

History 317

Seminar on Ethnicity in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa

Strathmore University

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Spring Semester

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Course Description:

Ethnicity has significantly shaped politics, economies, cultures, and societies in contemporary Africa. Civil wars, corruption, unemployment, poverty, and failed state phenomenon, major problems that have occurred in most parts of the continent have been generally attributed to ethnicity or “tribalism.” Different interpretations have been offered to explain the origin and resilience of ethnicity. Early and recent interpretations have viewed ethnicity generally as primordial, racial, biological, or as a given; that Africans have through out time been naturally “tribal,” that they have been “tribal” since time immemorial. Yet in seeing ethnicity as primordial or as a given, the interpretations hardly capture the constructed nature of ethnicity and nuanced historical dynamics which have shaped it over time. This course will explore historical origins of ethnicity in different parts of Africa. It will also examine its significance for the colonial and postcolonial state and African peoples of different socioeconomic backgrounds: how they have deployed it for political, cultural, and economic ends, and how this use has impacted the politics, cultures, economies, and environments of African countries. We will focus on different regions in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Required Readings:

Mamdani, Mahmood, *Citizens and Subjects* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

Mamdani, Mahmood, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and War on Terror* (Pantheon, 2009).

Adichie, Ngozi Chimamanda, *Half a Yellow Sun* (Anchor, 2007).

Thiong'o, wa Ngugi, *Decolonizing the Mind* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1986).

Bravman, Bill, *Making Ethnic Ways* (Heinemann, 1986).

Greene, Sandra E., *Gender, Ethnicity, and Social Change in the Upper Slave Coast* (Heinemann, 1996).

Teaching format: Discussion

Readings:

Five of the required readings are in the book store. These include *Citizen and Subjects*; *Half a Yellow Sun*; *Decolonizing the Mind*; *Making Ethnic Ways*; *Gender, Ethnicity, and Social Change in the Upper Slave* . You can get *Saviors and Survivors* from Amazon. There are used copies in Amazon not only of the latter but of the former going at affordable prices.

Evaluation:

Participation.....	20%
Book Review.....	20%
2 short papers (3 pages each).....	20%
Final paper.....	40%

Participation: Active intellectual engagement in discussions will earn you good participation grade. Participation here means asking questions that can stimulate intellectual discussion from the rest of the class, not waiting to be asked questions. You will also have to inject critical perspectives that question existing assumptions, as well as arguments in the reading materials. You are expected to do your readings in order to show familiarity with reading materials. In short, you must be active, creative, analytical, critical, and engaging.

You will also be expected to do a brief presentation (10 minutes maximum) on one topic of your choice. The presentation should capture clearly the arguments in the readings of that particular week, how the arguments are made and your take on them. Raise questions about the readings. The idea is to usher the class into discussion. Evaluations will be based on how well you accomplish the task.

Book Review: You will write a 5-7 pages review of Mahmood Mamdani’s book, *Saviors and Survivors*. In the review, you are expected to describe and analyze critically the argument the author is making. Evaluate the book by pointing out its strengths and weaknesses, as well as showing to what extent the author succeeds in making his argument. In brief, the idea is to develop your skills in critical reading and writing.

Short papers: You will pick 2 topics from those outlined in the weekly schedules and write brief response to each topic, length 3 pages. You are expected to show the arguments made in the reading materials for each of those weeks and provide a critical response.

Final paper: At the end of the semester you will be expected to have produced a well researched paper where you raise or answer questions which will arise from the readings and discussions—length 10-15 pages.

Submission of Assignments:

No late submission of assignments. Assignments are to be submitted on due date.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory, except for cases with genuine excuses provable with evidence which must be provided in advance.

Phones: Cell phones must be off during class time.

Plagiarism: No plagiarism. Acknowledge or cite ideas which are not yours. Do not copy or submit papers produced elsewhere for other classes.

Weekly Schedules:

Jan 20: Introduction: What is ethnicity?

Jan 27: Is ethnicity Primordial?

