Africa: An Introductory Survey  
Fall 2012

This course is a multi-disciplinary introduction to Africa. Themes vary from semester to semester, but the course always is grounded in geography, history, the social sciences, and the creative arts. It is available to students as African Languages and Literature 277, Afro-American Studies 277, Anthropology 277, Geography 277, History 277, Political Science 277, or Sociology 277.

Instructor  
James Delehanty  
African Studies Program  
telephone: 262-4458  
email: jmdeleha@wisc.edu

Office hours  
Wednesdays, 10:00 - 11:00  
Thursdays, 10:00-11:00  
Or please use email to set up an appointment at another time.

Lectures  
By long custom, this interdisciplinary course draws on occasional guest lectures from a variety of Wisconsin faculty members engaged in the study of Africa. My preference is to take responsibility for most of the lectures myself because the course is more coherent this way, but I have carefully slotted several guest specialists to cover subjects they can handle better than I. There will be enough guests to ensure the interdisciplinary variety this course is known for, but not so many that it spins out of my control or away from our principal themes.

As we approach Africa from different disciplines, you will be expected to make linkages and work your way toward your own understandings. Be supple, open minded, and receptive to different approaches, styles, and perspectives. Some of our approaches may seem just right because they appeal to your preconceptions of Africa or ideas you already have about the way the world works (whatever those preconceptions or ideas might be). This is fine, but at other times what is said in lecture (or described in readings) may seem jarringly at odds with what you think is true. Pay particular attention during these uncomfortable disjunctures because here is where learning occurs. In general, if you’re attentive and reasonably earnest (eschew knowingness! irony! cynicism!) this course should occasionally turn your mind in good or at least interesting new directions. Keep your mind open to being turned, no matter your ideological predispositions. College is for new departures.

You’ll have plenty of material to work with, including quite a bit of reading. Your teaching assistant and I will help you. Ultimately, however, it’s up to you to draw a coherent understanding of Africa out of the material we present. When you listen to a lecture, concentrate on the subject at hand, but think at the same time about how the ideas being presented connect with earlier lectures, support them, or seem to contradict them. Compare and contrast what is said in lectures with what you are reading. Your sources will not always agree. Nor should they always agree.

I expect faithful attendance at lectures. We meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00-2:15 in 165 Bascom Hall.

Many students are distracted during lectures by impolite laptop wanderings on the part of computer users near them. Distractions from sustained thought are the enemy of the kind of learning I expect. Multi-tasking in a lecture amounts to self delusion, disrespect, boorishness, or all three. Therefore, computers and similar devices are not allowed in lecture without prior permission from me. If you feel you must use a computer for note-taking, talk to me ahead of time. I’ll probably allow it, but I’ll sequester computer users in one section of the room. This policy signals no disrespect toward computer users and no refusal to admit that computers are useful learning tools. It’s entirely about courtesy and the value of listening uninterrupted to someone doing his best in real time to build a coherent argument.
Discussion Sections

In addition to twice-weekly lectures, all students will attend a weekly discussion section. You must be enrolled formally in one of the scheduled discussion sections and attend that section every week. If you are not enrolled in a discussion section, you are not enrolled in the course. Each discussion section will be led by a teaching assistant. The TAs are advanced Ph.D. students who have had considerable life experience in Africa and are carrying out Africa-related research. In discussion section your TA will help you review and sort out ideas presented in lectures, lead conversation and debate, help you analyze your readings, administer a quiz or two, and help you prepare for exams. Our TAs are:

Sofia Samatar, African Languages and Literature
Jackson Musuuza, Population Health Sciences
Taylor Price, Political Science
Patrick Otim, History

Their office location and hours will be announced.

Required Reading

All students are required to buy and read four books. Also required is a set of additional readings that I have placed on the Learn@UW site. In the past I have compiled these additional readings in an Africa 277 Course Reader, printed and available for sale, but this time I am experimenting with Learn@UW. Whether you prefer to read on line or print these items out on your own and read them in hard copy, you must read them. They comprise the bulk of our reading during the first half of the course. If many of you would rather have the option of buying a printed reader, I will consider asking a local copy shop to produce one, but for now I shall assume that you all will access these readings on Learn@UW. You are free to buy the four books wherever you wish, but this semester I have placed my order with A Room of One's Own, 315 W. Gorham Street. I have no particular affinity—or lack of affinity!—for that bookstore (I like it, and I like others too), but I do feel strongly that it's good for our university community, culturally and economically, to have thriving independent bookstores in the neighborhood, so I encourage you to buy locally. I rotate my book orders among the locally owned bookstores so as not to play favorites. Here is what you'll need:

1. Africa 277 Course Reader (available via Learn@UW).
2. Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart (any edition is acceptable)

Reading assignments are listed in the weekly schedule. You are expected to do all of the reading. You cannot do well on exams unless you've read everything that's been assigned. Your reading assignments are pegged to corresponding lectures in a logical way, but rarely will the reading merely repeat what a lecture has covered. Lectures and readings are intended to be complementary.

