HIST 277: Africa & Environmental History
Fall 2015

Instructor: Willis Okech Oyugi
Class Times: MW 2:30-3:45PM; King 327
Office: Rice Hall 303
Office Hours: Mon: 1-2 PM; Wed/Fri: 12-1 PM; & by appointment
Instructor’s email: wokechoy@oberlin.edu

Kimberley Diamond Mines, S. Africa, 1872
Kimberley, S. Africa, 2015

Course Description
This course broadly explores Africa’s peoples, political, socio-economic, and ecological developments from the 1800s until more recent times. The first half of the course will be dedicated to a survey of African history from the long nineteenth century; a period that witnessed the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Islamic revolutions, and European intrusion and occupation of Africa. We will subsequently assess the lasting colonial impact, the rise of nationalism in the 1950s & 1960s, and the shaping of new African nations in the twentieth century.

In the second part of the course we will focus on how Africa’s contemporary environmental issues reflect the continent’s historical developments over the past two centuries. We will focus on five countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Liberia, and Nigeria. We will engage with themes such as power, race, and gender dynamics and how these have been manifested in contestations over resource use.

Our course materials will include African art, music, and literature. Students will learn to analyze, speak, and write about Africa and its environmental history including the use of oral traditions as an alternative methodological approach to historical inquiry.

Generally, Classes will be structured as a lecture and discussion. Key questions that will inform our discussion include: How and why have fundamental ethical concepts such as social equality, property rights, procedural justice, and intergenerational equity been compromised through space and time?
By the end of the semester students should be able to:

1). Question popular and scholarly narratives of Africa and its environmental history (especially those that pertain to environmental determinism and degradation);
2). Engage with alternative methodological approaches to historical inquiry/research including oral traditions and sources, ethnography, ecology, and archaeology;
3). Analyze, write, and speak about Africa & Africa’s environmental history;
4). Understand the global interconnections to Africa’s socio-economic, political, and environmental history.

**Writing Assignments & Other Information**

As the deadlines for the **primary source** and **term paper** assignments approach, I will give you more detailed information about my expectations. Please keep the following in mind:

- I am happy to discuss your assignments with you as you prepare them, the earlier the better. Email or come see me during office hours to talk about paper outlines, thesis paragraphs, or drafts (sent at least 72 hours before the deadline).
- Late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day and will only be accepted up to one week after the due date. With the exception of the final term paper, I reserve the right to allow extensions on a case by case basis.
- You should complete the weekly readings as scheduled prior to attending lecture. This preparation will facilitate your ability to follow lectures and participate in class discussions.
- Because participation is a significant part of your grade, and since the lectures complement the readings, attendance is mandatory and will be registered.
- I encourage you to take advantage of the writing resources Oberlin offers to you. The writing center located at Mudd Library offers individual assistance at any stage in the writing process.
- You must submit a hard copy of your paper in class. E-mail submissions will only be accepted under certain conditions. The paper must be typed in a 12-point font (Times New Roman), double-spaced, and must be cited appropriately using footnotes following the *Chicago Manual of Style* (I will give you more information in class).
- **Honor Code: Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated.** I presume your familiarity with the college’s policies. Consequences can be dire and range from a failing grade on the assignment to expulsion. For more information on academic conduct familiarize yourself with the Student Honor Code available at: [http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/rules-reg.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/rules-reg.html). Accordingly, the College requires that students sign the honor code for all assignments that reads: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.”
- Cell phones, laptops, iPads and other technological distractions are not welcome in class.
- Appropriate accommodation will always be granted to students with documented disabilities or those who feel they may have physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities. Please let me know early in the semester so that your learning disabilities may be appropriately met. Any questions about the necessary process of documenting disabilities
should be addressed to Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities (Peters Hall).

- It is disruptive to your peers to arrive late to class or leave early. Please be unobtrusive if you really must do so.

**Texts/Readings/Films**

- Course readings are available on Blackboard (BB) or have been placed on Reserve (R) at Mudd Library unless otherwise indicated. If for any reason you cannot access any of the reading texts/materials please contact me.

**Course Requirements**

- Regular attendance at lectures
- Completion of assigned readings
- One Mid-Term Exam
- One Final Exam
- Two Term Papers

*Please note that all work must be completed in order to pass this course.*

**Evaluation/Grading**

- Attendance and engagement in class discussions 20%
- Analytical summaries (due every other Friday in class) 10%
- Mid-Term Exam 15%
- Primary source assignment (2-3 pages) 15%
- Final Exam 20%
- Second Term Paper (5-7 pages) 20%

**Exams:** The midterm and final examinations will consist of a map quiz, identifications and short essay questions and will be based on material from the course lectures, readings, and discussions. Note that the final will not be cumulative.

Grading will be as follows: A+100-97; A 96-93; A- 92-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-83; B- 82-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-73; C- 72-70; D 65-69, F below 65.

*NB: I would prefer to answer questions concerning grades during office hours or by appointment.*

**NO ONE WILL BE ALLOWED TO TAKE AN EARLY EXAM!!! PLEASE PLAN YOUR TRAVELS ACCORDINGLY.**
COURSE SCHEDULE*1

Week 1: Introductions
8/31: Introduction to the Course
9/2:
    [http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;idno=heb02588](http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;idno=heb02588)

Suggested Readings


Week 2: Africans, Europeans, and the Environment
9/7

  • King Solomon’s Mines (1950) trailer. Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOuMWN7bFec](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOuMWN7bFec)

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*Note: Course readings may be subject to change at Instructor’s discretion. Students will, however, be alerted ASAP to any changes on Blackboard/email.*

**Suggested Reading**


**Map Quiz (9/9)**

**Week 3: The Long Nineteenth Century & the Scramble for “Pleistocene” Africa**

9/14


9/16


**Suggested Readings**


**Week 4: Colonial Occupation of Africa**

9/21 & 9/23


**Week 5: Independence, Nationalism, & Postcolonial Africa**

9/28

9/30

**Week 6: Ethiopia: The Cradle of African Unity**

10/5 & 10/7

**Week 7: Liberia**

10/12 & 10/14
- *Liberia: America’s Stepchild* (video)

10/14

**Mid-Term Exam**
**Week 8:** *(Fall Recess, No Class)*

**Week 9: Kenya: Gender, ‘Equity’, and Environmental History of the Poor**
10/26 & 10/28
- Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed* (Select Readings)

**Term Paper Proposal due in class (2-3pp).**

**Week 10: South Africa: Apartheid; Postcolonial Politics of Conservation**
11/2 & 11/4
- Hugh Masekela & Miriam Makeba “Protest Songs.”

**Suggested Readings.**

**Week 11: Nigeria: Black Gold, Marginalization, & Conflict**
11/9 & 11/11
- Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (select readings). (BB)
- Ken Sarowiwa: *Silence would be Treason* (select readings). (BB)
- Fela Kuti, “Teacher Don’t Teach me Nonsense” (1986); & “Democracy & Military Rule,” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-dXNqakJ94](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-dXNqakJ94)

**Week 12: Human-rights, Identity, and Corporate Environmentalism**
11/16 & 11/18

**Week 13: Re-Scramble for Africa; African Renaissance**
11/23 & 11/25
- Hebert Sauper’s *Darwin’s Nightmare* (Film)

*Suggested Readings*

**Week 14: Course Review; Term Paper Meetings.**
11/30
- Meetings/Writing
12/2
- Meetings/Writing

**Week 15: Reading and Finals**
12/7
- Course/Final Review
12/9
  - *Research Term Paper due in class*

**Week 16: Reading and Finals**
12/19
  - *Final in-class exam 2:00-4:00 PM* (Room TBA).