

HIST 262: A History of Modern Africa



Spring 2021
Online Synchronous
Time: T 4:30-7:10pm

Dr. Liz Timbs
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Office Hours: By appointment [\[link\]](#)

This is a synchronous web course. You are required to attend 14 synchronous course meetings on Zoom, from 4:30-7:10pm:

1. Tuesday, August 24th
2. Tuesday, August 31st
3. Tuesday, September 7th
4. Tuesday, September 14th
5. Tuesday, September 21st
6. Tuesday, September 28th
7. Tuesday, October 5th
8. Tuesday, October 12th (no class)
9. Tuesday, October 19th
10. Tuesday, October 26th
11. Tuesday, November 2nd
12. Tuesday, November 9th
13. Tuesday, November 16th
14. Tuesday, November 23rd
15. Tuesday, November 30th

We will be using the course Blackboard site and GMU email for all communication.

Course Description

This synchronous online course is a survey of modern African history from the late 19th century to the present. Adopting a chronological and thematic approach, this course explores major themes in African history from the end of the slave trade, to colonialism and nationalist movements, to independence and postcolonialism in the African context. We will cover materials from North, South, East, West, and Central Africa, as well as exploring connections between Africa and the rest of the world – across the Mediterranean, the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. Lectures and discussions will explore themes ranging from gender, age, class, race and ethnicity, and the legacies of history in “modern” Africa. The course uses a variety of primary and secondary sources, including novels, films, photographs, speeches, newspaper articles, and political documents not only to explore the construction of African history, but to encourage scholarly debate through the construction of historically-informed arguments.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of African history in national, continental and global contexts.
- Engage in critical reading and become familiar with different analytical frameworks and scholarly sources
- Improve their debate and writing skills through in-class discussions, essays, and exams

Global Understanding

This course develops an understanding of global processes and their impact on societies in Africa and other continents. During our class discussions, you will be encouraged to identify, evaluate, and cite scholarship that enhances your awareness of the interconnectedness of a diverse global world. For further information on how “global understanding” fits within the Mason Core (University General Education) requirements, please visit the [Mason Core website](#).

Textbooks

<i>Required Texts</i>	<p>*Joseph Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> (1890) [link] Ousmane Sembene, <i>God's Bits of Wood</i> (1960) Laila Lalami, <i>Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits</i> (2005) [link] Wangari Maathai, <i>Unbowed</i> (2006)</p>
<i>Supplementary Textbook</i>	<p>Richard Reid, <i>A History of Modern Africa</i></p>

Texts denoted with an asterisk (*) are available digitally through the GMU Library. Additional course materials will be made available on Blackboard. For those who would like more background information, I have listed corresponding page numbers, by topic, for Richard Reid, *A History of Modern Africa* (3rd edition). These readings are denoted each week with (*Reid, Ch. #*).

Assignments

<i>Attendance/ Participation</i> (15%)	<p>To get full credit for attendance and participation, you must do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Attend all live discussions, unless you have a documented illness or emergency. See the Attendance/Participation section below for more details. – Just as in a physical classroom, full participation/attendance in a digital course means that you pay attention throughout the discussion. I prefer that you turn on your camera, and mute your mic when you are not speaking. If you need to step away from your computer, please note that in the chat screen. – Speak or comment via chat at least once in most live discussions. But do not monopolize discussions, and be sure to direct your comments and questions to your classmates, not just to your instructor.
<i>Map Quiz</i> (10%)	<p>Over the course of this semester, there will be two map quizzes. All quizzes will be taken virtually and will be due by the start of class on Tuesday during the week in which they are assigned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Map Quiz 1 – Africa (Week 3): For the first map quiz, students will be expected to familiarize themselves with the 54 nations of the African continent and identify those nations on a blank map. – Map Quiz 2 – Colonial Africa (Week 6): Students will be asked to identify the colonial powers associated with each territory on the continent during the colonial period. A handout with more detailed information and a study sheet will be distributed closer to the quiz.
<i>Reflection Papers</i> (30%)	<p>You have a total of four reading reflections due over the course of the semester. They will cover the weeks in which you are required to read an entire book. They should be 2-3 pages in length (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, 1” margins) and are intended to be an exercise in reading and interpreting argument and evidence. A reflection is a conceptual and analytical response to the reading. It should clearly and concisely outline the basic points of the week’s reading(s). They must show that you have completed the readings, clearly understood them, and are able to critically engage with the material. We are not interested in reflections that are simply summaries of the readings, but rather, a discussion of analytical concepts, key</p>