Some of your readings will be the subject of a discussion section, but other readings will not necessarily come up in discussion at all. Everything I've assigned is manageable, even enjoyable. None of it is especially difficult. But if you're having a hard time understanding something from the reading, other students probably are having trouble too, so don't be afraid to raise questions in discussion section. Do so during the week that that item has been assigned and only when your TA has opened the floor for questions, or when your question otherwise fits into the flow of the class.

Graded Work

There will be two exams, a mid-term on Tuesday, October 23rd, in the evening, from 7:30-9:30 P.M., and a final exam scheduled for Saturday, December 22nd at 10:05 A.M. Alternate exam times will be available for students who are ill. If you have an unusual conflict or problem, see me before the test. Both exams will comprise short-answer and essay questions only. Every student also will write a five-page paper, to be handed in at lecture
on Thursday, December 6th. The paper assignment will be given out in October but I want the paper handed in on December 6th, not before, not after.

The course will be graded on a 200-point scale: 50 points for the mid-term, 50 for the paper, 50 for the final exam, and 50 for discussion section. Discussion section points will be based on attendance (20 points), participation (20 points), and results of a map quiz (10 points). **Perfect attendance will work best for you, but for grading purposes you will be allowed to miss one discussion section for any reason without penalty. Each subsequent absence, no matter the reason for it (health or otherwise), will be penalized at the rate of four points per absence.** So save your one excused absence. You might need it. The most common reason for poor grades in this course is poor exam results. The second-most-common reason is skipped discussion sections.

**Grades**

There is nothing inherently difficult about our material, but it adds up; there’s quite a bit of it. You’ll have to work to master it. The key to earning a good grade in this 4-credit course is keeping up with the work. Attend all lectures and read every word that’s been assigned and your grade is likely to be high. Attend and read intermittently and your grade is likely to be low.

No letter grades – only points – will be assigned until the course is over. As a general guideline I would say this: If you earn 90 percent of all possible points (180/200) or higher, you’ll almost certainly get an A or AB. Even with 85 percent of points (170/200) there’s hope of an AB, especially if you show improvement during the semester. If you earn at least 80 percent of points (160/200) you should expect at least a B. With 75 percent of points (150/200) or higher you should get at least a BC. Fewer points than this and you should expect a C. Every semester I give a handful of Ds and Fs. The D range usually is for students who have earned about 60 or 65 percent of possible points (120-130 points). The Fs go to those below that. If you keep up with your work I can pretty much guarantee you will not get a D or F. If you blow off the course, D or F is the grade I hope you get.

If the past is any guide, well more than half of you, maybe as many as 2/3 of you, will get an A, an AB, or a B. Most of the rest of you will get a BC or a C. Only a few of you will fall into the abyss and end up with a D or F. Sometimes this happens through no real fault of the student, there are “issues,” but usually, believe it or not, it’s a deliberate choice, a decision – or a series of decisions – not to do the work. If you find yourself slipping into this (serious slippage usually happens before you know it … I mean in September), get a grip, make a decision, get help, and/or see me. Do this as it starts to happen, not when the damage has been done.

We take grading seriously and rarely make egregious mistakes. If you believe we have made an error in the points we have given you for an assignment, please see your TA or me, but only under the following conditions: (1) At least two days have elapsed since you the exam or paper was returned to you; (2) No more than two weeks have elapsed since the exam or paper was returned to you; (3) You are polite, respectful, and fully aware that inevitably there is some element of subjectivity in assessing written work.

