

***Africa and the Atlantic World, 1400-1880***  
***History / Africana Studies 262***

***Fall 2009***



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*Class Meeting Times: Monday, Wednesday 2:30 - 3:55, Kanbar 107*

*Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:00-3:00; Wednesday 1:00-2:00*

*Course web site: <http://blackboard.bowdoin.edu/> (access for enrolled students only)*

### **Course Description**

This lecture and discussion class surveys historical developments before conquest by European powers, with a focus on west and central Africa. We explore how politics, society, and culture changed with the intensification of the Atlantic Ocean trade. The course revolves around several scholarly controversies in the study of Africa and the Atlantic World: What influence did Africans have on the making of the Atlantic World? In what ways did Africans participate in the Atlantic slave trade? How were African identities re-made across the Atlantic World and on the slave plantations of the Americas? We end by considering the effects of the abolition of the slave trade on Africa and the turbulent times brought about by the advance of European colonial forces.

### **Course Goals**

In addition to introducing you to pre-colonial African history and the Atlantic slave trade, the course will familiarize you with the many different sources that historians of Africa use to write about the past. Several exercises will aid in the development of your writing skills. You will also have many opportunities to participate in class discussion and presentations that will develop your verbal presentation skills.

The course goals cannot be accomplished without *your* active participation in the class. Please complete the readings listed below before the assigned class. Don't worry if they are difficult or don't make sense at first. Bring questions for discussion and for clarification to class. I will guide you (and sometimes lecture!), but this is your class and I encourage participation.

### **Assignments**

You will be assessed in a number of different ways in this course — so take the time to prepare all the assignments carefully.

**Formal Papers:** The two formal papers can be found in the syllabus. More detailed handouts on the papers will also be distributed. Papers should be submitted and will be graded electronically.

**Journals:** You will write four short journal entries, three of which focus on different portions of the novel, *Segu*. They are due on 9:00 am on the day of the appropriate class. If you make an honest effort on your entries, you will gain full credit (worth 1% of your total grade per entry). You are expected to write a short paragraph and raise one or two

discussion questions. I have indicated questions that the class will explore, but you should also use the journals as an opportunity to reflect on what you find most interesting about the reading.

**Group Assignments:** The two group assignments are a debate on the role of Africans in the Atlantic slave trade and a debate on African identities in the Americas. Preparation involves an online discussion on blackboard, with your contributions due by 9:00 am on the day of the debate. **Your individual contribution to group discussions on blackboard will contribute to 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of your overall debate grades and the group discussion 1/3<sup>rd</sup>.** You will be randomly assigned to a group.

## Grades

I put great effort in ensuring that you receive the good grades that you deserve and do not grade according to a curve. Your final grade will be composed of the following:

Assignment	Value	Due Dates
Mid-Term Map & Vocab. Quiz	10%	7 Oct.
Paper One	20%	9 Oct.
Paper Two	30%	11 Dec.
Two Debate Assignments	6%	28 Oct., 11 Nov.
Journal Notes	4%	21, 30 Sept., 4,18 Nov.
Final Exam	30%	17 Dec., 2:00 pm

## Consultations

It is important for you to come to my office hours to discuss your assignments and other aspects of the course. I encourage all of you to attend my office hours. If inconvenient, please make an appointment with me and we can arrange another time. I am often available to meet for lunch.

## Attendance

More than two unexcused absences will result in a D grade.

## Books to Purchase:

The following books should be purchased. Additional readings will be made available on Blackboard, indicated by [B] on the syllabus.

D T Niane, ed. and trans., *Sundiata An Epic of Old Mali*. Essex: Longman, 2006.

David Northrup, ed., *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2001.

Maryse Condé, *Segu*. London: Penguin, 1987.

Philip Curtin, *Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade*. Prospect Ill.: Waveland Press, 1997.

John Thornton and Linda Heywood, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Jan Vansina, *How Societies are Born: Governance in West Central Africa Before 1600*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2004.

**Week One: Africa, c. 1400 (7, 9 Sept.)**

1. An Introduction to Africa and the Atlantic World, c. 1400

2. Linguistic Challenges: Controversies over Diffusion of Bantu-Speakers

Johnston, Guthrie, and Spear in Robert Collins, *Problems in African History: The Pre-Colonial Centuries*. Princeton: Markus Weiner, 1993, 55-77, 95-98. [B]

**Week Two: Archeology, Linguistics, and the Bantu-Speakers of West-Central Africa (14, 16 Sept.)**

3. The Origins of West-Central African Society.

Vansina, *How Societies are Born*, 1-68

4. From Villages to Kingdoms

Vansina *How Societies are Born*, 69-106, 160-205

**Week Three: Oral Traditions and the Kingdoms of the Savanna (21, 23 Sept.)**

5: South and East to the Savanna – The Eastern and Southern Bantu-speakers

David Gordon, *Nachituti's Gift: Economy, Society and Environment in Central Africa*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006, 31-33 [B]

Antonio Gamitto, *The Kingdom of Kazembe*, 109-130 [B]

Vansina, *How Societies are Born*, 206-260

**Journal Entry One (Due 21 Sept, 9:00 am)** Write about the advantages and disadvantages of using oral tradition, written eye-witness testimony, and historical linguistics as sources for Lunda history.

