

History 123  
Spring 2005  
T/TH: 5-6:20pm  
WLH 2113

Professor Gibril R. Cole  
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Office Hrs: 12-1:30pm  
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### West Africa from Earliest Times to 1800 to 1800

#### Course Description

History 123 is a survey course of the history of West Africa from the pre-historic period up to the nineteenth century. In terms of method, we will employ a multi-disciplinary approach and examine the very pivotal role played by such diverse disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, botany, linguistics, oral traditions, etc. in the reconstruction of early West African history.

The course will begin with an examination of the geography of the sub-region. In the process, we will take a close look at the development of crop cultivation, iron-working and animal domestication. Following this, the major ethnic groups and languages of West Africa will be examined. Among the various themes to be covered will be the rise of early urban life and commerce as well as the formation of states. The lectures and discussions will pay close attention to the early kingdoms and empires of West Africa including those of the western Sudan, the forest belt and Chad basin. Attention will also be paid to such issues as the development of the arts, religion and the advent of external influences. The trans-Saharan and Atlantic trade systems had a profound effect on the historical evolution of the region. Thus the social, political and economic impact of these developments will be examined as well. The course will close with a look at the role and place of West Africans in the making of the Atlantic world.

#### Required text:

A course reader is available at University Course Reader

#### Recommended Texts:

The following books are on reserve at the Geisel Library:

Cambridge History of Africa, vols. 3&4

J.U. Egharevba, A Short History of Benin

AFC Ryder, Benin and its Neighbours

Ivor Wilks, Asante in the nineteenth century

I.A. Akinjobin, Dahomey and its Neighbours

C.W. Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and its Rulers

W. Rodney, A History of the Upper Guinea Coast

K.Y. Daku, Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast

D. Robinson, The Holy War Of Umar Tal

J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, eds., History of West Africa, vol. 1

## Requirements

Final grades will reflect the following:

Attendance and participation	5%
Mid-term Examination	30%
Research Paper	30%
Final Examination	35%

Every student in the class will be required to write a research paper on a chosen topic that is of pertinence to this course. You are advised to utilize primary as well as secondary sources, the nature of which should be discussed in the paper. The chosen topic should also address certain important themes including religion, gender, race, slavery, urbanization, economics and state-formation, though not necessarily all of them.

## Course Outline/Reading Schedule

Mar. 29 – Introduction

Mar. 31 - Readings:

T. Obenga, “Sources and specific techniques used in African history: general outline”

On Method

Apr. 5 - Readings:

Akin Mabogunje, “The Land and peoples of West Africa”

C.T. Shaw, “The Prehistory of West Africa”

B. Wai Andah, “West Africa before the Seventh Century”

The West African environment

Apr. 7 & 12- Readings:

Basil Davidson, “The Empire of Ghana”

Kevin Shillington, “Trans-Saharan trade and the Kingdom of Ancient Ghana”

Nehemia Levtzion, “The Early States of the Western Sudan to 1500”

The Soninke and the state of Wagadu

The Trans-Saharan trade and the Kingdom of Ghana

Islamic orthodoxy and the decline/fall of Ghana

Apr. 14 & 19 - Readings: Course Reader

D.T. Niane, “Mali and the Second Mandingo Expansion”

M. Ly-Tall, “The decline of the Mali Empire”

Ascendancy of the Soso  
Sundiata and the Mandinka ascendancy  
Mansa Musa, the gold trade and Islam

Apr. 21 & 26- Readings:

J.O. Hunwick, "Songhai, Borno and Hausaland in the sixteenth century"  
K. Shillington, "Islam and the Sudanic states of West Africa"  
N. Levtzion, "Islam in the Bilad al-Sudan to 1800"  
D. Lange, "The Kingdoms and Peoples of Chad"  
R.A. Adeleye, "Hausaland and Borno 1600-1800" (in Ajayi and Crowder, eds., History of West Africa)

Sonni Ali and the rise of Songhai Empire  
Askiya Mohammed and expansion of Islamic influences

Apr. 28- \*\*Readings:

Kingdom of Kanem-Borno

May 3 – The Hausa Kingdoms

May 5 – Mid-Term Examination

May 10 & 12- Readings:

Ivor Wilks, "The Mossi and Akan States 1500-1800"  
Ivor Wilks, Asante in the nineteenth century  
C.W. Newbury, The Western Slave Coast and its Rulers

Akan States and the rise of Asante  
Asante Kingdom and the Atlantic trade system

May 17 & 19 - Readings

I.A. Akinjobin, "The Expansion of Oyo and the rise of Dahomey, 1600-1800"  
A.F.C. Ryder, "From the Volta to Cameroon"  
A.F.C. Ryder, Benin and its Neighbours  
J.U. Egharevba, A Short History of Benin

Kingdom of Oyo  
Dahomey and Benin

May 24 - Readings;

P.D. Curtin, "The Atlantic slave trade 1600-1800"

K. Shillington, "Atlantic slave trade, 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century"

Portuguese incursions into West Africa in the fourteenth century  
Across the Middle Passage

May 26 - \*\*Readings

Impact of Atlantic trade system on West African societies  
Trade and religion in West Africa

May 31 - Readings

Ivor Wilks, "The Juula and the expansion of Islam into the Forest"  
J. Suret-Canale and B. Barry, "The Western Atlantic Coast to 1800"  
G.I. Jones, "Olaudah Equiano of the Ibo"  
M. Priestley, "Philip Quaake of Cape Coast"

Islam and Politics in West African societies – Wolof, Cayor and Walo  
West Africans in the Atlantic world

June 2 – Conclusion and review