I have one more thing to say about subjectivity in grading and the element of chance in life in general: Sometimes you’ll benefit from subjectivity and chance (“I had no idea what that question meant, but I wrote a more-or-less random paragraph and got full credit!”), just as sometimes you will be hurt by it (“We studied together, I knew more than she did, she showed me her essay after we got them back, mine was better, and she got a higher grade!”). The reality is that chance, subjectivity, and the human factor (grader fatigue, for instance) find their way into all kinds of evaluations, no matter how diligent, careful, and unbiased the evaluators try to be. A graceful life is accepting of this reality and bears it lightly even when it hurts. When you leave the university your **grace point average** will be a more valuable asset than that other GPA. Work on it.
## Schedule

### Week 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>4 Sept.</td>
<td>Introduction: The idea of Africa (Delehanty)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>6 Sept.</td>
<td>Climate and biogeography (Delehanty)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reading:**

**Week 1 discussion section:** introductions & map quiz preparation

### Week 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>11 Sept.</td>
<td>African prehistory (Delehanty)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>13 Sept.</td>
<td>Environment and economic life in precolonial Africa (Delehanty)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reading:**
- *Achebe, Things Fall Apart*

**Week 2 discussion section:** ideas of Africa & map quiz

### Week 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>18 Sept.</td>
<td>Social and political organization in precolonial Africa (Delehanty)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>20 Sept.</td>
<td>From the slave trade to colonial rule (Delehanty)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reading:**
- Please spend an hour or so this week reading and linking off of the New York Times (About.com) site on the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Just go to this site, read the front page of it, and follow links that interest you: [http://africanhistory.about.com/od/slavery/tp/TransAtlantic001.htm](http://africanhistory.about.com/od/slavery/tp/TransAtlantic001.htm)

**Week 3 discussion section:** *Things Fall Apart*
Week 4
Tu 25 Sept. Colonialism: what it was and how it worked (Delehanty)
Th 27 Sept. Case study in colonialism: medicine as control in French Africa (Richard Keller)

Reading:

Week 4 discussion section: social and political organization

Week 5
Tu 2 Oct. Case study in colonialism: medicine as control in British Africa (Neil Kodesh)
Th 4 Oct. Case study in colonialism: religion in the 20th century (Delehanty)

Reading:

Week 5 discussion section: colonialism

Week 6
Tu 9 Oct How colonialism ended (Delehanty)

Reading:

Week 6 discussion section: religion

Week 7
Tu 16 Oct. The politics of conflict and violence in postcolonial Africa (Scott Straus)
Th 18 Oct. A case study in political transition: Liberia (Delehanty)

Reading:
- Optional reading: Straus will be lecturing on this paper, which be published this year: http://afraf.oxfordjournals.org/content/111/443/179.full

Week 7 discussion section: postcolonial politics
Week 8
Tu 23 Oct. No class, but EVENING MID-TERM EXAM, 7:30-9:30 (location to be announced)
Th 25 Oct. Postcolonial economies: the idea and practice of development 1 (Delehanty)
(Preceded by a 10-minute discussion of study abroad in Africa.)

Reading:
• Radelet, *Emerging Africa*, Introduction and Chapter 1 (pp. 1-26)

Week 8 discussion section: no discussion section meetings this week, but your TA will have extra office hours and/or review sessions before the mid-term exam

Week 9
Tu 30 Oct. Postcolonial economies: the idea and practice of development 2 (Delehanty)
Th 1 Nov. Postcolonial economies: case study (Delehanty)

Reading:
• Radelet, *Emerging Africa*, Chapters 2-8 (i.e., finish the book, pp. 27-160)

Week 9 discussion section: development

Week 10
Tu 6 Nov. Complicating development: education and its cost (Nancy Kendall)
Th 8 Nov. Complicating development: disease and the capacity to fight it (Delehanty)

Reading:
• Pepin, *The Origin of AIDS* (read about the first half of the book)

Week 10 discussion section: *education in Africa*

Week 11
Tu 13 Nov. HIV/AIDS in Africa (Delehanty)
Th 15 Nov. HIV/AIDS Case Study (Ajay Sethi)

Reading:
• Pepin, *The Origin of AIDS* (finish the book)

Week 11 discussion section: *HIV/AIDS*

Week 12
Tu 20 Nov. Popular culture: visual arts 1 (Mary Hark)
Th 22 Nov. THANKSGIVING

Reading:
• Nwaubani, *I Do Not Come to You by Chance*

Week 12 discussion section: no meeting (Thanksgiving)
Week 13
Tu  27 Nov  Popular culture: visual arts 2 (Henry Drewal)
Th  29 Nov.  Popular culture: music 1 (Delehanty)

Reading:

Week 13 discussion section: popular culture

Week 14
Tu  4 Dec.  Popular culture: music 2 (Teju Olaniyan)
Th  6 Dec.  Popular culture: music 3 (John Nimis) (*Paper due today*)

Reading:

Week 14 discussion section: *I Do Not Come to You by Chance*

Week 15
Tu  11 Dec.  Popular culture: African cinema (Aliko Songolo)
Th  13 Dec.  Final thoughts (Delehanty)

Reading:
- None (catch up!)

Week 15 discussion section: review