AFRICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

HIST 3530

Spring 2016

Course Description
This course will explore the intersection of the history of Africa, science, and the
environment. Throughout the semester, we will discuss how African environments
have shaped the course of history as well as how people have formed these envi-
ronments. We will also discover the many forms of science on the continent, start-
ing from European involvement in the slave trade to what feeds your morning stim-
ulant addiction. Throughout the course, you will encounter different systems of
knowledge, complicated power dynamics of science, and images of African land-
scapes and animals which will require you to think critically about how history has
been written and presented.

Course Objectives

• Understand interaction of people and the environment in African history.

• Understand the impact of science on Africa as well as Africa’s influence on
  science.

• Understand how African history is situated in the history of the world.

• Develop critical thinking and writing skills based on evidence and informed
  opinions.

• Gain confidence in communicating ideas in public settings.

• Develop skills related to research and writing.

Grading Scale

A   100-93
A–  92-90
B+  89-87
B   86-83
B–  82-80
C+  79-77
C   76-73
C–  72-70
D+  69-67
D   66-60
F   59-0

Matapato Hills, Zimbabwe
Assignments

You will have several assignments throughout the semester, so it is important you keep up with readings and what is going on in class each week. Some assignments are long-term assessments and some are short-term. Time-management is key to your overall success in this course.

Weekly Reading Responses 20%

Every Thursday, you will turn in a one page, single-spaced reading response to the week’s readings. (1-inch margins; Times New Roman, size 12) You may be given a prompt, but some week’s may be free writes. On Thursday, you will bring the response printed out to class. Emailed responses will not be accepted. Your presence is required to turn it in. You have two free passes. Having these ready for class will aid your participation in class discussion and understanding of the lecture.

Participation 25 %

This is an active learning classroom. Your active participation makes the course more engaging, fun, and productive. In this class, participation means more than answering the professor’s questions; you will be a peer teacher and researcher. There are several ways to earn participation points throughout the semester. You can find a detailed description on Canvas, but a few examples include: daily active engagement in class discussion, 5 minute flash presentations of a new idea or in-depth study of previous one, or engaging in online discussion on Canvas.

Required Texts


Mid-Term Critical Analysis 25%

You will write a 5-6 page essay, analyzing the major themes of the course. Over the course of the first half of the semester, you should pay attention to how the readings, videos, and class discussions address the major themes of the course. Then, in this essay, you will analyze how these themes inform African history and the history of science and the environment. Consider these questions as you write: How do the themes transcend geographic boundaries? How have your perceptions of race and gender changed over the course of the semester? What role do scientists have in politics? How do politics and environmental issues inform each other? What role have Africans and Europeans had in the production of knowledge of science/environment? These are not the only questions you might consider, but serve as a starting point. The essay should conclude with your assessment on future work for historians of Africa, science, and the environment.

Landscape Portfolio 30%

Throughout the course we will be discussing the ways in which Africans interact with the landscape, but this idea of landscape itself has much meaning. You will identify an African landscape to research, explore, and report on in a Landscape Portfolio. In a portfolio, you will examine your chosen location in many different ways throughout the semester using Evernote as your online portfolio. You will share this with the professor and as due dates arise, upload each component. Further details for this assignment can be found on Canvas.
Class Policies

- Everyone’s behavior affects our learning environment. Please arrive on time and do not begin to pack up until our session is over. If you need to come in late or leave early, please sit at the back or edge of the room so as not to disrupt the class.
- Please limit the use of computers in the classroom. Research has shown that students do better in class when they write notes by hand rather than on a computer.
- Phones should be completely silent. Even phones on vibrate are distracting. The use of phones for photography or recording is not allowed.
- Late assignments: Late essays will be deducted 10% for each day late up to one week. After 7 days, the assignment will not be accepted.
- No attendance taken. Recognize that it pays to show up regularly. In class, you hear the particular points of a lecture as well as the general context in which those points are raised. One without the other usually leads to problems on exams.
- Ask questions. If you are confused, please do not hesitate to ask in class or during office hours.
- In class, I expect you to focus your attention on the lecture and discussion. Chatting with neighbors, reading newspapers, answering your phone, browsing the Internet, updating Facebook or Twitter, or sleeping are all great things, but not in the classroom. In the classroom, they are rude and distracting. Worse still, they break down the mutual respect between students and teacher.
- By attending regularly, you do not depend on someone else’s notes — notes that might turn out to be awful. In class, you can work on a skill that the non-attender never develops: note-taking abilities. You cannot sharpen this skill just by copying notes but only by doing the work yourself: be a good listener, become familiar with materials in its entirety, and learning to discern, organize, and inter-relate the critical components of an argument. I cannot emphasize the importance of these skills inside and outside the university.

