

History 5304: Seminar in World History: Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa



The Battle of Adwa (Ethiopia, 1896)

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Office Hours: Mondays, 1-3 & Tuesdays, 9-12

General Introduction

This class is an exploration of the politics, structures and impact of African colonization and decolonization, principally between 1870 and the present. Through a series of lectures, discussions, readings, and activities, we will explore the scope, content and long-term effects of colonialism in Africa. You will gain a basic knowledge of African histories, cultures, and peoples but our discussions of colonialism will also have a broad application to similar situations across the world.

Land Acknowledgement

Sul Ross State University (Alpine) is on the ancestral lands of the Jumanos, Lipan Apaches, Comanches, Kiowas, Plains Apaches, Mescalero Apaches and Chisos Apaches.

Academic Objectives

At the end of this class, students should be able to

1. Articulate a basic outline of African history since 1880
2. Explain the structure and scope of European colonial regimes in Africa
3. Identify post-colonial problems and structures in Africa
4. Understand why historiography is an important aspect of the practice of history
5. Demonstrate mastery by researching and writing a historiographical essay on a topic within some aspect of colonial or post-colonial African histories

Student Learning Outcomes

The history student will demonstrate historical research skills in a logically-organized, written paper that is mechanically correct and supported by relevant documentation of historical content. Marketable Skills:

- Students will learn the importance of meeting deadlines in a successful manner.
- Students can identify the differences between primary and secondary sources, a crucial step in developing critical thinking skills.
- Students can learn to select and organize data in a relevant manner.
- Students can hone their writing skills.

The history student will demonstrate the ability to write about topics in historiography and how those topics are interpreted. Marketable Skills:

- Students can learn how ideas and interpretations change over time.
- Students can learn how to evaluate different interpretations and ideas.
- Students can learn how to use evidence to persuade various audiences.

The history student will demonstrate knowledge of American History, World History, and Non-American History. Marketable Skills:

- Students can develop a better understanding of the development of various cultures, political and economic systems, gender and race relations, and environmental change.

- Students can develop a multicultural perspective necessary for an increasingly globalized world.
- Students can learn how to manage and absorb various perspectives and information.

Required Texts

- Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* [1972] (New York: Verso, 2018)
- A. Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism* [1989] (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011)
- Bala Saho, *Contours of Change: Muslim Courts, Women and Islamic Society in Colonial Bathurst, the Gambia, 1905-1965* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2018)
- Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* [1963] (New York: Grove Press, 2004)
- Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996)

All other assigned readings will be provided by the instructor. This does not include historiographical readings you will need to access through the library.

Grades

Each student earns their own grade. However, you are not only a student, but a contributor, a co-learner, and a fellow investor in our collective educational experience. My job as the instructor is to assess your work along clearly articulated guidelines and expectations. I also value and reward improvement. It is therefore critical that you do all the assignments, watch all lectures, and participate in the discussions.

Late Work

I do not accept late work aside from extenuating circumstances specified in the “Reasonable Accommodation and Extenuating Circumstances” section of the syllabus. If possible, please notify me in advance of extenuating circumstances.

Assignments

Historiography Paper (50 points)

Historiography – the study of how previous historians have discussed a particular historical topic – is an important aspect of our profession. In this class, you will write a historiographical essay on a particular topic of your choosing within the broader fields of colonial and post-colonial African History. Your topic must be approved in consultation with me. Your essay should engage with at least 15 secondary sources (this is the

minimum) over the course of 20-25 pages. You do not need to do any primary source research for this assignment; primary sources will not count towards the secondary source requirement. Over the course of the semester, you will complete various assignments associated with the paper, including selecting a topic, two check ins, turning in a partial draft, turning in a full draft, and turning in a final, polished version.

