

**HI 870/Fall 2014**  
**Introduction to African Historiography**  
**Prof. Diana Wylie**  
**Mon. 3-6**  
**African Studies Center (232 Bay State Road) Room 505**  
**Office Hours: M, W 1:30-2:30 and by appointment**  
**Office: African Studies Center, #517**  
**e-mail: [dwylie@bu.edu](mailto:dwylie@bu.edu)**  
**Phone: 617 353-6645**

### Goals of the Seminar

The purpose of this seminar is to provide graduate students with an introduction to key themes, methods, sources, and debates in the historiography of Africa. The approach will be that of a reading seminar with an emphasis on analysis of method and the distinctive character of historical writing on Africa within North American, European, and African traditions of historical scholarship. Students in the seminar will receive guidance and peer support in writing a bibliographic paper, précis of major monographs, as well as assessing articles and review essays in the field.

Key thematic foci include:

Methods and Sources for Pre-colonial History	Islam and Christianity in Africa
Pre-colonial State-building	Imperialism and the Scramble
Africa and the Atlantic World	Colonialism and Social History
Slavery and the Slave Trades	Environmental History
South Africa	The History of Health

### Seminar Project and Evaluation Criteria

This is a reading seminar. Its forms of evaluation will emphasize writing in two forms. The first will be weekly **one-page précis statements** that describe the central argument and evidence for monographs. The second writing exercise will be a **15-20 page bibliographic essay** (aka review article) that surveys the literature on either a particular theme (examples appear above) or a regional historiography related to the student's long-term research/teaching interest. That bibliographic essay should take the form of a review article intended for a professional journal, such as the *International Journal of African Historical Studies* or the *Journal of African History*.

### Readings

Weekly readings will consist of a core set of classic and innovative monographs that have contributed to the founding of national and regional historiographies of Africa as well as key themes within a broader continent-wide focus. In addition to monographs, the seminar may examine seminal periodical literature and review essays that fostered debate and statements by influential scholars in the field. For each weekly reading, students will

also gather a corpus of book reviews for those works as a means of placing a particular work within a professional framework. All readings – except the five that are available online (2d Thornton title, Harms, Livingston, McCann, Cooper) -- have been put on 2-hour reserve in Mugar library and are available for purchase.

### Seminar Leadership

Students will take part in weekly seminars as participants in discussions. Perhaps two times over the course of the semester students will serve as discussion leaders, framing questions, and organizing the seminar agenda for that week. Wherever possible, this Third Hour should take the form of analyzing **documents**.

### Academic Integrity

Students are expected to observe the procedures and guidelines regarding plagiarism and academic integrity prescribed by the Boston University Graduate School. Those guidelines are provided on the following Graduate School website:

<http://www.bu.edu/grs/academics/resources/adp.html>.

### Weekly Seminar Schedule

Sept. 8 (Week One)

#### **Introduction and Seminar Method**

Sept 15 (Week Two)

#### **Methods and Sources in Pre-modern African History**

Reading: Jan Vansina, *Living with Africa*  
(Comparative: Roland Oliver, *Realms of Gold* (1997))

Sept. 22 (Week Three)

#### **Pre-colonial States and Local Structures**

Reading: John Thornton, *The Kongolese St. Anthony* (1998)  
(Prof. Thornton will visit)

Sept. 29 (Week Four)

#### **Slavery and the Slave Trades**

Reading: Robert Harms, *The Diligent* (2002)  
(Comparative: Philip Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (1965))

Tuesday Oct. 6 (Week Five)

#### **Formation of the Atlantic World**

Reading: Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World* (1999) Prof. Thornton will visit  
(Comparative: Judith Carney, *Black Rice* (2001))

Oct. 14 (Week Six)

#### **Islam and Christianity in Modern Africa**

Readings: B. Cooper, *Evangelical Christians in the Muslim Sahel* (2006)

(Comparative: E. A. Ayende, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria* (1966))

Oct. 20 (Week Seven)

**The History of Health**

Reading: Julie Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination in Botswana* (2005)

(Comparative: Eric Silla, *People are not the same* (1998))

Oct. 27 (Week Eight)

**Mau Mau and the End of Colonial Rule in Africa**

Reading: Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning* (2005)

(Comparative: F. Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (2002))

Nov. 3 (Week Nine)

**Nationalism and the Idea of Authenticity**

Reading: James McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria* (2006)

Nov. 10 (Week Ten)

**Southern Africa: Contexts of Apartheid**

Reading: Wylie, *Art + Revolution* (2008).

(Comparative: John Pepper, *Art and the End of Apartheid* (2009))

Nov. 17 (Week Eleven)

**Bibliographic Essays: Progress Reports**

Assignment: Students will present a ten-minute progress report on their bibliographic essays' themes and summarize the format and argument of a review article chosen from a professional historical journal.

Nov. 24 (Week Twelve)

**African Environmental History**

Reading: James McCann, *Maize and Grace*

(Comparative: Fairhead and Leach, *Misreading the African Landscape* (1996))  
(Prof. McCann will visit)

Dec. 1 (Week Thirteen)

**Final Session: Semester Project Reports**

Students will present a 15 minute summary of their Project Reports on a theme or region in African historiography. Students are also expected to comment critically on the reports of other seminar members.

Dec. 8 (Week Fourteen) **Conclusions: paper due**