

Spring 2009, HIST 262: Survey of Modern African History

Colonialism, Environmental Change, and Struggles over “Sustainability”

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Fine Arts Building, Room B106, Monday (1:30 – 4:15 PM)

An electronic copy of this syllabus can be obtained from <http://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the influences of European colonialism in Africa from 1800 to the present. We particularly examine the ways in which white authorities established different systems of political control that dramatically altered African ecologies, production (i.e., crops, livestock, etc.) and consumption (subsistence, hunting, etc.). For example, we trace how British settlers, in the name of “efficient progress,” reduced soil fertility by using tractors to prepare fallow fields for commercial agriculture in Sub-Saharan territories. We also consider how local resistance to Western farming techniques sometimes undermined long-established strategies of rural sustainability. Finally, we assess a range of African responses to modern conservation ideas that (derisively) claimed to save a “Dark Continent” from the “wasteful natives” in regions vulnerable to resource scarcity. Throughout the semester, we critically assess definitions of “sustainable development” in relation to changing power relationships between governments and the people they sought to rule.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

- 1. Please do NOT arrive late to class.**
- 2. Please turn OFF cell phones and all communication devices.**
- 3. University regulations prohibit eating or drinking in class.**
- 4. You are only allowed to use your laptop for HIST 262 purposes.**
- 5. When emailing your professor, please include the heading “HIST 262.”**
- 6. You are expected to check for emails sent by your professor.**

READINGS

Over the course of the semester you will read a number of journal articles and book chapters. The following three **required texts** are available in the GMU bookstore:

- 1) A. Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism*.
- 2) James McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800-1990*.
- 3) Jonathan Adams and Thomas McShane, *The Myth of Wild Africa: Conservation Without Illusion*.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The requirements for this course include an in-class essay (20%); a short-answer/matching mid-term exam (30%); a final exam, with two essay questions (35%); and class participation (15%). Due dates appear under the 2009 Spring Schedule.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

You must complete assigned readings before you come to class. If you fall behind in your reading, you will struggle in this course. Your final grade is dependent on at least three factors. You must earn satisfactory grades on your exams, attend lectures on a regular basis, and participate to the best of your ability in class discussions.

Class attendance: Class participation is a crucial component of your final grade. If you are absent for two straight classes (and you provide no excuse), you will lose significant points from your class participation credit (15%). If you have poor class participation—due largely to absences, i.e., non-presence during discussions—your final grade will drop considerably. In other words, if you average a B+ on the exams but have poor class participation, your final mark will be C+ or lower. If you stop attending this course just before or after the mid-semester mark, you will receive a failing grade for the class. Finally, since we only meet once a week, you should know that I will not be able to re-teach a missed class in an email message or during an office conference. Thus, you are strongly encourage to take extensive notes in class.

Exam rules: In adherence with university regulations, professors in the Department of History and Art History re-schedule exams after receiving written documentation of a sudden medical emergency or serious family emergency. Work-related and personal/family obligations (work-related trips, needed holidays, graduation ceremonies, etc.) are not adequate excuses for re-scheduling an exam. In past semesters, when students developed a pattern of missing classes or tests, they had to contact Dean Bitler in the Office of Undergraduate Affairs.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ACADEMIC POLICIES

I will hold office hours on Monday, 4:30-5:30 P.M, and Wednesday, 4:00-5:15 P.M. If I change these times, I will inform you in advance. It is best to contact me, preferably by email (bcarton1@gmu.edu), several days before you plan to attend my office hours so that you are guaranteed an appointment. In addition, appointments can be made before or after class. **My office is in Robinson B, Room 355 B. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CONTACT ME IF YOU NEED A MAKE-UP EXAM.**

You are bound by the George Mason University Honor Code, particularly the sections on plagiarism.

COURSE REGISTRATION DEADLINES

February 4, 2009 is the last day for students to add a class to their schedules. Similarly, February 4, 2009 is the last day for students to drop classes and receive a 100% refund. The last day a student can drop this course without obtaining special permission is February 20, 2009.

2009 SPRING SCHEDULE

Week 1: Jan. 26 – Course Introduction.

Week 2: Feb. 2 –Africa: Myths and Realities.

Read for Mon. Feb 2nd: Binyavanga Wainaina, “How to Write About Africa,” *Granta* (2005); Chris Lowe, Tunde Brimah, Monde Muyangwa, et al, “Talking About Tribe” at www.africaaction.org; McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land*, introduction; Adams and McShane, *The Myth of Wild Africa*, chapter one.

Week 3: Feb. 9 – African Environments: Ecology, Biodiversity, and Sustainability in Historical Perspective.

Read for Mon Feb. 9th. McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land*, chapter two and chapter three; also review chapter six; M. Andreas Wienecke, “The Role of Biological Diversity and Sustainability in the Conservation and Preservation of the Environment,” *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* (Spring 2004) at <http://www.jsd-africa.com/> ***William Beinart, “African History and Environmental History,” *African Affairs* (2000).