Category	Explanation	Due Date	Point Value (out of 50)
Topic	Select a historiographical topic in consultation with professor	1/25	5
Check In #1	Identify at least five academic secondary sources and provide one page of writing	2/8	5
Check In #2	Identify at least ten academic secondary sources and provide three pages of writing	2/22	5
Partial Draft	Provide five pages of writing	4/5	5
Full Draft	Provide at least twenty pages of writing	5/1	5
Sources*	Did you include at least 15 secondary sources? Is it clear that you did your homework and figured out who the most important authors in your field are?		5
Length*	Does your essay meet the basic requirement of 20 pages?		5
Style*	Does your essay flow well? Does your discussion make sense? Could someone who was unfamiliar with African history follow your discussion?		5
Chicago Format*	Did you follow Chicago format?		5
Grammar/Editing*	Are grammatical errors or other editing issues noticeable? Is it clear that you proofed your paper more than once and spent some time doing so?		5

*only applies to the final draft

Discussion Questions (5 points)

At the beginning of the semester, you will sign up to provide discussion questions for two of the following fifteen weeks. For each week you select, you will need to read the assigned materials in advance and devise two questions that you believe would prompt

conversations about those materials. Discussion questions must be submitted to me by Thursday at 11:59pm on your chosen week.

Discussion (45 points)

Discussion is an opportunity for us to learn as a community. Participation in discussion is mandatory and will be done via a video posting on Blackboard. As long as you participate in good faith (it should be clear that you read the assigned readings, thought about them, and that you are listening to your colleague's responses), you will receive full points. I will post some initial questions each week to get us started, but you will be responsible for posting at least a two-minute response and a one-minute response to your colleague. Initial postings are due by Friday at 11:59pm. Responses are due by Sunday at 11:59pm.

Category	Explanation	Due Date	Point Value
Post	Is your response at least 2 minutes? Does it clearly reflect genuine engagement with the assigned readings? Do you show us that you have read and thought about the assigned readings?	Friday @11:59pm	2
Response	Did you respond to your colleague? Is your response at least 1 minute? Did you listen to your colleague and then engage with the ideas they are articulating? (if you simply repeat their ideas, you will not receive points)	Sunday @11:59pm	1

POLICIES

Contact

Please contact me via email or speak to me during my office hours. During the work week (Monday through Friday), I will do my best to respond to your email within 24 hours.

Conduct

All are welcome in my classroom. I expect you to treat your fellow classmates and any guests with empathy, kindness, and respect. Remember that we (myself, you and your peers) can make mistakes. In that circumstance, I ask for grace for both myself and your colleagues. I hope to extend that same grace to you.

Academic Integrity

Students who violate academic integrity will receive a zero on the associated assignment. Some examples of violations of academic integrity are plagiarism, failure to properly cite sources of information, or submitting papers written by someone else (including with the assistance of artificial intelligence). To be successful in this class, your work must be yours and yours alone.

A.I. Policy

Any use of artificial intelligence must be documented. While A.I. can absolutely be a useful tool, it is not a replacement for critical thinking or academic research.

Reasonable Accommodation and Extenuating Circumstances

In the event of illness, a death in your family, or other catastrophic personal crisis, I will be sympathetic and flexible, *provided* that you alert me as soon as possible and preferably in advance of an assignment's due date. Belated excuses will not account for poorly done or late work. You will need to support any medical excuses with the appropriate, written documentation. I will also work with you to accommodate long term extenuating circumstances, such as pregnancy and childbirth, limited transportation, childcare, eldercare, limited access to the internet, limited access to permanent housing, or other issues. While I cannot solve these problems, I will work with you.

RESOURCES

Students with Disabilities

Sul Ross State University is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities, but it is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility services must contact:

Mary Schwartze
Ferguson Hall, Room 112
Mailing address: P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas 79832
Phone: 432-837-8691
Email: mschwartze@sulross.edu

As a person with disabilities, I hope you will take advantage of these resources.

Counseling

Sul Ross has partnered with TimelyCare. All SRSU students will have access to nine free counseling sessions. You can learn more about this 24/7/365 support by visiting Timelycare/SRSU. The SR Counseling and Accessibility Services office will continue to offer in-person counseling in Ferguson Hall room 112 (Alpine campus).

