

HISTORY 315-01: SEMINAR ON ENVIRONMENT, PEOPLE, AND STATE IN AFRICA

Strathmore University, Nairobi, Kenya

Instructor: Alphonse Otieno

Email: aomondi@strathmore.edu

Phone: 7-2811

Office: I202

Office hours: Wed 3-5pm

Course Description:

This seminar examines how interactions between people, environment, and state contributed to social, economic, political, and ecological changes experienced in different parts of Africa beginning in the late nineteenth century and ending in the late twentieth century. It focuses on four major themes: indigenous perceptions and use of environments, colonial and postcolonial state policies on Africa's environments and motivations behind them, global conservation ideas and their impacts on local areas, and African adaptations, as well as responses to the consequences of state interventions and global ideas on environment. Going through these themes, we will also highlight the significance of social differences—gender, class, and race—in shaping contests between African subjects, state officials, and non-governmental agencies for control over the environments.

Evaluation and Grading:

Two short papers (each 7 pages).....	20% each
Participation.....	20%
Final paper (20 pages).....	40%

Assignments:

By the end of the semester you will be expected to have produced two papers, each 7 pages maximum, in which you respond to two different topics of your choice. In each paper, clearly explain the arguments and themes articulated in the readings you choose to respond to and then provide your take on these matters. Be analytical and critical as you can.

You will also have to write a final paper, 10-15 pages. You will have the freedom to come up with a topic of your choice preferably articulated in the form of a question. The task will be upon you to identify a researchable question from the readings and discussions we will do this semester. This could be something from this seminar that resonates with your interest or field of study. Before the end of the semester, each one of you will propose his/her topic. We will discuss each of these topics in class with the objective of helping you think about your topic clearly before you start writing.

Participation: This is an important aspect of this seminar. You are expected to present on one topic of your choice. The presentation should capture clearly the arguments in the

readings of that particular week, how the arguments are made and your take on them. Raise questions about the readings. The idea is to usher the class into a discussion mode. Evaluations will be based on how well you accomplish the task. Apart from presenting/leading discussion on one topic, you will be expected to participate in the general class discussion weekly. Ask questions, inject well thought comments and raise new ideas.

TEACHING METHOD

Discussion

Required Readings:

Helge, Kjekshus. 1996. *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History*. London: James Currey.

Christopher, O. Conte. 2004. *Highland Sanctuary: Environmental History in Tanzania's Usambara Mountains*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Wangari, Maathai. 2003. *The Green belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and Experience*. Lantern Books

**Purchase the required readings from the Bookstore

Recommended Readings:

James, Scott. 1998. *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to improve the Human Conditions Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Jan Bender Shetler. 2007. *Imagining Landscape: A History of Landscape Memory in Tanzania from Earliest Times to the Present*. Ohio University Press.

**The recommended readings are on the electronic reserve, but if you want personal copies please find them in the bookstore.

Find the rest of the readings mentioned below on the electronic reserve.

Weekly Schedule:

Jan 21

Brief lecture on environmental history of Africa through colonial and postcolonial period

Jan 28: Indigenous control of disease & physical environ.

Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History*

Feb 4: Misreading landscapes

James Fairhead. 2000. "Challenging Neo-Malthusian deforestation Analysis in West Africa's Dynamic Forest Landscapes. *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1.

James McCann. "A Tale of Two Forests: Narratives of Deforestation in Ethiopia, 1840-1996." African Studies Center, Boston University (Requested).

Feb 11: Soil conservation

William Beinart. 1984. "Soil Erosion, Conservationism and Ideas about Development: a Southern African Exploration, 1900-1960", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 11, 1.

Ian Phimister. 1986. "Discourse and the Development of Historical Context." *Journal of Southern African Studies*

Feb 18: Race, gender, agrarian/water policy

Nancy Jacobs. "The Flowing Eye: Environmental Management and Irrigation in the Kruman Crown Reserve, 1886-1958."

Fiona Mackenzie. 1991. "Political Economy of the Environment, Gender and Resistance under Colonialism: Murang'a District, Kenya, 1910-1950." *CJAS*, 25, 2.

Feb 25: Creating pristine nature (National Park)

Terence Ranger. 1989. "Whose heritage? The Case of the Matobo National Park." *Journal of South African Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2.

Jan Bender Shetler. 2007. *Imagining Serengeti: A History of Landscape in Tanzania from Earliest Times to the Present*: chapters 5 & 6 (169-237)

March 4: Exploiting, conserving forests, transforming knowledge and practices

Giles-Vernick, *Cutting the Vines of the Past: Environmental Histories of the Central African Rain Forest*, University Press of Virginia, 2002.

March 18

Exploitation and management of Mountain Environments:

Christopher O. Conte. 2004. *Highland Sanctuary: Environmental History in Tanzania's Usambara Mountains*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

March 25: Participatory environmental management & social justice

Consequences of Ujamaa and Socialism in Tanzania:

Introduction and chapter 7 of James, Scott. 1998. *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to improve the Human Conditions Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Michael, Sheridan. 2004. "The Environmental Consequences of Independence and Socialism in North Pare, Tanzania, 1961-1988." *Journal of African History*, 45, 81-1-2.

April 1

Robert Hitchcock. 2002. "'We are the First People': Land, Natural Resources and Identity in the Central Kalahari, Botswana." *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 28, 4.

Jesse Ribot. 1999. "Decentralization, Participation and Accountability in Sahelian Forestry: Legal Instruments of Political-Administrative Control." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*. 69. 1.

April 8

Wangari Maathai. *The Green belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and Experience*.

April 15

Discussing topics for final paper

April 22

Documentary: Milking the Rhino