

History 8a Africa in the Era of the Slave Trade
Spring 2020
Professor Burke
Swarthmore College
MWF 9:30-10:20

Office hours:
Parrish W201 Tuesday 2-3:30, Thursday 10-1
Trotter 206 Wednesday 1-3:30
Or by appointment

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x8115

History 8a is a survey course, a broad overview of an area of historical inquiry. The most important goal for students in this course is to acquire a strong command over the content, but we will also be working with important skills associated with the discipline of history: reading primary and secondary sources, analytic writing, search and discovery of relevant information, and the formation of useful questions and arguments.

The course focuses on Western Africa, a region that stretches from present-day Mauritania to present-day Cameroon along the coast and as far inland as Chad. It begins with the formation of large imperial states along the upper Niger River and the borders of the Sahara Desert and then examines the transformations of the region associated with the development of the Atlantic slave trade. Students will consider the causes, development and consequences of the Atlantic slave trade primarily from the perspective of Western African societies. We will put Western Africa into the wider picture of world history over the last millennium and in so doing understand the present and its limitations with new urgency and specificity.

Course grades are based on two short papers, a midterm quiz, a variety of small response assignments and a final exam. The final grade is heavily weighted towards the final exam. Attendance and participation in class are also important to the final grade. Please contact the Dean's Office if you have an extended illness, personal crisis or other issue that may cause you to miss more than two or so class sessions.

You may use laptops or other electronic devices to facilitate taking notes and to consult **relevant course-related materials** during a class session. Do not open a browser window or other application to social media or to unrelated materials during a class session. You are responsible for yourself—and your attention and investment in learning is your own business **up to the point where you interfere with others**. Having YouTube or a game or social media visible on your laptop interferes with the experience of other students. Do not abuse my

willingness to allow laptop use for your own notetaking and learning by abusing the learning experiences of your peers.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (Parrish 113W) or email studentdisabilityservices@swarthmore.edu to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs. As appropriate, the Office will issue students with documented disabilities a formal Accommodations Letter. Since accommodations require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services as soon as possible. For details about the accommodations process, [visit the Student Disability Service Website](http://www.swarthmore.edu/academic-advising-support/welcome-to-student-disability-service) at <http://www.swarthmore.edu/academic-advising-support/welcome-to-student-disability-service>. You are also welcome to contact me [the faculty member] privately to discuss your academic needs. However, all disability-related accommodations must be arranged through the Office of Student Disability Services.

Wed January 22

Introduction and Overview: Causes, Meaning, Consequences
Why African History Is Worth Your Time
What Is a Discipline? What Are They Good For? (And Not)
Course Expectations and Structure: What a Survey Is For

Fri Jan 24

Lecture: Envisioning West Africa

Start reading Toby Green, Introduction, *A Fistful of Shells*

Monday Jan 27

Lecture: The Craft of the Historian: West African edition
The Problem of the Archive
Other Forms of Evidence
Deeper Problems: The Politics of African Knowledge and Knowledge About Africa

Finish reading Toby Green, Introduction, *A Fistful of Shells*

Wed Jan 29

Discussion: Definitions and Why They Matter I
(State, Nation, Empire, Polity, Regime, Kingdom, Region, Territory, Network)

Start reading Michael Gomez, *African Dominion: A New History of Empire in Early and Medieval West Africa*, pp. 9-42 (Moodle)

Fri Jan 31

Discussion and Review: The Political, Social and Material Landscape of West Africa in the Era of Mali

Assignment: Bring two reactions to the Gomez reading, to turn in: 1) A word or term in the reading that you want explained and discussed; 2) a sentence in which you feel Gomez is making an argument or interpretation from historical evidence.

Finish reading Gomez' *African Dominion*, pp. 9-42 (Moodle)

Mon Feb 3

Lecture: The Trans-Saharan Trade and the Rise of Islam in West Africa

Start reading Michael Gomez, *African Dominion*, pp. 61-91 (Moodle)

Wed Feb 5

Discussion and Review: Centuries and moments: thinking about time and causation in history

Finish reading Gomez, *African Dominion*, pp. 61-91 (Moodle)

Fri Feb 7

Discussion and Review: The Sunjata Epic

Be halfway through reading: D.T. Niane, *Sundiata*

Mon Feb 10

Keita, the Heritage of the Griot

Keep reading Niane, *Sundiata*

View in-class: *Keita, the Heritage of the Griot*

Wed Feb 12

Discussion: Oral history as source: strengths, strategies, problems

Finish reading Niane, *Sundiata*

First paper topic distributed

Fri Feb 14

Lecture: The Senegal River Valley, Oyo, Benin, Igboland, Kongo up to 1550

Start reading Toby Green, Introduction and Chapter One and Two, *Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade* (Moodle)

Monday Feb 17

Discussion: Historiography, theories of history, and the problem of origins

Continue reading Green, *Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade* (Moodle)

Wed Feb 19

Discussion: Green's theory of Atlantic creolization

Finish reading Toby Green, Introduction and Chapter One and Two, *Rise of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Moodle)

Assignment: What does Green think is different or new about his claims about "Atlantic creoles" in Western Africa? Find one sentence where Green is describing what is novel or different about his analysis in relationship to the historiography.