Academic Assistance

As an SRSU student, you have access to several programs designed to assist your academic performance. If you need help with writing, contact the SRSU Writing Center via Blackboard: https://shsu.blackboard.com/ultra/organizations/_195798_1/cl/outline or via Robin Alvarez (Writing Center Coordinator) at rka19ro@sulross.edu. You also have access to the Lobo Den Tutoring Center at Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library. Anthony Quintana is Coordinator of Tutoring Services: anthony.quintana@sulross.edu.

Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine offers free resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123).

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 (January 14-18)

- Lecture: Africans and Europeans in the Atlantic World, 1450-1870
- Discussion: Introduction

Week 2 (January 20-25)

- Lecture: European Designs for Africa
- Readings: Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, xiii-175
- Discussion: African Development and European Colonialism
- Historiography Topic Due January 25

January 19 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Week 3 (January 26-February 1)

- Lecture: The Scramble
- Readings: Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 175-354
- Discussion: How did Europe Underdevelop Africa?

Week 4 (February 2-8)

- Lecture: Consolidation and Resistance
- Readings: Boahen, *African Perspectives*
- Discussion: The Scramble for Africa
- Historiography Paper Check In #1 Due

Week 5 (February 9-15)

- Lecture: Africans and Europeans under Colonial Rule
- Readings: Saho, *Contours of Change*
- Discussion: Women and Colonial Structures

Week 6 (February 16-22)

- Lecture: Colonialism and Violence in Africa
- Readings:
 - Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, xlix-96
 - [France 24, Thiaroye 44: Investigating a Colonial-Era Massacre in Senegal \(2022\)](#)
- Discussion: Colonialism and Violence
- Historiography Paper Check In #2 Due February 22

Week 7 (February 23-March 1)

- Lecture: The Economy of Colonialism
- Readings:
 - Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 97-180
 - [Burna Boy, “Monsters You Made” \(2020\)](#)
- Discussion: Nationalism, National Identity and Decolonization

Week 8 (March 2-8)

- Lecture: The Foundations of Decolonization
- Readings: Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 181-239
- Discussion: Colonial Wars and Mental Disorders
- Historiography Paper Partial Draft Due

Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10 (March 16-22)

- Lecture: Decolonization in North Africa
- [Readings: The Battle of Algiers \(1966\)](#)
- Discussion: The Algerian Revolution, Frantz Fanon, and *The Battle of Algiers*

Week 11 (March 23-29)

- Lecture: The Congo
- Readings: Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 1-61
- Discussion: The Structure of Colonialism

Week 12 (March 30-April 5)

- Lecture: The Fall of the Portuguese Empire
- Readings: Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 62-179
- Discussion: Indirect Rule
- Historiography Paper Full Draft Due

Week 13 (April 6-12)

- Lecture: The Trials of Independence
- Readings:
 - [General Idi Amin Dada: A Self-Portrait \(1974\)](#)
 - [Thomas Sankara: The Upright Man \(2006\)](#)
- Discussion: Idi Amin and Thomas Sankara

Week 14 (April 13-19)

- Lecture: Settler States in Africa
- Readings:
 - Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 183-217
 - [Prophets of Da City “Never Again” \(1994\)](#)
- Discussion: African Cultures, Colonialism and Post-Colonial Cultures

Week 15 (April 20-26)

- Lecture: China and the United States in Africa
- Readings:
 - Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 218-301
 - [Egon Cossou, “How the US overtook China as Africa's biggest foreign investor” BBC, November 8, 2025](#)
- Discussion: South Africa

Week 16 (April 27-29)

- Lecture: Post-Colonial Politics in Sudan
- Readings: [“Inside Sudan’s Forgotten War” BBC News Africa \(2024\)](#)
- Discussion: Exit Discussion
- Historiography Paper Final Draft Due