- Aidan Southall, “The Illusion of Tribe,” *Journal of southern Asian and African Studies* (On e-reserve).
- Crawford Young, “Nationalism, ethnicity, and class in Africa,” *Cahiers d’ etude Africaines*, 103 (1986), 421-95
- Schapera, “A Working Classification of the Bantu Peoples of Africa,” *Man*, Vol. 29, p 82-87 (On e- reserve).
- Patrick, “Exclusion, Classification, and Internal Colonialism: The emergence of Ethnicity Among the Tsonga-Speakers of South Africa,” in Leroy Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*

On reserve:

- Bethwell A. Ogot, *History of the Southern Luo: Volume I, Migration and Settlement, 1500-1900* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967).
- E. S. Atieno Odhiambo & David W. Cohen, *Siaya: the historical anthropology of an African landscape* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989).

Feb 3: The making of Ethnicity in the Pre-colonial Era. Was there ethnicity in the pre-colonial period?

- Justin Willis, “The making of A Tribe: Bondei Identities and Histories,” *Journal of African History*, 33, 2 (1992).

- Igor Kopytoff, “The internal African Frontier: the Making of African Political Culture” in Igor, *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington, 1987), 3-84. **(On e-reserve)**.
- Sandra Greene, *Gender, Ethnicity, and Social Change*

Feb 10: Is Ethnicity a colonial invention?

- Carola, Lentz and Paul, Nuget, “Ethnicity in Ghana: a comparative perspective,” in their *Ethnicity in Ghana: The Limits of Invention* (London, 2000), 1-28. **(On e-reserve)**.
- Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
- Patrick Harris, “The Roots of Ethnicity: Discourse and the Politics of Language Construction in South-East Africa.” **(Reading in the internet)**
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Feb 17:

- Terrence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa,” in T. Ranger & Olufemi Vaughan (eds) *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth Century in Africa* (London: 1993). **(On e-reserve)**
- Bill Bravman, *The making of Ethnic Ways: Communities and their Transformation in Taita, Kenya, 1800-1950* (Portsmouth NH, 1998).

Feb 24: Ethnicity, culture, and race: Is ethnicity racial/cultural?

- Jonathon Glassman, “Sorting out the Tribes: The Creation of Racial Identities in Colonial Zanzibar’s Newspaper Wars,” *Journal of African History*, 41 (2000), pp 395-428.
- John Sharp, “Ethnic group and nation: the Apartheid in South Africa,” in Boonzaier and Sharp, *South African keywords*, 78-84, 90-99. **(On e-reserve)**.
- Saul Dubow, “Ethnic euphemisms and racial echoes,” *Journal of southern African Studies* 20:3 (1994), pp. 355-65, 368-70.

March 3:

Ethnicity in postcolonial conflicts: How has ethnicity been utilized in postcolonial Africa?

Civil war in post-colonial Nigeria:

- Chimamanda, Ngozi Adichie: *Half a Yellow Sun*, Anchor, 2007
- Chinua Achebe, Chinua Achebe on Biafra: Talking to Transition, *Transition*, no. 36, 1968
- Margery Perham, “Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War,” *International Affairs*, vol. 46, no. 2, 1970.

March 10: Documentary on Rwanda: *Ghosts of Rwanda* by Greg Barker.

March 17: Ethnicity and Genocide

- John Janzen, "Historical consciousness and a 'prise de conscience' in genocidal Rwanda," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 13: 1 (2000): pp 153-4, 157-67.
- Scott Straus, "Origins and aftermaths: the dynamics of genocide in Rwanda and their post-crime implications," in Simon Chesterman, Béatrice Pouligny, and Albrecht Schnabel, eds., *After mass Crimes and Post-Conflict Peace-Building* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2007), pp. 122-141. (**On e-reserve**).

March 24: Documentary: *All about Darfur* by Taghreed Elsanhoury, or the devil on the Cross by Annie Sundberg.

March 31: Darfurian conflicts, ethnicity, race, and environment:

- Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and War on Terror*, (Pantheon, 2009)

Book review due

April 7: Ethnicity, nation, and democracy: How has ethnicity been disruptive and significant for democracy?

- Stephen Ndegwa, "Ethnicity and Citizenship: An examination of Two transition moments in Kenyan Politics," *American Political Science Review*, 91 (1997), 3, 599-617. (**Reading in the internet**).
- D. Ndirangu Wachanga, "Info-ethnic warfare: The 2007 Kenyan post-election violence and the new communication." Unpublished. (**On e-reserve**).

April 14: Ethnicity and language:

- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: *Decolonizing the Mind*

April 21: Discussing Final papers

April 28: Wrapping up the course

Final paper due

