

Fall 2011, HIST 565 (002): Tues. 7:20-10:00 PM, Research Hall 201

Race, Empire, and Environment

Histories of Health and Nature in Africa

Dr. Benedict Carton, Associate Professor of History, Office Hours: Wed. 4:30-6:00 PM, Robinson B, 355B, bcarton1@gmu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

While factoring the impact of racial slavery and European imperialism, one leading scholar in the 1970s argued that modern Africa was the only continent in which peasants and their lands avoided “capture” by elites. This structural reality supposedly explained why the changing environment, as opposed to social engineering, determined the paths of development in the Sub-Saharan region.

By the 1980s, the “uncaptured peasant, uncaptured land” theory had drawn critics who highlighted the human interventions that altered Africa’s history, for example, the civil wars that disrupted farming and spawned famine; and the white settlers who in the name of progress unwittingly eroded ecologies and spread diseases. Indeed, land-use strategies promoted by Europeans (profiting from wildlife hunting and African agriculture and minerals) linked environmental efforts to the “civilizing mission,” which claimed to save a degraded “Dark Continent” from the “wasteful natives”; it was a case of preserving resources for the sake of exploiting resources. Soon historians were documenting indigenous resistance to colonial conservation policies like livestock and soil betterment schemes. Since the 1990s, the prevailing scholarship has explored two somewhat different issues: how Africans managing illness, drought or blight sought relief in Western science and ritual remedies; and why Africans facing a profound collective crisis often turned to traditional beliefs in retribution and renewal.

Throughout the semester, we examine shifting historical perspectives of nature and health from a range of theoretical positions; some analyses illuminate gender, race, and class relations. Others focus on ethnic (rather than “tribal”) nationalisms that radicalized popular politics. Whatever the case, one important aim of this seminar is for you to engage with the conceptual debates shaping African historiography. Another aim is for you to consider ways of integrating research on environmental change and African health.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

- 1. Please do not arrive late to seminar.**
- 2. Please turn off cell phones and do not eat in class.**
- 3. You are required to finish weekly readings before coming to seminar.**
- 4. You are strongly urged to participate in class discussions.**
- 5. When emailing your professor, please include the heading, “African Seminar”**

READINGS

The readings include works of historical analysis and synthesis. Several required journal articles and book chapters (in pdf form) will be emailed to your gmu.edu accounts. **The following required books are available at the GMU bookstore:** 1) James McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa*; 2) Jonathan Adams and Thomas McShane, *The Myth of Wild Africa: Conservation without Illusion*; 3) Emmanuel Akyeampong, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon: An Eco-Social History of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana: C. 1850 to Recent Times*; 4) Gregory H. Maddox, James L. Giblin, and Isaria N. Kimambo, eds. *Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania*; 5) David Schoenbrun, *Green Place, A Good Place: Agrarian Change and Social Identity in the Great Lakes Region to the 15th Century*; 6) Karen Flint, *Healing Traditions: African Medicine, Cultural Exchange, & Competition in South Africa, 1820-1948*; 7) Steven Feierman and John Janzen, eds. *Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa*; 8) Julie Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination in Botswana*; 9) Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*; 10); 11) Christopher Taylor, *Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwandan Genocide of 1994*; 12) Julie Parle, *States of Mind: Searching for Mental Health in Natal and Zululand, 1868-1918*; 13) Jonny Steinberg, *Sizwe's Test: A Young Man's Journey Through Africa's AIDS Epidemic*.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Class participation is worth **15%** of your overall grade. **If you have poor class participation**—due largely to absences, i.e., non-presence during discussions—**your final grade will fall dramatically. In other words, if you average an A- on papers and have poor class participation, your final mark will be B- or lower.**

You are required to write two 5- to 6-page book-review essays. Each essay is worth **25%** of your overall grade. You must complete a draft of your essay and email it to bcarton1@gmu.edu no later than 4:00 PM on the Tuesday that it is due. Please give me the final (hard) copy of the essay in evening seminar. Your “draft” essays will inform our weekly discussions. During our second class of the semester, I will ask you to choose one book to review from section I and one book to review from section II. I will also send you several “anonymous” examples of book review essays from my previous seminars. You should also consider the following basic guidelines when writing a review essay:

A) What is the main argument of the book and/or article? B) Do the primary and secondary sources support the main argument? C) How does the scholarship under review build on previous ideas? D) Are certain interpretations and/or methodological approaches singled out for criticism? E) Are these criticisms fair? F) Does the book ignore crucial perspectives that undermine its findings?

