

**History 3391/01
Fall 2009**

History of West Africa

Kennesaw State University

Time: Mon & Wed 3:30-4:45 P. M.
Room: SO 3010
Office Hours: Mon & Wed
2:45- 3:15 and by appointment anytime

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This course explores the history of West Africa from the earliest known agricultural and pastoral communities to the present modern states. The overarching theme is interaction, how West Africans joined together to bring about changes in their lives and physical environments. For example, through interactions, communities on the southern fringe of the arid Sahara and those in the grassland further south, have been able to confront some of the harshest environmental conditions. These regions are dry and received incredibly sparse rainfall. Along the Atlantic coast, rainfall is plentiful, good for agriculture, but equally advantageous for the propagation of deadly diseases, including the lethal malarial parasite. Cooperation also became the basis of West Africa's initial encounter with outsiders, first Arabs and then Europeans. Partnership with the strangers opened new opportunities and challenges, often forcing West Africans to depend even more on their old alliances. The class will examine these interactions and note how they informed West Africa's history.

Course Objectives

The common objective is to provide students with basic knowledge of ancient and contemporary West Africa: e.g., geography, cultures and peoples, development, and challenges. Also, the course is intended to elevate the level of critical thinking in historical analysis through discussions, exams, and writing.

Required Texts (mostly small-sized books and easy to read)

1. Boahen et al., *Topics in West African History*
2. Keim, *Mistaking Africa*
3. Gilbert and Reynolds, *Africa in World History*
4. Niane, *Sundiata*
5. Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*
6. Benjamin, *A Student's Guide to History*

Course Requirement and Evaluation

| <u>Areas</u> | <u>% of Course Grade</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 2 exams | 40 |
| 2 quizzes | 30 |
| 1 two-page long paper | 15 |
| Class exercises | 10 |
| News from Africa | 05 |

(Conversion of the final numerical grade is based on this formula: A=90-100; B=80-89; C=70-79; D=60-69; F=0-59.)

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory. Drop the class if you expect to miss more than the three absences I allow. There are no make-ups.

Exams

The exams are non-cumulative essay questions and will be based on the readings, lectures, and class discussions. Excellent tips for taking notes and studying can be found in *A Student's Guide to History* (Chapters 2 & 3). Dates of the exams and quizzes are listed below in the Tentative Schedule.

Quizzes

Quizzes are mostly objective essay questions, i.e., they require answers that are directly from the readings and lectures.

Two-page long paper: You will write a two-page long, single-spaced essay in 12 pt Times New Roman font. I will post the assignment on WebCT Vista, and you will do likewise with the essay. Follow the format in *A Student's Guide to History*: Chapters 4 & 5 (especially plagiarism, paraphrasing, and documentation). The consequence of plagiarism is simple: I will give you an F. (See below: *Academic Integrity*.) A grade of "B" is the highest score you can earn on a late essay. You have two days from the original deadline (including Saturdays and Sundays) to turn the assignment in, otherwise you forfeit the points. It is your responsibility to make arrangement for turning in tardy assignments.

Class exercises

These are mostly in-class activities design to facilitate or encourage class discussions. The exercises are not specified in the Tentative Schedule, but I will incorporate them throughout the semester.

News from Africa

Just before class commences, you can present one piece of news about anywhere on the African continent. There are various authoritative sources, including the BBC. Additional sources are local and national newspapers like *The Atlanta Journal-*

Constitution and The New York Times. You must present the source, date of publication, and explain the relevance of the news. Each presentation is worth one point.

Academic Integrity

Every KSU student is responsible for upholding the provisions of the Student Code of Conduct, as published in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. Section II of the Student Code of Conduct addresses the University's policy on academic honesty, including provisions regarding plagiarism and cheating, unauthorized access to University materials, misrepresentation/falsification of University records or academic work, malicious removal, retention, or destruction of library materials, malicious/intentional misuse of computer facilities and/or services, and misuse of student identification cards. Incidents of alleged academic misconduct will be handled through the established procedures of the University Judiciary Program, which includes either an "informal" resolution by a faculty member, resulting in a grade adjustment, or a formal hearing procedure, which may subject a student to the Code of Conduct's minimum one semester suspension requirement.

(October 12: LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY)

Tentative Schedule

Part I Introduction to class; Q & A; popular notions of Africa

Aug. 17-19 Readings: Keim Pp. 3-51; 53-164; Gilbert and Reynolds, Photo Essay I (opposite P. 120)

Part II Where is West Africa? Early Africa

Aug. 24-26 Readings: Gilbert and Reynolds, Pp. 4-55, maps Pp. 456 and inside back cover; Boahen et al., maps, Pp. 194-96

Part III History without books

Sep. 2 Niane, Preface, Pp. 1-2

Sep. 7 Labor Day: No Class

Sep. 9 **Quiz #1**

Part IV Early Societies, food production, and environment

Sep. 14-16 Readings: Gilbert and Reynolds, Pp. 37-48

Part V Trans-Saharan trade and the emergence of the Sudanic kingdoms

Sep. 21-30 Readings: Boahen et al., Pp. 1-32, Pp. 44-53; Niane, Gilbert and Reynolds, Photo Essay II (“When the Sahara was Wet”)

Part VI Kingdoms of the Savanna and Rainforest: Asante and Oyo

Oct. 5-7 Readings: Discussion of Niane; Boahen et al., Pp. 54-73
Exam #1 (Oct. 5)

*Part VII The Encounter: West Africa and Europe
(assign two-page long essay)*

Oct. 12-21 Readings: Boahen et al., Pp. 102-16; Gilbert and Reynolds, Pp. 150-65, Photo Essay II (opposite P.312: Africans in New World, Roasting corn)

Part VIII Colonialism

Oct. 26-Nov. 2 Readings: Boahen et al., Pp. 117-33; Gilbert and Reynolds, Pp. 294-98; Achebe; Discussion of Achebe

Part IX Nationalism and Independence

Nov. 4-11 **Quiz # 2** (Nov. 4)
Readings: Boahen et al., Pp. 134-48

Part X Political problems and challenges in post-independence West Africa, c. 1960-c.1980

Nov. 16-23 Readings: Boahen et al., Pp. 149-73

Nov. 25 Fall Break: No Class

Part XI West Africa Today: Culture, epidemics, arts and entertainment, music, and sports

Nov. 30-Dec. 2 Readings: Boahen et al., Pp. 182-93; Gilbert and Reynolds, Pp. 342-62, Pp. 398-404, Pp. 413-17

Final Exam Dec. 7: 3:30-5:30