Fri Feb 21

Discussion/review: How to write a paper for a history professor

Assignment: Write up a different paper topic that draws from our first four weeks of class, turn in at beginning of class.

Mon Feb 24

Lecture: Green's theory of early Atlantic slaving vs. other common arguments about origins

Start reading Green, *A Fistful of Shells*, pp. 31-107

First paper due by 5pm.

Wed Feb 26

Discussion: Definitions and why they matter II: Slavery

Live reading in-class: Lovejoy, Kopytoff and Miers, Patterson, Stevenson

Finish reading Green, *A Fistful of Shells*, pp. 31-107

Fri Feb 28

Lecture: West Africa compared to Central Africa and East Africa up to 1650

Start reading Green, *A Fistful of Shells*, pp. 108-185

Mon March 2

Lecture: Social formations in West Africa up to 1650

Finish reading Green, *A Fistful of Shells*, pp. 108-185

In-class midterm quiz.

Wed March 4

Discussion: The problem of past consciousness

Start reading Green, *A Fistful of Shells*, pp. 243-333

Fri March 6

Discussion: Change: sudden ruptures vs. gradual transitions. What counts as “new” in history?

SPRING BREAK

Read Green, *A Fistful of Shells*, pp. 334-429 **over break**

Mon March 16

Discussion: Personal agency in West Africa between 1400-1750

Second paper topic distributed.

Wed March 18

Discussion: The quantitative scope of African enslavement

Voyages website database: <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>
Eltis and Richardson, “A New Assessment of the Transatlantic Slave Trade”, 2008 (skim, Moodle)

Fri March 20

Discussion: Struggle, dominance and defeat: when did West Africans become fully subject to the Atlantic slave trade?

Start reading Robert Harms, *The Diligent*, up to p. 264

Mon March 23

Discussion: The totality of the Atlantic slave trade

Finish reading Robert Harms, *The Diligent*, up to p. 264

Wed March 25

Lecture: West Africa and the world in 1750: modernity and simultaneity

Start reading: Randy Sparks, *Where the Negroes Are Masters*, selection (Moodle)

Fri March 27

Discussion: Anomabu

Finish reading: Randy Sparks, *Where the Negroes Are Masters*

Start reading: Ana Lucia Araujo, "Dahomey, Portugal and Bahia" (Moodle)

Mon March 30

NO CLASS

Wed April 1

Discussion: Dahomey

Finish reading: Ana Lucia Araujo, "Dahomey, Portugal and Bahia" (Moodle)

Assignment: Find two things that seem similar about Anomabu and Dahomey and two things that seem different. Write a paragraph describing the comparison, due at the beginning of class.

Fri April 3

Lecture: Benin and Oyo

Start reading: Northrup ed, et al, *The Diary of Antera Duke* (Moodle)

Mon April 6

Discussion: Calabar

Finish reading: Northrup ed., et al, *The Diary of Antera Duke* (Moodle)

Assignment: What difference does it make to hear about a place like Calabar from a primary source? 2-3 sentences, due at the beginning of class.

Wed April 8

Discussion: Atlantic African transformations: War and rebellion

Review *A Fistful of Shells*, pp. 243-333

Fri April 10

Atlantic African Transformations: Spirituality and religion

In-class viewing: *Ceddo*

Second paper due.

Mon April 13

Discussion: Atlantic African transformations: society, ideology, worldview

Review *A Fistful of Shells*, pp. 334-429

Wed April 16

Lecture: Abolition and the "Era of Legitimate Commerce"

Start reading Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (Moodle)

Fri April 18

Discussion: Mungo Park and 19th Century European views of Western Africa

Finish reading Mungo Park, *Travels* (Moodle)

Mon April 20

Discussion: Consequences I: Revolution and modernity in 19th Century Western Africa

Start reading Green, *Fistful of Shells*, pp. 430-476

Wed April 22

Discussion: Consequences II: Economics, demography, society

Finish reading Green, *Fistful of Shells*, pp. 430-476

Review Green overall

Fri April 24

Lecture: From the 19th Century to the 21st Century: Lasting impacts

Start reading Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*

Monday April 27

Discussion: *Lose Your Mother*

Finish reading Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*

Wednesday April 29

Discussion: Responsibilities and reparations

Fri May 1

Review for final exam