Course Schedule

The course schedule can be found on Canvas. Keep up with readings for each class, and check this page regularly. The schedule and reading list is subject to change, but I will post announcements if I make any alterations. I believe it is best to print out articles and excerpted readings. Always bring the readings with you to class.

I suggest that in addition to having the weekly reading reflection, you also have your own notes on the reading. You should also have some ideas (probably written down) on issues/topics/questions you might raise in class discussion ready before coming to class. Review lecture notes before coming to class.
Course Schedule (Tentative)

January 12/14 The African Continent – Landscapes in History
Tuesday: Introduction to the course, assignments, and responsibilities
Thursday: Overview of African history
Reading: *Very Short Introduction* Chapters 1-3.

January 19/21 The African Continent continued
Tuesday: Overview of African History & Environmental History
Thursday: Sourcing Africa History

January 26/28 The Nunu of Central Africa
Tuesday: Read through page 80 of *Games Against Nature*
Thursday: Jigsaw Reading of chapters 5-9 of GAN. We will assign chapters the week before. Peer teaching of Nunu’s interaction with the environment.

February 2/4 The Introduction European Perspectives on the Environment and Resources
Tuesday: Conclusion of GAN. Read through end of book.

February 9/11: Introduction to Colonial Science
Tuesday: Scramble for Africa and the scattering of scientists
Thursday: Birds of a Feather? African knowledge & European science
February 16/18 Race, Gender, and Science in Africa

Tuesday: Sara Baartman – race and gender intersect on one person

Video: In class, we will watch the video *The Life and Times of Sara Baartman*. (52 mins)

Thursday: Images of race and gender


February 23/25 Agricultural Control

Tuesday: British agricultural schemes


Thursday: Southern Africa – Politics in the soil


March 1/3 King Leopold’s Rubber Kingdom

Tuesday: The backdoor of the scramble for Africa

Video: Part 1 of “White King, Red Rubber, Black Death”

Thursday: The fall of King Leopold’s Kingdom

Video: Part 2 of “White King, Red Rubber, Black Death”

Mid-term critical analysis due.

March 8/10 Spring Break—No Class

March 15/17 From Appalachia to Africa—Richard Garner, Primatologist

Tuesday: A Southerner in Gabon

Reading: Rich, Introduction through Chapter 3 of *Missing Links*

Thursday: Primates and colonial images

Reading: Finish *Missing Links*, Chapters 4-7;

March 22/24 Post-Colonial African Environments

Tuesday: Fortress Conservation

Thursday: Community based conservation


March 29/31 African Wildlife

Tuesday: Hunting


Thursday Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey in context

Reading: Read through the articles and examine the images of The Jane Goodall Archive at National Geographic http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/gombe-hub & The Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International http://gorillafund.org/Page.aspx?pid=377. Finally, what can you find on ngs.com about Fossey?

April 5/7 African “Traditions” in a Modern World

Tuesday: Pastoralism


Thursday: African knowledge systems in a modern context


April 12/14 Energy Consumption in Africa

Tuesday: Deforestation


Thursday: Alternative Energy

April 19/21 Our Caffeine Addiction

Tuesday Coffee


Thursday: Tea


April 26/28 Student Presentations of Landscape Portfolios

You will be assigned to present on Tuesday or Thursday. You must be present both days to receive full credit for your presentation.