

# **African History in Films and Photographs**

**HIS364G (38850) / AFR372G (29480) / WGS340 (46075)**

**Tuesdays: 3:30PM - 6:30PM, UTC 3.122**

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:**

Western exposure to Africa has primarily been through stylized Hollywood films which rarely offer any historical context for the events they depict. These films have led to an overall lack of understanding for the complexities of African history and produce detrimental effects for popular conceptions of Africa, its peoples, and its plights. This course seeks to increase the understanding of social, economic, and political challenges present throughout Africa's history with an examination of several documentaries and popular films. Each film will serve a twofold purpose: First, it will be a case study used to speak to an issue central to the history of Africa, and second, it will aid in dispelling many of the misconceptions present in popular portrayals of the continent and its peoples. Each film, where possible, will be accompanied by a corresponding text that speaks to major events and themes in African history. Furthermore, students will be challenged to interrogate primary and secondary sourcing, the ways in which films may classify under both of these designations, and the perceptions – factually grounded or not – that they engender. This course carries the Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside of the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.

## REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. Toyin Falola, *Key Events in African History: A Reference Guide*. Greenwood, 2002. (Hereafter listed as *Key Events*)
2. Vivian Bickford-Smith and Richard Mendelsohn, *Black and White in Colour: Africa's History on Screen*. Ohio University Press, 2007. (Hereafter listed as *Black and White*)
3. Michael Afoláyan, *Fate of our Mothers: The Collected Memories of an African Village Boy*. Pan-African University Press, 2015. (Hereafter listed as *Fate of our Mothers*)
4. \*\*\*The fourth required book for this class is chosen from the list in the “Response Paper” assignment below and depends on independent choice. It is recommended that students wait to purchase one of the following books until they know what topic interests them for the assignment.\*\*\*
5. Canvas Documents: A few articles and a primary source reading packet will be uploaded to Canvas.

## GRADING SCALE:

Letter Grade:

93-100: A

90-92: A-

87-89: B+

83-86: B

80-82: B-

77-79: C+

73-76: C

70-72: C-

67-69: D+

63-66: D

60-62: D-

0-59: F

Grade Assessment:

A = Excellent

B = Above Average

C = Average

D = Below Average

F = Little evidence of learning course material

## ASSIGNMENTS:

1. **Attendance (10%)**
2. **Film Review Handouts (45%) – Three Due by March 8<sup>th</sup> and Three More Due by April 26<sup>th</sup>**
3. **Response Paper (15%) – Due Feb 23<sup>rd</sup>**
4. **Africa Conference Review Handout (10%) – Due March 29<sup>th</sup>**
5. **Final Research Paper (20%) – Due May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

*Attendance:*

Students must be present to view each film; therefore, timely attendance is mandatory. Cell phones must be off and there should be no talking in class during film viewing. To get full points for attendance you may only miss 1 class without a documented absence.

Make-ups will be granted only in the case of medical illness or a university-related conflict. Such conflicts will require signed documentation from the Dean's Office explaining the reason for your absence. In most cases, films can be reviewed for free on Youtube or Kanopy. If a film is unavailable, please contact the TA.

*Film Review Handouts (Due March 8<sup>th</sup> and April 26<sup>th</sup>):*

Prior to each film, students will be given access to Film Review Handouts through Canvas. Students are expected to turn in a total of six of these handouts for grades, three by March 8<sup>th</sup> and three more by April 26<sup>th</sup>. Student responses should reflect analytical thinking and the complexities of the topics covered. Early submissions are encouraged in order to obtain feedback before bulk submissions. Completed Film Review Handouts should be turned in typed. Should they wish, students are allowed to complete one extra Film Review Handout to replace their lowest grade on another. This exception will not apply to grades that resulted from missed deadlines.

*Response Paper (Due February 23<sup>rd</sup>):*

Each student is required to write a response paper that incorporates one film from a set list and its corresponding reading. See the list at the end for details. The films can be found online or in the Fine Arts Library. Reviews should be analytical, and not just a retelling of the book and film narratives. You must analyze the film in your own words and critically examine the historical content, style, and your overall impression. Additionally, you will need to incorporate examples and evidence from the given readings that either support or contradict the film. Feel free to express your own opinion, but do so clearly with a well-supported argument. Organize and develop the main points you wish to make and re-emphasize them in a conclusion. Papers should be roughly 500 words in length.

