

HI 870/Fall 2018
Introduction to African Historiography
Prof. Diana Wylie
Fri. 11:15-2 pm
African Studies Center (232 Bay State Road) Room 505
Office Hours: M, W 11-12 and by appointment
Office: African Studies Center, #517
e-mail: 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 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 should also gather a corpus of book reviews as a means of placing a particular work within a professional

framework. All readings – except those that are available online -- have been put on 24-hour reserve in Mugar library and may be purchased.

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, usually during the Third Hour, framing questions and contributing to the seminar agenda for that week. The comparative titles listed below may give you ideas for the Third Hour.

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. 7 (Week One)

Introduction and Seminar Method

Sept 14 (Week Two)

Methods and Sources in Pre-modern African History

Reading: Jan Vansina, *Living with Africa*

(Comparative: Roland Oliver, *Realms of Gold* (1997); Terence Ranger, *Writing Revolt* (2013))

Sept. 21 (Week Three)

Formation of the Atlantic World

Reading: John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World* (1999)

(Comparative: Judith Carney, *Black Rice* (2001))

Sept. 28 (Week Four)

Slavery and the Slave Trades

Reading: Robert Harms, *The Diligent* (2002)

(Comparative: Philip Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (1965))

Oct. X (Week Five). *Alternative date to be arranged*

Pre-modern Africa: women and legal sources

Reading: Trevor Getz, *Abina and the Important Men: A Graphic History* (2011)

(Comparative: C. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms* (1980))

Oct. 12 (Week Six)

Social History and Commodities

Reading: Emmanuel Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change, A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana from c. 1800 to the Present* (1996)

(Comparative: Jeremy Prestholdt, *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization* (2008))

Oct. 19 (Week Seven)

Mau Mau and the End of Colonial Rule in Africa

Reading: David Anderson, *History of the Hanged* (2005))

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

C. Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning* (2005))

No class on October 26; individual meetings to discuss final review essay topic

Nov. 2 (Week Eight)

The History of Health

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

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

Nov. 9 (Week Nine)

Religious Conversion and Politics

Reading: Derek Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival* (2012)

(Comparative: Debate on Peterson's book to be found in *Social Science and Missions* 27 (2014), 267-280. (Essays by J.D.Y. Peel, Justin Willis and Mark Noll))

No class on November 16; individual meetings to discuss final review essay progress

Nov. 30 (Week Ten)

Southern Africa: Contexts of Apartheid

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

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

Dec. 7 (Week Eleven)

African Environmental History

Reading: James McCann, *Maize and Grace*

(Comparative: Fairhead and Leach, *Misreading the African Landscape* (1996))

Dec. xx (Week Twelve) **Semester Project Reports: date to be arranged**

Students will present a circa 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. Papers will be due 5 days later so you have time to adopt edits and suggestions.