular culture (perhaps two-thirds of Latin and Caribbean civilization?), and the ancestral homeland of more than one-third of all humankind.

In particular, this term, we study Africa's entry into the "modern world." We do so for what it teaches us about African humanity and societies and about the "modern world."

We study Africa's dilemmas of plenty and poverty, of progress and chaos, of good fortune and catastrophe as a paradigm of that two-thirds of humankind who are not white nor wealthy (save for elites) and who, perforce, hold the destiny of our planet in their hands.

We examine Africa's recent past through weekly lectures on selected themes, classroom discussions, films and slides. We hear visiting Africans and Africanists who are in (or are near and observing) the struggle. We read no textbooks as such;* but among works of synthesis, case studies, monographs, original sources and creative works of imagination. (*see below).

Honors candidates, graduate students, and History majors will prepare term essays on topics in modern African history, which will account for 50% of the final grades. Achievements of "AB" or above on essays will excuse them from the Final Examination. A list of suggested essay topics will accompany the syllabus which will be distributed at the first class meeting.

¹See enclosed statements by public officials and private researchers.

*Two works of synthesis will provide the conceptual and time frameworks of the course. They and several other books are available at the UBS. But interested students should attend the first class meeting before buying any books.