

HISTORY 292H.001
Undergraduate Seminar in History: The United States and Africa
Fall 2009
TTh 2:00-3:15, Hamilton 523

Dr. Lisa Lindsay

lalindsa@email.unc.edu

Office hours: TTh after class until 4pm, and by appointment
Hamilton 521, 962-2178

This honors course focuses on the changing relationship between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa. That relationship began with the first group of African slaves who landed at Jamestown in 1619 and continues in international diplomacy, debt relationships, immigration, tourism, activism, and other forms of connection today. It encompassed *people* who traveled from Africa to America or from America to Africa, *ideas* about Africa and its people, *policies* between governments and other institutions, and *activism* on the part of Americans interested in Africa. We will deal with these chronologically, focusing on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, back-to-Africa movements of the 19th and 20th centuries (including the colonization of Liberia by African Americans), pan-Africanism as an international ideal, US policies toward decolonizing and post-colonial African countries, and American activism around African issues such as *apartheid*. Readings and discussions on these topics will emphasize the longstanding connections between Africa and the United States--which have shaped people and societies in both locations--as well as changing conceptions of "race" over time. You should learn about the global history of people and ideas as well as hone your skills in research, speaking, and writing.

Format and Activities of the Course:

Since people learn best through multiple senses and activities, this course is organized around a mixed format of lectures, discussions, film viewings, readings, writing exercises, research projects, and oral presentations. Class meetings will feature a mix of the first three; you will be responsible for the others with guidance from me and your classmates. Here is some more information on your responsibilities:

Readings: Please come to class having read and taken notes on the assignment listed for that day. If possible, bring the text(s) with you to class. Our discussions will be much more stimulating if students have substantive ideas, spurred by the reading material, to contribute. Readings will be drawn from the following books, which are available for purchase at Student Stores and on reserve at the Undergraduate Library:

Curtis Keim, *Mistaking Africa: Curiosities and Inventions of the American Mind* (2nd ed., 2009)
David Northrup (ed.), *Crosscurrents in the Black Atlantic, 1770-1965: A Brief History with Documents*
James Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005*
Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*

In addition to these books, we will read articles and other documents available either on the internet or on the class Blackboard site. You can get to the internet documents on your own or via links provided on Blackboard version of this syllabus. The documents in Blackboard are in the "Course Documents" section and are designated below as "BB."

Other Assignments:

1. Class participation: At a bare minimum this means attendance in class; it also includes active involvement in class discussion. Missing class more than once will adversely affect your participation grade. Additionally, as part of your class participation, I would like each student, at least twice during the semester, to bring to the class= attention an item from the contemporary press relevant to the African-American relationship. Please bring enough copies of the item to distribute to everyone in the class, or else post your item on Blackboard.
2. Three short (about 2 pages, double-spaced) "think pieces" due in class on September 10, September 22, and November 19. The three papers will be commented upon but not graded; you get credit simply for doing them with reasonable effort. They are intended to get you to think on paper about particular issues as well as practice your analytical and writing skills.
3. Two short essays (3-4 pages each, double-spaced), which interpret and place in historical context one or more primary source documents assigned on the syllabus. The papers are due on October 6 and October 27.
4. Final paper and group presentation in the "US-Africa Policy Forum." The final project for this course is intended to help develop skills and to emphasize the link between learning history and analyzing the present. In groups and individually, you will be asked to construct policy recommendations that are grounded in historical understandings of Africa and its relationship to the US, and to present your findings both orally and in writing. In brief, each group will focus on an African region, its historical background, its relationship with the US, and policy proposals toward constructive change. The final paper will be your opportunity to use historical processes to formulate arguments about policy, and the final exam will provide you an opportunity to make your arguments in a public forum. Specific instructions are at the end of this syllabus.

You should be aware that plagiarism will not be tolerated, and all suspected cases of plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Court for assessment. Remember that when writing, taking exams, or performing other assignments you are bound by the Honor Code. For details, see

<http://honor.unc.edu/honor/code.html> and
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html>.

Grading:

Your final course grade will be calculated as follows:

Class participation and newspaper submissions	10%
Three un-graded "think pieces"	20%
Two graded essays	30%
Final paper	20%
Group project (our "final exam")	20%

Schedule:

Tu Aug. 25: Introductions to the course and each other

- What do we (and other Americans) think about Africa?

