

University of Pittsburgh, Fall 2006
History of Africa before 1800
AFRCNA 0318 // HIST 0795
823 Benedum – with 8 lab sessions in 1201 WWPH
Tuesday and Thursday, 1:00 – 2:15
Blackboard: <http://courseweb.pitt.edu> — 2071_18955

Patrick Manning
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Hours: Tuesday 11:00 – 12:00; Thursday 11:00 – 1:00
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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 five modules of the course address human evolution, language in history, archaeology of Neolithic and iron-age settlements, medieval empires, and slavery. For the first four modules 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. The fifth module will be simpler, with an assigned book, lectures, and an exam.

Texts (available at Pitt bookstore):

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

Course modules and key questions:

- Human evolution** (Weeks 1-4). What were the stages in the evolution of hominids?
What were the stages in the spread of modern Homo sapiens?
- Language** (Weeks 5-7). What can studies of language tell us about the early history of Africa and the world?
- Archaeology** (Weeks 8-10). What can studies of archaeology tell us about life in Neolithic and Iron-Age Africa?
- Medieval Empires** (Weeks 11-13). What was the character of life in Africa's medieval empires?
- Slavery** (Weeks 14-15). How did slave trade and slavery change African life?

Course Grade:

Each of the four papers is worth 10%, for a total of 40% (based on group work)

Each of the five exams is worth 10%, for a total of 50% (based on individual work)

Class participation (including attendance): 10%

Note on Disability:

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact the instructor and Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union 412-648-7890 or 412-383-7355 (TTY), as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1.

Tuesday, Aug. 29. Introduction to the course

Thursday, Aug. 31. Introduction to human evolution

Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 1-25
Stringer & McKie, *African Exodus*

Week 2. Human Evolution

Tuesday, Sep. 5. *Internet lab* (1201 WWPH): Hominid evolution

Thursday, Sep. 7. Lecture: Hominid evolution

Reading: Stringer & McKie, *African Exodus*

Week 3. Human Evolution

Tuesday, Sep. 12. Lecture: The spread of modern Homo sapiens

Thursday, Sep. 14. Lecture: Topics and debates in human evolution

Paper 1 (paper or PowerPoint on an aspect of human evolution)

Reading: Stringer & McKie, *African Exodus*

Week 4. Human Evolution

Tuesday, Sep. 19. *Internet lab* (1201 WWPH): **Review 1:** Human evolution

Thursday, Sep. 21. **Exam 1.** (based on Stringer, Ehret + papers of classmates)

Week 5. Language

Tuesday, Sep. 26. Lecture: Introduction to studies of language.

Thursday, Sep. 28. *Internet lab* (1201 WWPH): Language

Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 26-58
Heine & Nurse, *African Languages*

Week 6. Language

Tuesday, Oct. 3. Lecture: Migration and African societies as seen through language

Thursday, Oct. 5. **Paper 2** (paper or PowerPoint on an aspect of language in Africa)

Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 59-106
Heine & Nurse, *African Languages*

Week 7. Language

Tuesday, Oct. 10. *Internet lab* (1201 WWPH). **Review 2:** Migration and language.

Thursday, Oct. 12. **Exam 2.** (based on Heine & Nurse, Ehret + papers of classmates)

Week 8. Archaeology

Tuesday, Oct. 17. Lecture: Introduction to archaeology of Africa

Thursday, Oct. 19. *Internet lab* (1201 WWPH): Archaeology

Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 107-158
Connah, *African Civilizations*

Week 9. Archaeology

Tuesday, Oct. 24. Lecture: Archaeology of Africa

Thursday, Oct. 26. Lecture: Iron-age Africa

Paper 3 (paper or PowerPoint on an aspect of archaeology)

Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 159-237
Connah, *African Civilizations*

Week 10. Archaeology

Tuesday, Oct. 31. *Internet lab* (1201 WWPH). **Review 3:** Archaeology of Africa.

Thursday, Nov. 2. **Exam 3. Archaeology** (based on Connah + papers of classmates)

Week 11. Medieval Empires

Tuesday, Nov. 7. *Internet lab* (1201 WWPH): Medieval Empires

Thursday, Nov. 9. Lecture: Medieval Empires of Africa

Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 238-289
Niane, *Sundiata*

Week 12. Medieval Empires

Tuesday, Nov. 14. Lecture: Medieval Africa and the Islamic World

Paper 4 (paper or PowerPoint on an aspect of medieval empires)

Thursday, Nov. 16. *Internet lab* (1201 WWPH). **Review 4:** Medieval Empires.

Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 290-348
Niane, *Sundiata*

Week 13. Medieval Empires

Tuesday, Nov. 21. **Exam 4. Medieval Empires** (on Niane + papers of classmate)

Thursday, Nov. 23. Thanksgiving Holiday – no class.

Reading: Niane, *Sundiata*

Week 14. Slavery

Tuesday, Nov. 28. Discussion: Niane's *Sundiata*

Thursday, Nov. 30. Lecture: Slavery and Slave Trade

Reading: Manning, *Slavery and African Life*

Week 15. Slavery

Tuesday, Dec. 5. Lecture: Long-term changes in African history

Thursday, Dec. 7. **Review 5:** Long-term changes in African history

Reading: Manning, *Slavery and African Life*

Exam Week

Dec. 11-15. **Exam 5** (based on Manning + Niane)