#### **Option 1: African Civilizations**

**FILM:** *Magical Egypt-Episode 7; Illumination*

**BOOK:** Davidson, Basil. *African Civilization Revisited: From Antiquity to Modern Times*. New York, African World Press, 1990. (pgs. 1 – 166).

#### **Option 2: Colonialism in Africa**

**FILM:** *This Magnificent African Cake*

**BOOK:** Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

#### **Option 3: Racism in Africa**

**FILM:** *Cry, the Beloved Country*

**BOOK:** Van Woerden, Henk. *A Mouthful of Glass*. London: Granta Books, 2000.

#### **Option 4: Independence Struggles**

**FILM:** *Cry Freedom*

**BOOK:** Biko, Steve. *I Write What I Like: Selected Writings*. London: Bowerdean Press, 1978.

#### **Option 5, Governance and Violence**

**FILM:** *Hotel Rwanda*

**BOOK:** Gourevitch, Philip. *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our Families: Stories from Rwanda*. New York: Picador, 1998. (pgs. 5-171.)

### **Option 6, Governance and Violence**

**FILM:** *The Devil Came on Horseback*

**BOOK:** Eggers, David. *What is the What?* New York, First Vintage Books, 2006. (pgs. 9-207)

*Africa Conference Review Handout (Due March 29<sup>th</sup>):*

All students must attend **TWO** panels and the keynote lecture during the UT Africa Conference (March 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>)—additional information will be announced in class. Students may select any two panels based on their own individual interests. Students will be given questionnaires similar to the Film Review Handouts in which they will be expected to discuss each of the panels, the keynote, and the Q&A sessions that follow.

*Final Research Paper (Due May 3<sup>rd</sup>):*

All students must complete a short final research paper of roughly 1200 words. By April 12<sup>th</sup>, students must email the TA about an African history film that has not been watched in class or as a part of class assignments which they would like to pursue further research on. The TA will confirm that the film can be used for the final project. Students will be expected to perform additional research that helps them write a paper reflecting on the film, its portrayals of historical events, and other themes emphasized throughout the course. This project is an extension of the skills practiced during the Response Paper assignment, but engages students' abilities to research additional readings on their own. Given the longer nature of the paper, more and deeper analysis is expected.

*Formatting Guidelines:*

All assignments must be stapled, typed, double spaced (Handouts can be single spaced.), have 1" margins and size 12 Times New Roman font. Assignments that do not follow these guidelines will receive a five point deduction. Part of writing history includes clearly communicating your ideas. As such, written assignments must conform to standard rules of written English including the organization of essays and grammar. Students who require assistance can use the undergraduate writing center free of charge. All papers should use Chicago/Turabian style footnotes for citations. Any direct quotes **MUST** include full citations, including the pages they came from. A formal bibliography at the end is not required on any of the assignments with the exception of the final paper.

### **CLASS POLICIES:**

**Grades:** All questions about grades should be directed to the TA before discussing concerns with the course professor. Except in extreme cases, all individual questions about grades should not be raised within 48 hours of an assignment being handed back. Take this time to look over TA comments and your graded work. All challenges to grades must be raised within two weeks of an assignment being handed back. After this period, all grades are final.

**Canvas:** Further details on assignments and course updates will be posted to Canvas throughout the semester. Grades will not be posted on Canvas, but can be checked with your TA. Be sure to configure your Canvas account for the course to notify you whenever announcements are made, documents are uploaded, etc. The Professor and TAs are not responsible for a student's failure to check the content added to Canvas regularly.

**Due Dates:** All assignments must be submitted on the due dates in the syllabus. Assignments turned in late will incur a penalty of 5 points per calendar day late. Assignments more than three calendar days late will not be graded and will receive a zero. Unless otherwise agreed upon with the TA prior to the due date, email submissions will not be accepted. Make-ups will be granted only in the case of medical illness or university-related conflict. Make-ups will only be given when a request is made prior to the date of the assignment except for documented medical emergencies. Even with prior notice, an alternative deadline will only be given in extreme documented cases.

**University of Texas Honor Code:** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Any student found guilty of scholastic dishonesty may receive an "F" in the course and be remanded to the appropriate University of Texas authorities for disciplinary action. For more information, view Student Judicial Services at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs>.