	<p>questions, and issues relating to the reading's argument. Please note, while they are relatively short, these are not stream of consciousness response papers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Week 5 on Monday 09.20 – Joseph Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> - Week 10 on Monday 10.25 – Ousmane Sembene, <i>God's Bits of Wood</i> - Week 14 on Monday 11.22 – Laila Lalami, <i>Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits</i> - Week 15 on Monday 11.29 – Wangari Maathai, <i>Unbowed</i>
<i>Midterm Essay (20%)</i>	<p>For your midterm essay, you will be given a set of original historical sources and secondary sources and asked to think like a historian, answering questions about what we learn about the past from these documents and this historiography, and what their limitations are. You will be expected to draw from the readings we have done in class so far in answering the essay question; you are not expected to use any outside readings. This essay should not exceed five double-spaced pages (one-inch margins, 12-point font, not including endnotes). I'll stop reading at the bottom of page five, so take this length limit seriously.</p>
<i>Final Essay (25%)</i>	<p>The final essay will allow you to tie together different components of the class in an analytical essay of eight to ten pages (double-spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins) in length in response to a broad question about modern African history. Like the midterm essay, it should have properly cited footnotes or endnotes, and I will stop reading after page ten. You are not expected to use any outside readings.</p>

Grading Criteria

Any concerns about grades or course progress must be conducted via Zoom during an appointment scheduled ahead of time, not over phone or email. If the pre-scheduled virtual office hours do not work for you, I am happy to schedule an appointment. Final grades will be based on the following criteria:

Attendance/Participation	15% of final grade
Map Quiz	10% of final grade
Reflection Papers	30% of final grade
Midterm Essay	20% of final grade
Final Essay	25% of final grade

The grading scale is as follows. I do not round up grades.

A+ = 98-100	C+ = 77-79
A = 93-97	C = 73-76
A- = 90-92	C- = 70-72
B+ = 87-89	D+ = 67-69
B = 83-86	D = 63-66
B- = 80-82	D- = 60-62

F = Below 60

Attendance/Participation

It is expected that you will come to class prepared, having read the course material, and ready to engage in discussion. The assigned materials should be completed before class on the date listed in the syllabus. Student participation is strongly encouraged through questions, informed comments, observations, etc. Your participation grade is based on both the quantity and quality of your participation. In-class exercises may also count towards your participation grade. In particular:

- An **A** means that you contribute to the vast majority of the discussions, you show that you have both done the readings and thought about them, and your contributions are highly productive. That is to say, you push the discussions in new, important, and interesting directions, raise substantive questions, and make links between

readings and some of the larger themes of the course. If you were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished markedly.

- A **B** means that you contribute to most of the discussions. You have done the readings and can talk about them. If you were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished.
- A **C** means that you don't participate a lot. When you talk, you show that you have done the readings, but do not fully engage with them. If you were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be somewhat diminished.
- A **D** means that you rarely contribute to class, and that when you do, your contributions do not reflect knowledge of the readings.
- An **F** means that either I don't know who you are or that your contributions are detrimental to class discussion (i.e., disruptive or disrespectful).

Attendance and participation are important to your success in this course. However, we are living through a pandemic and unprecedented health crisis, so I am willing to work with you individually throughout the semester on attendance, participation, and due dates. If you need extensions, or if you *absolutely must* be absent, we can work on that. We're all trying our best here. My only formal attendance rule this semester is **NO GHOSTING**.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is mandatory in this course. Plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately passes off another's words or ideas without acknowledging their source. If you plagiarize in this class, you will fail the assignment on which you are working and your case may be passed on for additional disciplinary action as a violation of the university's Honor Code [\[link\]](#). Plagiarism is often the result of desperation and procrastination. If you feel yourself falling behind, come talk to me. If you are confused about what defines plagiarism, take note of the following and/or ask me. Academic integrity violations can include (but are not limited to):

- Copying small or large sections of written text, this includes a single sentence, without appropriate quotations and citation of original author.
- Paraphrasing written materials without citing the source.
- Citing a source other than that from which you obtained your evidence.
- Altering or contriving evidence.

For each assignment submitted in this course, you are required to sign the Honor Code:

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University Community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this Honor Code: Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must contact the [Office of Disability Services \(ODS\)](#).

Academic Support

This class will require a great deal of your energy and your time. Depending upon your previous experience with humanities courses and the requirements of this discipline, you may find the assignments and reading load difficult. Many resources are available to help you succeed. One such resource is the Writing Center, writingcenter.gmu.edu, that provides free writing assistance to undergraduates via Zoom.

Counseling and Psychological Services provides a range of virtual services. If you are feeling overwhelmed or like you need someone to talk to, please visit caps.gmu.edu to familiarize yourself with CAPS' offerings.

Technology Policy

All course materials (including videos, readings, and exams) are not to be recorded or shared. Students may not redistribute materials from this course to individuals who are not students in this course without express permission. Distribution without permission is a violation of educational privacy law.