Finally, you are required to write a 15-page final paper; it is worth **35%** of your course grade. This final paper will critically assess **at least 6** assigned books in this course. You will need to include 2 or 3 books from section I and 2 or 3 books from section II. In addition, you must incorporate scholarly works from section III. You will be given a choice of final paper questions in November. **ALL PAPERS IN THIS CLASS WILL BE PENALIZED ½ A GRADE POINT FOR EACH DAY LATE. Please note that this grading penalty applies to every day late of a seven-day week.**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

GMU is an Honor Code university. Please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? When you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on any aspect of someone else's work, you will give full credit in the proper (academically accepted) form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and open debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of our class will be conducted with civility and respect for different ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

GMU EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Crucial resources for HIST 565 will be sent through the university server to your GMU email accounts. Thus, students must use their Mason accounts—either the existing “MEMO” system or the new “MASONLIVE”—to receive important information, including key messages and required readings. Please see <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

OTHER IMPORTANT CAMPUS RESOURCES

WRITING CENTER: Rob A114; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES: <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES: (703) 993-2380.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for GMU policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

FALL 2011 SEMESTER SCHEDULE

Week 1, Aug. 30: Introduction.

Seminar introduction and discussion of “Talking about Tribe.”

Week 2, Sept. 6: Africa in Continental Perspectives: Nurture over Nature?

James McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa*. Also: “Africa and World History Forum,” *Historically Speaking* 6, 2 (2004). A pdf of this article will be emailed to the seminar.

SECTION I: ENVIRONMENT

Week 3, Sept. 13: Domesticating Africa: The Continent as Playground, Engine, and Laboratory

Jonathan Adams and Thomas McShane, *The Myth of Wild Africa: Conservation without Illusion*. Also: Dingani Mthethwa, “Two Bulls in One Kraal: Local Politics, ‘Zulu History’ and Heritage Tourism in Kosi Bay, KwaZulu-Natal,” in B. Carton, et al. eds. *Zulu Identities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). A pdf of this book chapter will be emailed to the seminar.

Week 4, Sept. 20: Fluid Traditions: West Africa

Emmanuel Akyeampong, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon: An Eco-Social History of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana: C. 1850 to Recent Times*.

Week 5, Sept. 27: Equatorial Heart: Central Africa

David Schoenbrun, *Green Place, A Good Place: Agrarian Change and Social Identity in the Great Lakes Region to the 15th Century*.

Week 6, Oct. 4: Back to the Land: East Africa

Gregory H. Maddox, James L. Giblin, and Isaria N. Kimambo, eds. *Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania*.

Week 7, Oct 11: NO CLASS. GMU COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY OBSERVANCE.

SECTION II: HEALTH

Week 8, Oct. 18: Protecting, Avoiding, Harming: A Universe of Sickness and Cure

Steven Feierman and John Janzen, eds. *Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa*. Selected chapters will be assigned; you will not read this entire book.

Week 9, Oct. 25: Treating Illness, Leveling Blame

Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*. Also: Mandisa Mbali, “AIDS Discourses and the South African State: Government Denialism and Post-apartheid AIDS policy-making,” *Transformation* 54, (2004). A pdf of this article will be emailed to the seminar.

Week 10, Nov. 1: The Realm of Frailty

Julie Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination in Botswana*.

Week 11, Nov. 8: Genocide as Disease

Christopher Taylor, *Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwandan Genocide of 1994*.

Week 12, Nov. 15: AIDS in Africa

Becker and Denis, eds. *AIDS in Historical Perspective* (digital book). Selected chapters will be assigned; you will not read this entire book. A pdf of this book will be emailed to the seminar (permission is pending).

SECTION III: SOUTH AFRICA: A CASE STUDY

Week 13, Nov. 22: Modernizing Nature and Natural Healing

Karen Flint, *Healing Traditions: African Medicine, Cultural Exchange, & Competition in South Africa, 1820-1948*.

Week 13, Nov. 29: Colonizing the Mind and Madness

Julie Parle, *States of Mind: Searching for Mental Health in Natal and Zululand, 1868-1918*.

Week 14, Dec. 6: Grasping New Landscapes and Old Misfortunes

Jonny Steinberg, *Sizwe's Test: A Young Man's Journey Through Africa's AIDS Epidemic*. Also: Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala, "AIDS in Zulu Idiom: Etiological Configurations of Women, Pollution and Modernity," in B. Carton, et al. eds. *Zulu Identities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). A pdf of this book chapter will be emailed to the seminar.

******* Your final 15-page paper in MSWORD is due Dec. 14th at 12:00 Noon, Fairfax time. You must email your paper (in attachment) to me, using my GMU address: bcarton1@gmu.edu**

******* Please remember the "1" in bcarton1@gmu.edu**