**Use of Class Materials:** No material presented in lecture may be directly or indirectly published, posted to the Internet, or rewritten for publication or distribution in any medium. Neither these materials nor any portion thereof may be stored in a computer except for personal and non-commercial use.

**Documented Disability Statement:** The University of Texas at Austin provides appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities upon request. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone). Students requiring special accommodations need to get a letter from the Service for Students with Disabilities. This letter should be presented to the Professor at the beginning of the semester. Five days prior to an assignment due date, it is the student's responsibility to remind the professor of the accommodations needed.

**Religious Holy Days:** By UT Austin policy, you must notify the Professor of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will have a reasonable amount of time to make up missed work.

## Course Schedule

### Jan 19: Introduction

Lecture: Course Introduction, Practice Video Analysis  
Lecture: Film Analysis and Stereotypes of Africa  
Film: *TED Talk – “The Danger of a Single Story”* (19 mins)

### Jan 26: Early Africa

Lecture: African Origins/Civilizations  
Film: Africa Series by Basil Davidson: Episode 1: *Different But Equal* (51 mins)  
Film: *Lost Kingdoms of Africa: Great Zimbabwe* (60 mins)  
**Reading:** *Key Events*, Africa: An Overview, Chapters 2-5, 7-8

### Feb 2: European Contact

Lecture: Africa’s Contact with Europe  
Film: *Mountains of the Moon* (136 mins)  
**Reading:** *Black and White*, Chapter 4; *Key Events*, Chapters 9-11, 12

### Feb 9: European Contact

Film: *Mountains of the Moon* cont.  
**Reading:** *Key Events*, Chapters 13-15

### Feb 16: Colonial Africa

Lecture: Scramble for Africa  
Film: *Boma - Tervuren, The Journey* (54 mins)  
**Reading:** *Key Events*, Chapters 18-19

### Feb 23: Colonial Africa

Lecture: Africa in the World Wars  
Film: *Congo: White King, Red Rubber, Black Death* (90 mins)  
**Reading:** *Key Events*, Chapter 20  
**Assignment Due: Response Paper**

### Mar 1: Colonial Africa

Lecture: Guest Lecture – Dr. Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso, Babcock University, Nigeria  
Film: *Black and White in Color* (90 mins)  
**Reading:** *Black and White*, Chapter 9; *Key Events*, Chapter 21

### Mar 8: Independence Struggles

Lecture: Independence and African Radicalism  
Film: *The Battle of Algiers* (121 mins)  
**Reading:** *Black and White*, Chapter 12; *Key Events*, Chapters 22-23  
**Assignment Due: First Three Film Review Handouts**

\*\*\*\* SPRING BREAK\*\*\*\*

Mar 22: Independence Struggles

Film: *Lumumba* (115 mins)  
**Reading:** *Black and White*, Chapter 13; *Key Events*, Chapter 24-26

Mar 29: Governance and Violence

Film: *Sometimes in April* (140 mins)  
**Reading:** *Black and White*, Chapter 16; *Key Events*, Chapters 28-29, 32, 34  
**Assignment Due: Africa Conference Review Handouts**

Apr 5: Governance and Violence

Lecture: Apartheid in South Africa  
Film: *South Africa: The Apartheid Years – Generations of Resistance* (53 mins)  
Film: *South Africa: The Apartheid Years – Winnie Mandela* (58 mins)  
**Reading:** *Key Events*, Chapters 31, 35

Apr 12: Governance and Violence

Film: *The Wooden Camera* (105 mins)  
**Reading:** *Black and White*, Chapter 15; *Key Events*, Chapter 36  
**Assignment Due: Final Research Paper Film Selection**

Apr 19: Contemporary Africa

Lecture: Contemporary Issues in Africa  
Film: *Moolade* (124 mins)  
**Reading:** *Fate of our Mothers*, Chapters 1-6; *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as Source and Subject Selections* (Posted on Canvas)

April 26: Contemporary Africa

Film: *The First Grader* (103 mins)  
Film: *Africa Open for Business* (58 mins)  
**Reading:** *Fate of our Mothers*, Chapters 7-16  
**Assignment Due: Last Three Film Review Handouts**

May 3: Contemporary Africa

Lecture: Final Thoughts  
Film: *The Carrier* (88 mins)  
**Reading:** *Fate of our Mothers*, Chapters 17-23

**Assignment Due: Final Research Paper**