

Africa and the World in Early Times
AFR U390 – HST U390, Spring 2005
Tuesday and Friday, 1:35 – 3:15

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This course explores the early history of Africa and Africa's place in the world from the beginnings of human evolution to the high point of Africa's medieval empires in the fifteenth century. It introduces students to the multiple disciplines contributing to knowledge about early Africa, develops skills in internet research, and shows the centrality of Africa and Africans for humanity in general.

The four modules of the course address human evolution, language in history, archaeology of Neolithic and iron-age settlements, and medieval empires. For each module there will be lectures, an assigned book, internet lab sessions, preparation of a two-page paper, discussion (of the lectures, readings, and papers), and an in-class exam. Each student paper will summarize topics selected from a list of key subjects. Research for the papers will rely on internet resources, assisted in lab sessions. Papers will be posted on the web, and the exam for each module will be based on the papers as well as on readings and lectures.

Texts:

- C. Ehret, The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800
- C. Stringer and R. McKie, African Exodus : The Origins Of Modern Humanity
- B. Heine and D. Nurse, African Languages: An Introduction
- Graham Connah, African Civilizations
- D. T. Niane, Sundiata, an Epic of Old Mali

Course Grade: Each of the four papers is worth 10%, for a total of 40%
Each of the four exams is worth 10%, for a total of 40%
Attendance: 10%
Class participation: 10%

Course modules and key questions:

- Human evolution** (Weeks 2-5). What were the stages in the evolution of hominids?
What were the stages in the spread of modern Homo sapiens?
- Language** (Weeks 6-8). What can studies of language tell us about the early history of Africa and the world?
- Archaeology** (Weeks 9-11). What can studies of archaeology tell us about life in Neolithic and Iron-Age Africa?
- Medieval Empires** (Weeks 12-14). What was the character of life in Africa's medieval empires?

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1.

Friday, Jan. 7. Introduction

Week 2. Human Evolution

Tues, Jan. 11. Introduction to human evolution

Friday, Jan. 14. *Internet lab* (14 DK): Hominid evolution
Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 1-25
Stringer & McKie, *African Exodus*

Week 3. Human Evolution

Tuesday, Jan. 18. Lecture: Hominid evolution

Friday, Jan. 21. *Internet lab* (14 DK): The spread of modern Homo sapiens
Reading: Stringer & McKie, *African Exodus*

Week 4. Human Evolution

Tuesday, Jan. 25. Lecture: The spread of modern Homo sapiens

Friday, Jan. 28. Lecture: Topics and debates in human evolution
Paper 1 (paper or PowerPoint on an aspect of human evolution)

Week 5. Human Evolution

Tuesday, Feb. 1. *Internet lab* (36 DK): Discussion of papers and Stringer book

Friday, Feb. 4. **Exam 1** (based on Stringer, Ehret + papers of classmates)

Week 6. Language

Tuesday, Feb. 8. Introduction to studies of language.

Friday, Feb. 11. *Internet lab* (14 DK): Language
Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 26-58
Heine & Nurse, *African Languages*

Week 7. Language

Tuesday, Feb. 15. Lecture: Human migration as seen through language

Friday, Feb. 18. Lecture: African societies as seen through language
Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 59-106
Heine & Nurse, *African Languages*
Paper 2 (paper or PowerPoint on an aspect of language in Africa)

Week 8. Language

Tuesday, Feb. 22. *Internet lab* (36 DK): Discussion of papers + Heine & Nurse book

Friday, Feb. 25. **Exam 2** (based on Heine & Nurse, Ehret + papers of classmates)

Spring Break

Feb. 26 – March 6

Enjoy the break.

Week 9. Archaeology

- Tuesday, Mar. 8. Introduction to archaeology of Africa
Friday, Mar. 11. *Internet lab* (14 DK): Archaeology
Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 107-158
Connah, *African Civilizations*

Week 10. Archaeology

- Tuesday, Mar. 15. Lecture: Archaeology of Africa
Friday, Mar. 16. Lecture: Iron-age Africa
Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 159-237
Connah, *African Civilizations*
Paper 3 (paper or PowerPoint on an aspect of archaeology)

Week 11. Archaeology

- Tuesday, Mar. 22. *Internet lab* (36 DK): Discussion of papers and Connah book
Friday, Mar. 25. **Exam 3** (based on Connah + papers of classmates)

Week 12. Medieval Empires

- Tuesday, Mar. 29. Introduction to Medieval Empires of Africa
Friday, April 1. *Internet lab* (13 DK): Medieval Empires
Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 238-289
Niane, *Sundiata*

Week 13. Medieval Empires

- Tuesday, April 5. Lecture: Medieval Africa and the Islamic World
Friday, April 8. Lecture: Africa in world history
Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 290-348
Niane, *Sundiata*
Paper 4 (paper or PowerPoint on an aspect of medieval empires)

Week 14. Medieval Empires

- Tuesday, April 12. *Internet lab* (36 DK): Discussion of papers and Niane book

Exam Week

- Thurs., April 22.** **Exam 4** (based on Sundiata + papers of classmates)
8:00 – 10:00 a.m.