How to Succeed in This Course

Your success in this course depends on you. Below are a few tips that will help you get the most out of this semester:

1. **Read:** You are expected to read the assigned texts in their entirety before the class they are assigned for and be prepared to fully engage in all class sessions. It is important for you to read critically and strategically. Your goal is not to master all the “facts” and details presented. Instead, you should focus on the authors’ main arguments and key insights and think about how these points connect to past readings and other course material. You should have copies of readings readily available for reference during class sessions because we will make direct reference to them during class. All readings are available on the course Blackboard site.
2. **Take Assignments Seriously:** Students who complete all written assignments do better than those who don’t. Don’t be fooled by the seemingly “low” percentage value for certain assignments – in the end they all add up and zeros or low grades on multiple assignments can hurt your overall grade.
3. **Take Good Notes:** Each lecture will begin with a set of over-arching questions. The lectures are structured around these questions then addressed with a central argument, evidence, and analysis. The questions are intended to introduce big concepts and course themes. Listen for the argument, concepts, and themes, which I repeat often, and make sure you understand them and how to apply them to course readings, lecture content, and all assignments.
4. **Review Your Notes After Class:** Studies show that reviewing notes after class helps students retain information better. Draw connections between what you learned this week and previous weeks; write full sentences based on your notes; ask yourself questions in the margins; etc.

COURSE SCHEDULE

I reserve the right to add or change readings, assignments, or lecture topics. I will notify you in advance.

I encourage you to read in the order that the materials are listed below.

Week 1 <i>August 24th</i>	Introducing African History/What is Africa? Lecture Topics: Introductions; Stereotypes; Defining Africa Read: – Curtis Keim, “Africans Live in Tribes, Don’t They?,” in <i>Mistaking Africa</i> (2018) – Jonathan T. Reynolds, “So Many Africas, So Little Time,” <i>World History Connected</i> (2004) – Binyavanga Wainaina, “How to Write About Africa” [link] and “How to Write about Africa: Part II, The Revenge” [link] *Reid, Ch. 1*
Week 2 <i>August 31st</i>	East and Central Africa in the 19th Century Lecture Topics: Trade Caravans; Indian Ocean Slavery Read: – Edward A. Alpers, “The Other Middle Passage: The African Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean” (2007) – Dodie McDow, “Tippu Tip’s Kin, from Oman to the Eastern Congo” (2018) *Reid, Ch. 3; 7*
Week 3 <i>September 7th</i>	Islam, North and West Africa in the 19th Century Lecture Topics: Resistance to European Occupation; Islamic Revolution; Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Read: – Paul Lovejoy, “The Nineteenth Century Slave Trade” (2011)

- Toby Green, "Let Them Drink Rum! Islam, Revolution, and the Aristocracy" (2019)

Reid, Ch. 2; 5-6

- > Map Quiz 1 due by 4:30pm on Tuesday 09.07

Week 4

September 14th

Southern Africa in the 19th Century

Lecture Topics: Dutch Colonialism; State-Formation in Southern Africa; White Settlers

Read:

- Carolyn Hamilton, "The Character and Objects of Chaka': A Reconsideration of the Making of Shaka as 'Mfecane' Motor" (1992)
- Henry Francis Fynn, "Shaka"
- Piet Retief, "Manifesto" (1837)
- "Christianity and cattle-killing" (1856)"

Reid, Ch. 4

Week 5

September 21st

The Scramble for Africa and Beyond

Lecture Topics: Agents of Empire; The Scramble for Africa

Read:

- Helen Tilley, "An Imperial Laboratory: Scientific Societies, Geopolitics, and Territorial Acquisitions," in *Africa as a Living Laboratory* (2011)
- Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899)
- Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" (1978)

Reid, Ch. 8-9

- > Reading Reflection on *Heart of Darkness* (1899) due by 4:30pm on Monday 09.20

Week 6

September 28th

Colonial Conquest and Early African Resistance

Lecture Topics: Colonial Rule; Resistance in French West Africa; Mineral Revolution in South Africa

Read:

- "Making colonialism appear traditional (1875)"
- "Cecil Rhodes's dreams of empire (1877)"
- "Frederick Lugard on indirect rule" (1913-18)
- "French practice direct rule to enforce submission" (1908)
- Dan Hicks, "Looting" and "Ten Thousand Unfinished Events," in *The British Museums* (2021)

Reid, Ch. 10

- > Map Quiz 2 in-class on Tuesday 09.28

Week 7

October 5th

Consolidating Empire

Lecture Topics: Concessionary Companies; Rebellion in German Colonies; Early Nationalism

Read:

- George Washington Williams, "Open Letter to King Leopold II" (1890)
- Firsthand Accounts of Herero Genocide (1904-1908)
- Primary Sources on Maji Maji Rebellion (1905-1907)