6: Oral Tradition and the Writing of History

Niane, *Sundiata*, xxii-xxiv, 1-17

Francois Dossou, "Writing and Oral Tradition in the Transmission of Knowledge," in *Endogenous Knowledge Research Trails*. Dakar: Codesria, 1997 [B]

**Week Four: Meanings and Manifestations of Wealth in the Sahel (28-30 Sept.)**

7. The Sahel Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai

Distribute Paper One: "The Epic of Sundiata" **Due Oct. 9.**

Niane, *Sundiata*, 18-84

Ibn Khaldun in Levtzion and Spaulding, ed., *Medieval West Africa*, 89-101 [B]

8. People, Things, and Society in West Africa

Condé, *Segu*, 1-124.

**Journal Entry Two (Due 30 Sept., 9:00 am)** What does *Segu* reveal about West African society? How is it different to our society? What are the most important forces that govern life in Segu?

**Week Five: The Atlantic World, c. 1400-1500 (5, 7 Oct.)**

9. Europe, the Americas, and the Beginnings of the Plantation Complex  
Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles*, 1-48

10. **Mid-Term Map & Vocabulary Quiz**; Introduction to the Kongo Kingdom

**Assignment One Due Oct. 9****Week Six: West-Central Africa and the Atlantic World (14 Oct.)**

11. *Fall Vacation*

12. Warfare, Society, and Atlantic Slavery: The Kongo Kingdom and Angola; Return  
Mid-Term Map Quiz

Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles*, 49-168

Hillard, *African Intellectual History*, 356-8 [Letter from King Affonso of Kongo] [B]

**Week Seven: The Making of an African Diaspora (19, 21 Oct. )**

17. An African Creole Culture in West Central Africa?

Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles*, 169-235

18. From Santeria to Condomble: African Identities Across the Atlantic

Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles*, 236-331

**Week Eight: Disputing the Diaspora (26, 28 Oct.)**

19. The Arguments and Historiography of the African Diaspora. **Group Assignment One**: Debate: “The trauma of the slave trade undermined African attempts to maintain cultural and religious identities in the America”

Northrup, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 149-166.

20. Debate One

**Blackboard discussion contributions to be completed by 28 Oct, 9:00 am**

**Week Nine: West Africa and the Slave Trade and the Slave Trade (2, 4 Nov.)**

13. Dahomey and the Slave Trade

Condé, *Segu*, 125-260

14. Yoruba and Asante. Discussion: African Rulers and the Slave Trade

Condé, *Segu*, 261-322

**Journal Entry Three (Due 4 Nov., 9:00 am)**: What does *Segu* reveal about attitudes towards slavery and the slave trade, especially by African leaders?

**Week Ten: Debate: Africans and the Slave Trade (9, 11 Nov.)**

15. **Group Assignment Two:** Debate: “The trans-Atlantic slave emerged, was sustained, and driven by objective economic principles. Furthermore, the trade contributed to economic growth, the consolidation of states, and the rise of wealthy elites across the Atlantic World, including Africa.”

Northrup, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* 1-63; 101-131.

16. Debate Two

**Blackboard discussion contributions to be completed by 11 Nov., 9:00 am.**

**Week Eleven: The End of the Atlantic Slave Trade (16, 18 Nov.)**

21. Reasons for the End of the Atlantic Slave Trade

Northrup, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 134-149

22. The Impact and Consequences of Abolition.

Condé, *Segu*, 325-418

**Journal Entry Four (Due 18 Nov., 9:00 am)** Consider the impact of the abolition of the slave trade and slavery in Africa and Americas as presented in *Segu*? What kinds of changes did abolition bring about? What were the limits of abolition?

**Week Twelve: Abolition and its Aftermath (23 Nov.)**

27. Voices of Freedom; Preparation for Final Written Paper

Curtin, *Africa Remembered*, 152-189, 199-216, 289-333

28. *Thanksgiving*

**Week Thirteen: The Aftermath (30 Nov., 2 Dec.)**

29. Jihad in West Africa

Condé, *Segu*, 421-490.

30. Transformations in South-Central Africa and West Central Africa: The Mfecane Selections from *William and Mary Quarterly* October (2009)

**Week Fourteen: Legacies and Revision (7, 9 Dec.)**

31. Legacies of the Atlantic World and the Rise of European Colonialism in Africa

32: Revision for Final Exam: Answer Sample Questions for Final Exam

**Paper Two Due on 11 December**

**Final Exam: 17 Dec. 2:00 pm.**