Part I: the United States and the Slave Trade from Africa

Th Aug. 27: Introduction to the Atlantic Slave Trade

- "Priscilla's Homecoming," at <http://www.yale.edu/glc/priscilla/index.htm>
- Keim, *Mistaking Africa*, chapters 1-2, "Changing our Mind about Africa" and "How We Learn," pp. 3-32
- In-class film, "The Language You Cry In" (52 minutes)

Tu Sept. 1: Statistical History of the Slave Trade

- Campbell, prologue, "Ayuba's Journey," pp. 1-14 in *Middle Passages* (and look at the book's "Epilogue" too)
- Class activity: using the Slave Trade Database, at www.slavevoyages.org

Th Sept. 3: the United States and the Atlantic slave trade

- Ira Berlin, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 53 (1996): 251-258, online at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2947401>

Tu Sept. 8: Africans in the early United States

- "The Life of Omar ibn Said, written by Himself" (1831), in Marc Shell and Werner Sollors, *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature: A Reader of Original Texts with English Translations*, pp. 58-93 (BB)
- Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (New York: Author, 1849), pp. 25-28, online at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bibb/bibb.html> (you have to scroll to p. 25)

Th Sept. 10: Slavery and Emancipation in the 19th century US

- Ira Berlin, "The Migration Generations," in *Generations of Captivity: A History of African American Slaves* (2004), pp. 160-209 (BB)
- **"Think piece" #1 due: To what (if any) extent were mid-19th century American slaves culturally "African"? And what would such a thing mean in practice?**

Part II: Back to Africa?

Tu Sept. 15: American Slavery, African Freedom? The Founding of Sierra Leone and Liberia

- Campbell, *Middle Passages*, ch. 1, "Windward Coast," pp. 15-56
- In-class video: part of "Liberia: America's Stepchild"

Th Sept. 17: NO CLASS

Tu Sept. 22: The American Colonization Society and the Ambiguities of Emigration

- Campbell, ch. 2, "Representing the Race," pp. 57-98
- American Colonization Society, *Annual Report* (1850) and Martin R. Delany, *Changing Views of the Wisdom of African American Emigration* (1859), both in Northrup, *Crosscurrents*, pp. 48-54

Th Sept. 24: Race, Reconstruction, and the Image of Africa in the late 19th century

- Campbell, ch. 3, "Emigration or Extermination," pp. 99-135
- **"Think piece" #2 due: If you had been a 19th century African American offered the chance to emigrate to Liberia, would you have done it? Why or why not?**

Tu Sept. Sept. 29: Colonialism in Africa

- Campbell, chapter 4, "Mundele Ndom," pp. 136-187
- George Washington Williams, *A Report on the Congo Free State to President Benjamin Harrison* (1890), in Northrup, *Crosscurrents*, pp. 68-74
- Optional: Keim, chapter 3, "The Origins of "Darkest Africa"" and Chapter 4, "'Our Living Ancestors'," pp. 35-62

Th Oct 1: The Harlem Renaissance and Africa

- Campbell ch. 5, "So Long, So Far Away," pp. 188-225
- Keim, ch. 5, "Real Africa, Wise Africa," pp. 63-81

Tu Oct. 6: The Pan-African Visions of WEB DuBois and Marcus Garvey

- Campbell ch. 6, "The Spell of Africa," pp. 226-267
- Marcus Garvey, *Speech in Philadelphia* (1919) and Universal Negro Improvement Association, *Declaration of the Rights of the Negro People of the World* (1920), in Northrup, *Crosscurrents*, pp. 87-95

Th Oct. 8: Cultural Encounters in the 1950s

- Era Bell Thompson, *An African American in Africa* (1953) and Maya Angelou, *An African American in Ghana* (1963), both in Northrup, *Crosscurrents*, pp. 156-165
- Optional: Campbell, ch. 7, "Native Son, American Daughter," pp. 268-314
- **First essay due: Why did Thompson, Angelou and others travel to Africa in the mid-20th century? To what extent did they find what they were looking for? How do their aspirations and experiences reflect their position(s) in the United States?** (Your answer should take the form of a short essay, with an introduction, cited evidence, and conclusion presented in logical and grammatical fashion.)

Part III: US Policy and Africa

Tu Oct. 13: White Supremacy in the US and South Africa

- Borstelmann, *Cold War and the Color Line*, prologue and chapter 2, "Jim Crow's Coming Out," pp. 1-9 and 45-84

Th Oct. 15: The Dilemmas of African Nationalism in the 1950s

- Borstelmann, ch. 3, "The Last Hurrah of the Old Color Line," pp. 85-134

Tu Oct. 20: The Congo Crisis

- Read the Church Commission report (1975) sections on the Congo, pp. 13-70, at http://history-matters.com/archive/church/reports/ir/html/ChurchIR_0014a.htm
- In-class film: *Cuba: An African Odyssey*, part 1 (2007, 90 minutes)

Th Oct. 22: FALL BREAK—NO CLASS

Tu Oct. 27: The Congo Crisis and its Aftermath

- Stephen R. Weissman, "U.S. Role in Lumumba Murder Revealed," (July 22, 2002) at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200207220024.html>
- Borstelmann, part of ch. 5, "The Perilous Path to Equality," pp. 172-191
- **Second essay due: According to the Church Commission Report, what was the CIA's role in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba? According to other sources we have seen (specify them), what did the Church Commission leave out?**

Th Oct. 29: Civil Rights and pan-Africanism

- Malcolm X, "Message to the Grassroots" (1963) at <http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1145>
- Oliver Tambo, "Accomplices of Apartheid" (1964), in *Oliver Tambo Speaks*, pp. 46-52 (BB)
- Kwame Nkrumah, *Imperialism* (1965), introduction and chapter 18 (BB)
- Optional: Campbell, ch. 8, "Black Star," pp. 315-364