Week 4: Feb. 16 –The 19th-century African Renaissance in “Sustainability and Development”/ European Encounters in 19th-century African Landscapes

Read for Mon. Feb 16th: A. Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives*, 1-26; ***Rueben Matheka, “The Political Ecology of Wildlife Conservation in Kenya, 1895-1975,” (Ph.D. dissertation, 2001), chapter one. **Review for in-class essay.**

Week 5: Feb. 23 –African Environmental Strategies in the Era of European Invasions.

- **You will write your exam essay during the first half of class.**

Read for Mon Feb 23rd: McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land*, chapter seven; *** Isaria Kimambo, “Environmental Control and Hunger in the Mountains and Plains of Northeast Tanzania,” in G. Maddox, J. Giblin and I. Kimambo, ed, *Custodians of the Land: Ecology & Culture in the History of Tanzania* (1996); ***Jane Carruthers, “Africa: Histories, Ecologies and Societies,” *Environment and History* (2004).

Week 6: Mar. 2 – European Imperial Partition: African Resistance and Accommodation.

Read for Mon Mar. 2nd: Boahen, *African Perspectives*, 27-57.

Week 7: Mar. 9 – SPRING BREAK.

Week 8: Mar. 16 – The Politics of European Divide-and Rule/New Regimes of Hunting and Conservation in Colonial Africa.

Read for Mon Mar. 16th: Boahen, *African Perspectives*, 58- (middle) 76; Adams and McShane, *The Myth of Wild Africa*, 24-58; ***David Mabunda, et al, “The Kruger National Park: A Century of Management and Research,” in J. Du Toit, K. Roger and H. Biggs, eds, *The Kruger Experience* (2003).

Week 9: Mar. 23 – Blaming the Victim in Colonial Africa? Who Was Responsible for the Loss of Forests and Spread of Deserts in the Sub-Saharan Region?

Read for Mon. 23rd: McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land*, chapter four.

Review for in-class mid-exam.

Week 10: Mar. 30 –MID-TERM EXAM.

Week 11: April 6 –The Consolidation and Collapse of Colonial Power: “New Generation” African Struggles for Sovereignty and Control over the Environment.

Read for Mon April 13th Boahen, *African Perspectives*, (middle) 76-93; McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land*, epilogue ***Claperton Mavhunga, “‘If They Are as Thirsty as All That, Let Them Come Down to the Pool’: Unearthing ‘Wildlife’ History and Reconstructing ‘Heritage’ in Gonarezhou National Park from the Late Nineteenth Century to the 1930s,” *Historia* (2003); ***Joann McGregor, “Living with the River: Landscape & Memory in the Zambezi Valley, Northwest Zimbabwe,” in W. Beinart and J. McGregor, eds, *African Environments* (2003).

Week 12: April 13 – The Balance Sheet of Colonialism and Liberation Politics of “Natural” Development: Continuity v. Change/Continuity and Change.

Read for Mon. April 13th: Boahen, *African Perspectives*, 94-112; Adams and McShane, *The Myth of Wild Africa*, 85-108; ***Kevin Hill, “Conflict over Development and Environmental Values: The International Ivory Trade in Zimbabwe’s Historical Context,” *Environment and History* (1995); *** James Scott, “Compulsory Villagization in Tanzania,” in James Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (1998).

Week 13: April 20 – Elephants and Gorillas before “People-Poachers”? Debates over Conservation and Sustainability in Independent Africa.

Read for Mon. April 20th: Adams and McShane, *The Myth of Wild Africa*, 59-84, 122-138, 184-206.

Week 14: April 27 – Striking the Balance: Cultivating “Development,” Protecting “Nature” in Contemporary Africa.

Read for Mon. April 27th: Adams and McShane, *The Myth of Wild Africa*, 139-183, 207-226; ***Malcolm Draper, Marja Spierenburg, and Harry Wels, “African Dreams of Cohesion: Elite Pacting and Community Development in Transfrontier Conservation Areas in Southern Africa,” *Culture and Organization* (2004).

Week 15: May 4 – What Horizon, Contemporary Africa?

Read for Mon. May 4th: Adams and McShane, *The Myth of Wild Africa*, 227-247; Miguel Torres, “Is It Africa’s Turn?” <http://bostonreview.net/BR33.3/miguel.php> and the debate “statements” between William Easterly, Jeffrey Sachs, et al on <http://www.nyu.edu/fas/institute/dri/Easterly/> (for example, click on: Debate on Financial Times, Round 2: [Martin Wolf vs. Easterly](#), refereed by [Clive Crook](#); Round 3: [Martin Wolf vs. Sachs vs. Collier vs. Easterly](#)).

Review for final exam on May 11th 1:30-4:15 PM (in FAB, Room B106)