Watch:

– King Leopold’s Ghost [link](#)

Reid, Ch. 11-12

Week 8

October 12th

NO CLASS THIS WEEK (FALL BREAK)

Midterm essay due by 5pm on Friday, October 15th

Week 9

October 19th

The World Wars in Africa and Africans in the World Wars

Lecture Topics: World War I; Interwar Nationalism; World War II; Pan-Africanism

Read:

- Joe Lunn, “France’s legacy to Demba Mboup? A Senegalese griot and his descendants remember his military service during the First World War,” (2013)
- Michelle Moyd, “Ordeal and Opportunity: Ending the First World War in Africa” (2019)
- Excerpt from Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Négritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century* (1966)
- Hailu Habtu and Judith Byfield, “Fighting Fascism: Ethiopian Women Patriots, 1935–1941” (2015)

Reid, Ch. 13

Week 10

October 26th

Challenges to Colonialism, Pt. I

Lecture Topics: Pan-African Solidarity; Independence Movements (British West Africa; French West Africa; The Maghrib; The Horn)

Read:

- Kevin Gaines, “Projecting the African Personality: Nkrumah, the Expatriates, and Post-independence Ghana, 1957-1960” (2006)
- Ousmane Sembene, *God’s Bits of Wood* (1960)
- “Algeria’s War of Independence: Torture and Colonial Rule”

Reid, Ch. 14-15

› Reading Reflection on *God’s Bits of Wood* due by 4:30pm on Monday 10.25

Week 11

November 2nd

Challenges to Colonialism, Pt. II

Lecture Topics: Independence Movements (British East Africa; Belgian East Africa; Lusophone Africa; Southern Africa)

Read:

- James Brennan, “Radio Cairo and the Decolonization of East Africa, 1953-64” (2010)
- Amilcar Cabral, “Identity and dignity in the context of the national liberation struggle” (1972)
- Steve Biko, “Black Consciousness and the Quest for True Humanity” (1978)
- Frederick Cooper, “The late decolonizations: southern Africa 1975, 1979, 1994” (2014)

Reid, Ch. 16

Week 12

November 9th

Decolonization and the Cold War in Africa

Lecture Topics: One-party states; socialism; Structural Adjustment Programs; The Congo Crisis

Read:

- Documents on Patrice Lumumba and the Congo
- Julius Nyerere on Socialism and Self-Reliance (1967)
- Jamie Monson, “Remembering Work on the Tazara Railway in Africa and China, 1965-2011: When “New Men” Grow Old” (2013)
- Dambisa Moyo and Paddy Ashdown, “Does aid work?” (2012)

Reid, Ch. 17

Week 13

November 16th

Democratic Progress (?) in the 1990s

Lecture Topics: Apartheid Ends in South Africa; Rwandan Genocide; Africa's World War; Reconciliation

Read:

- Nelson Mandela, "Inaugural Speech" (1994)
- Mahmood Mamdani, "The Civil War and the Genocide" (2001)
- Samantha Power, "Bystanders to Genocide" *The Atlantic* (2001)
- Mahmood Mamdani, "Amnesty or Impunity?" (2002)
- Christopher LeMon, "Rwanda's Troubled Gacaca Courts" (2007)

Explore

- Testimonies from the Rwanda Tribunals [[link](#)]

Reid, Ch. 18

Week 14

November 23rd

Issues in Contemporary Africa, Pt. I

Lecture Topics: U.S. Foreign Policy in Africa; Migration to/from/within Africa

Read:

- Elizabeth Schmidt, "U.S. Africa Policy after the Cold War (1991-2017)," in *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War* (2018)
- Teju Cole, "The White Savior Industrial Complex" (2012)
- Beth Elise Whitaker, "Migration within Africa and Beyond" (2017)
- Laila Lalami, *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2005)

Watch:

- Kony 2012 [[link](#)]

Reid, Ch. 19

- > Reading Reflection on *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2005) due by 4:30pm on Monday 11.22

Week 15

November 30th

Issues in Contemporary Africa, Pt. II

Lecture Topics: Arab Spring; Health Crises; Social Unrest; Climate Change

Read:

- Shamil Jeppie, "From Cairo to the Cape: The Dilemmas of Revolution," in *The African Renaissance and the Afro-Arab Spring* (2015)
- Paul Farmer, "The Twenty-Fifth Epidemic?," in *Fevers, Feuds, and Diamonds* (2021)
- Nanjala Nyabola, "Africa Is Not Waiting to Be Saved From the Coronavirus" (2020) [[link](#)]
- Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed* (2006)

Reid, Ch. 19

- > Reading Reflection on *Unbowed* (2006) due by 4:30pm on Monday 11.29

Final Exam due by 4:30 pm on Tuesday, December 14th