Tu Nov. 3: Cold War Bedfellows

- Alan Cowell, "Mobutu's Zaire: Magic and Decay," *New York Times Magazine* (April 5, 1992), at <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/05/magazine/mobutu-s-zaire-magic-and-decay.html?pagewanted=1>
- In-class film excerpt: *When We Were Kings* (1996)

Th Nov. 5 and Tu Nov. 10: Decolonization, *apartheid*, and the Cold War in Southern Africa

- Steve Biko, "American Policy towards Azania" (1976) in *I Write What I Like*, pp. 138-142 (BB)
- Oliver Tambo, "Make South Africa Ungovernable" (1985) and "Strategic Options for International Companies" (1987), pp. 151-163 and 245-255 of *Oliver Tambo Speaks* (BB)
- J.E. Spence, "Southern Africa in the Cold War," *History Today* (Feb. 1999): 43-49, at <http://search.ebscohost.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=1547000&site=ehost-live>
- Optional: Borstelmann ch. 6, "The End of the Cold War and White Supremacy," pp. 223-265
- In-class film: *Cuba: An African Odyssey*, part 2 (90 minutes)

Th Nov. 12: Invasion of the Acronyms: SAPs and NGOs

- Keim, ch. 6, "We Should Help Them," pp. 83-102

Tu Nov. 17: Africa in the 1990s, with plenty of Contradictions and Complexity

- Campbell, ch. 9, "Counting the Bodies," pp. 365-404

Th Nov. 19: The World War Nobody Noticed

- Simon Robinson, "The Deadliest War In The World," *Time* (May 28, 2006), online at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1198921-1,00.html>
- Initial discussion of papers and group projects
- **"Think piece" #3 due: Why have so many people died in the Congo over the last 15 years? What's all the fighting about?** (Your challenge here is brevity: summarize the major issues in only about 2 pages.)

Tu Nov. 24: NO CLASS—start working on your papers

Th Nov. 26: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Tu Dec. 1: Liberia and Sierra Leone revisited

- Helene Cooper, "In Search of a Lost Africa," *New York Times Magazine* (April 6, 2008), at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/06/magazine/06Liberian-t.html>
- Campbell, Epilogue, "The Language We Cry In," pp. 405-439
- In class: watch the rest of *Liberia: America's Stepchild*

Th Dec. 3: Africa and the War on Terror

- Thom Shanker, "Command For Africa Established By Pentagon," *New York Times* (Oct. 5, 2008), at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/05/world/africa/05command.html>
- Optional: Keim, ch. 12, "From Imagination to Dialogue," pp. 179-187

Tu Dec. 8: paper and policy group workshop

- **Rough drafts of papers are due**

Final Papers Due: Friday, Dec. 11 by 5:00pm

Final Exam (Africa Policy Forum): Thursday, Dec. 17 12:00pm

FINAL PROJECT: THE US-AFRICA POLICY FORUM

The final project for this class is composed of two parts: an individual research paper and a group presentation. The group presentation will build upon, but not replicate, the individual papers of members of the group. Both assignments are intended to bring historical thinking to bear on current policy issues and to hone your skills in research and communication.

Here is our scenario: the Obama Administration is undertaking a sweeping overhaul of American relations with Africa. To this end, the State Department has commissioned research committees to report on the current situations in various regions of Africa, their historical background, and their implications for American policies. Each group, composed of four or five people, will focus on one of the following sub-Saharan regions: West Africa, Southern Africa, the Horn of Africa and Sudan, Central Africa, and East Africa. Working together, members of the groups will prepare a concise oral report (no longer than 20 minutes) on American objectives for that region, regional actors' goals for their relationship with the US, and the historical background to both. Finally, they should make two or three policy recommendations for the Obama Administration in dealing with their region.

At our "US-African Policy Forum" meeting, which will take place during our final exam period, each group will present its findings, using PowerPoint as desired, to an imagined audience of high State Department and Administration officials. The groups should also distribute to audience members a 1-page handout with bullet points highlighting their key findings. At the end, the audience will prioritize the policy recommendations for President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton.

In preparation for the group activity, each student will research and write a paper of 8-10 pages on a topic relevant to her/his group's region. This might be a study of one particular country in the region (Nigeria in West Africa, for instance), of a particular issue relevant throughout the region (HIV-AIDS in Southern Africa, perhaps), or of a particular set of actors (women, for example, or oil companies) who have discrete interests in the region. Group members should choose their topics in coordination with each other, so that each person's individual research may productively feed into the presentation the group will make at the end. Regardless of the topic, the paper should identify the key contemporary issues involved, particularly as they relate to the relationship between the US and Africa, and their historical context. It should also offer at least some tentative policy recommendations. You should double-space your paper and cite your sources in either footnote or parenthetical form. On the last day of class, students will work with partners to go over rough drafts, and groups will meet to begin to formulate their presentations. Groups are expected to finalize their presentations during the period between the end of classes and the final exam date.