HIST 313: WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN KENYA’S MAASAILAND
SPRING 2015

Instructor: Willis Okech Oyugi
Class Times: Monday 7:00-9:00 PM; King 325
Office: Rice 303; Office Tel: x56259
Office Hours: MWF: 10:00-11:00 PM
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Course Description

This research seminar explores Maasai-wildlife relations in Kenya from the late nineteenth century to the present. It is designed for students who are interested in comparative environmental ideologies (indigenous and formal), the development of environmental policy in colonial and postcolonial Africa, the politics of conservation, and human-environmental interactions in the broadest sense. The seminar is open to all majors and has no course prerequisites.

Impressionistic images of “warlike” Maasai warriors—flashy spears in hand while resplendently dressed in red shukas (shawls) as they tend to their large herds of cattle harmoniously amongst abundant wild animals have been commonplace for the past 150 years. These idealistic images exhibit the Maasai as natural custodians of the environment who reside in a pristine and primordial African landscape. That Kenya’s foremost private and public game reserves are located in Maasailand seemingly support such popular representations even as increased and persistent human-wildlife conflicts and alarming declines of wild animal populations in recent decades challenge these notions. Students will interrogate these and other contradictions. We will question, for instance, who decides how “wild” Africa should look? Who owns Kenya’s wildlife? Do the Maasai consider themselves natural custodians of wildlife?
This seminar offers students the opportunity to build upon and contribute to existing scholarship by producing an original term paper. Though this seminar will introduce students to some of the most significant scholarly literature on the place of the Maasai relevant to the history of wildlife conservation in colonial and postcolonial Kenya, it also aims at making students familiar with a range of primary documents, histories, and ethnographies from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century. Students are expected, for instance, to familiarize themselves with the Kenya National Archives Maasai/nature-specific official documents accessible online.

We will begin by discussing the sources and methods used by historians to reconstruct African environmental history. At least half of our class meetings will also focus on the changing historiography on Maasai-environmental relations with respect to certain key topics. The remaining course meetings will be dedicated to rigorous discussions/feedback of students’ drafts and term papers.

**Course Goals**

1. Students will learn essential research skills including where and how to locate topic-specific historical information and how to assess and categorize various types of primary and secondary resources;
2. Students will use historical inquiry to question common assumptions, develop an argumentative thesis, and develop and support plausible historical interpretations;
3. Students will develop effective writing and communication skills.

**Class Format & Writing Assignments**

- Our class meetings will mostly feature group discussions including peer to peer reviews. A few documentaries will also be shown in class. As the deadlines for the Book Review and Term Paper assignments approach, I will give you more detailed information about my expectations.
- This is a writing-intensive course. Outside of our class discussions and instructor-student meetings and communications (office hours and email), you will be expected to take responsibility for directing your own learning and meeting the writing benchmarks: paper proposal, research, drafts, and the final term paper.

**Other Information**

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 seminar. 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 section.

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.

**Required Texts/Readings/Films***
The following books are available at the Oberlin Bookstore. These texts have also been placed on print reserve, or are available electronically [ER] in Mudd Library. All other readings are available on Blackboard (designated with “BB”) under “Course Documents” unless otherwise indicated. Documentaries will be shown in class. If for any reason you cannot acquire or access any of the reading texts/materials please contact me.


*Please note that the Book Review (2-3pp) will be based on either one of the last two texts.*

**Other Sources/Databases**
- Kenya National Archives (Syracuse University): [http://researchguides.library.syr.edu/kenyanarch](http://researchguides.library.syr.edu/kenyanarch)
- Human Relations Area Files (Yale University): [http://hraf.yale.edu/](http://hraf.yale.edu/)
• Kenya Gazette (OBIS)

Evaluation/Grading/Course Requirements
• Regular attendance and engagement in class discussions 25%
• Peer Review 5%
• Research Proposal 5%
• Annotated Bibliography 5%
• Book Review, (2-3 pages) 10%
  ○ *Primate’s Memoir* or *In the Dust of Kilimanjaro*
• Research Term Paper (18-20 pages) 50%

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

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.

*Please note that I would prefer to answer questions concerning grades during office hours or by appointment.*

Due Dates:
• Research Paper Topic: Week 3
• Annotated Bibliography: Week 4
• Paper Proposal: Week 6
• First Paper Draft: Week 9
• Peer Review of First Draft: Week 10
• Second Paper Draft: Week 11
• Presentation of Research Paper in class: Week 14
• Final Paper: Week 15

**SEMINAR SCHEDULE**¹

Week 1: Introductions
2/2: Introduction to the Course.
• Trailer of *King Solomon’s Mines* (1950) movie. Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0uMWN7bFec](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0uMWN7bFec)

¹ Note: *Course readings may be subject to minor changes. Please check with Blackboard for up-to-date information.*


**Week 2: Theory and Methodology (Writing African Environmental History)**
2/9


**Suggested Reading**


**Week 3: Meeting with the Librarian (MUDD)**
2/16

• **Paper Topic for Research Paper.**

**Week 4: Ethnicity & Identity in East Africa**
2/23


• Johann Krapf, *Vocabulary of the Engutuk Eloikob, or the Language of the Wakuafi-Nation in the Interior of Equatorial Africa*. Tubingen: Germany, 1854. (BB) Select pages

**Suggested Readings**


**Week 5: “Pleistocene Africa”**

3/2


**Week 6: Paradise Challenged**

3/9


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

**Suggested Readings**

Week 7: Humans and Wildlife in Conservation
3/16

- **Book review (2-3 pp.) Due in Class.**

Suggested Readings


Week 8: (Spring Recess, No Class)

Week 9: Community Conservation
3/30


**First Paper Draft, 4-6 pp.**

**Week 10: Elitism & Exclusion in Maasailand**

4/6


**Peer Review Comments (First Paper Draft), 1-2 pp.**

**Week 11: Writing/Meeting with Instructor**

4/13

**Second Paper Draft, 10-12pp.**

**Week 12: Writing/Meeting with Instructor**

4/20

**Week 13: Research Paper Presentations**

4/27

**Week 14: Research Paper Presentations**

5/4

**Week 15: Reading and Finals**

5/17

- **Final Research Term Paper Due (11 AM)**