

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Humanities
Department of African-American and African Studies

AAAS 774: Africa Before Colonial Rule

Professor: C. Magbaily Fyle

Description

The intention in this course is to establish an appreciation of indigenous African systems and accomplishments before the twentieth century. It will also serve to address misconceptions about African life. Issues like the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Zimbabwe, Kush and Ethiopia, the use of iron and the African agricultural revolution, the Western Sudan civilizations, indigenous political, religious, economic and trade systems will be examined. By the end of the course, the student is expected to have a good grasp of the historical context within which African history is constructed.

Texts

- C. Ehret *The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800*
- C. Magbaily Fyle, *Introduction to the History of African Civilization. Volume I, Precolonial Africa.*
- M. El Fasi (ed), *Africa from the 7th to the 11th Centuries.* UNESCO General History of Africa, vol. 3
- D. T. Niani (ed), *Africa from the 12th to the Sixteenth Centuries.* UNESCO General History of Africa, vol. IV
- B.A. Ogot, *Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries.* UNESCO General History of Africa, vol. V
- J. Ajayi and M. Crowder, *A History of West Africa*, vol. I
- A. Jalloh and Maizlish, *The African Diaspora*

REQUIREMENTS

Attendance at class sessions is essential. More than three absences and persistent extreme lateness or absence from the first or second hour of the class will lead to a loss of up to ten percent of the final grade.

Everybody is expected to read the basic text, Fyle, *History of African Civilization*, and participate actively in class discussions.

Each member of the class has to do a short summary (5 pages or less, double spaced) of assigned readings which will be presented orally in class. Presentations longer than 20 minutes could attract a lower grade. The summaries have to be turned in after the presentation. Failure to do so automatically reduces the grade and this continues for every day the summary is overdue. No summary will be accepted after three days following presentation.

Questions: Critically evaluate the evidence, from Diop's research, about the African origins of Ancient Egyptian civilization.
What relationship has been drawn between the spread of iron working, food production and migrations in Africa, particularly the Bantu migration.

Week 3

Migrations: the Berbers in North Africa; The Fulbe
Western Sudan civilizations

Fyle, *African Civilizations*, chaps. 4, 7, and 8

El Fasi, "Stages in the Development of Islam and Its Dissemination in Africa" Chapter 3' in UNESCO vol. 3 (M. El Fasi ed. *Africa from the 7th to the 11th Century*)

Expansion of Islam

D.T. Niani, "Mali and the Second Mandingo Expansion" chap. 6, in Niani (ed), UNESCO, vol. 4

N. Levtzion, 'The Early States of the Western Sudan'. in Ajayi & Crowder, *History of West Africa* vol. 1, chapter 4.

Questions: How significant was trade in the development of western Sudan kingdoms?
What factors contributed significantly to the spread of Islam in west Africa before the eighteenth century?

Week 4

Emergence of Swahili Culture

V.V. Matveiev, 'The Development of Swahili Civilization'. In UNESCO, vol. IV (D.T. Niani, ed. *Africa from the 12th to the 16th Centuries*) chap. 18

F.T. Masao and H.W. Mutoro, "The East African Coast and the Comoro Islands" UNESCO, vol. III (M. El Fasi ed., *Africa from the 7th to the 11th century.*)

Fyle, *African Civilization*, chap. 5

Economic Activity; west Africa

D.T. Niani, 'Relationship and Exchanges among the different regions'. In UNESCO Vol. IV, chap. 25.

Economic activity, Central Africa

P. Curtin, *African History*, pp. 218-221

Fyle, *African Civilization*, chap. 11

Questions: Analyze the background to the conception of Swahili culture as a primarily Arab culture.

Discuss patterns of economic activity in Africa during the colonial period.

Week 5

The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery in Africa.

Fyle, *African Civilization*, chap. 13,

W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Ch. 4, pp. 95-145

J. Inikori, 'Slavery in Africa and the TransAtlantic Slave Trade'. In A. Jalloh and S. Maizlish (eds), *The African Diaspora*. pp. 39-72

The Mfecane and race issues in South Africa

Fyle, *African Civilization*, chap. 15

L.D. Ngcongco, 'The Mfecane and the rise of new African states'

UNESCO, vol. VI, chap. 5

Omer-Cooper, *History of Southern Africa*, chap. 4

Identify the mix of economic, religious and political factors in the nineteenth century jihads in west Africa.

Discuss the impact of the mfecane on the region of southern Africa

Week 9

Nineteenth Century Trade and Politics.

W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, chaps. 3 & 4

Questions:

How important was trade in the consolidation of political authority in east and central Africa by the nineteenth century?

Did the growth of European commercial interest in Africa facilitate or detract from the development of African systems?

Week 10

The African Diaspora

J. Harris, 'The Dynamics of the Global African Diaspora' In A. Jalloh & Maizlish (eds), *The African Diaspora*, pp. 7-21

Dale Graden 'The City has too many slaves Joined Together: The Abolitionist Crisis in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil 1848-1856". In A. Jalloh, etc. *The African Diaspora* pp. 134-149

Question: How significant was African initiative in the adaptation to their new environments in the diaspora outside the United States.