

Dr Derek R. Peterson
History 629, Fall 2014

New Directions in African History

Email: drpeters@umich.edu
Tel: (734) 615-3608
Office hours: Tuesdays, 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. (in 1634 Haven Hall) and by arrangement

As a field of academic study, African history has been uniquely responsive to the changing tide of politics and economy. The field was born in the 1960s, a time when new nations were born, new archives were organized, and new methods of doing history were opened up. It was a time of brilliant promise. Historians were undoing the conceits of functionalist anthropology: they aimed to show that Africa had a history to be proud of. By the 1970s, economic depression was guiding scholars to pursue research about 'modes of production.' In the 1980s and 90s historians sought to ally their work with South Africa's anti-apartheid movement. They elevated the 'African voice' as a means of accessing history-from-below, and 'resistance' became the paradigmatic theme. Most recently, a productive auto-critique has drawn attention to non-discursive, material ways that Africans make history. In this current age, it is hard to see a dominant paradigm. But the study of historiography remains useful—indeed, it is incumbent on any prospective scholar of the field to understand where we stand in relation to older paradigms and ways of thinking. Scholarly work is guided by our acquaintance with particular archives and by our engagements with a constrained body of knowledge. The routines of scholarly production have produced distinctive sub-literatures that can productively be studied.

This course is meant as an introduction to the major themes that have structured the study of African history. Each week's work will be organized around a key text, and student commentators will read and review related texts that illuminate the larger scholarly debate. The books vary widely in their subject matter, methodology, timescale, and geography. That is the point. The aim is to fertilize students' own research with new ideas, approaches, and problems.

The course will culminate in the writing of a substantial historiographical essay on a topic of the student's choice.

Requirements

The most fundamental requirement for this course is **attendance and participation**. Please do come to the seminar having done the assigned reading for the week. Make sure to bring the reading with you, as we will be looking at specific passages together.

All seminar participants should prepare **two book reviews**, of no more than 1,000 words each, for general distribution to the seminar. Books for review are listed below; these will be doled out at the seminar's first meeting. Book reviews should be circulated to the class by email by **9:00**

am on the day the book is to be discussed. Reviewers will make brief (five minute) presentations in class for the benefit of their colleagues.

All participants will **lead class discussion**—with a partner—on two occasions. Discussion leaders should together prepare a set of questions—no more than five or six, please—which should be circulated to the class by email by **9:00 am** on Thursday morning. During the class session discussion leaders will take the class through the texts under study, using the set questions as a guide. We will allocate discussion-leading duties during the first class period.

Over the course of the term students will frame, research, and write a **seminar paper** about some aspect of Africa's historiography. I am very keen that students should make use of primary research material in writing these essays. But at its core, this is to be a historiographic essay, reflecting on the development of a particular theme (urban history, for example, or the history of religion, or ...) in the study of Africa's past. What questions guided the linguists, anthropologists and archaeologists who did research on African societies during the earlier twentieth century? What contributions did Africans, as ethnohistorians, pamphleteers, research assistants, informants, or sources make to the changing pattern of academic discourse? What new questions did the first 'guild' historians ask in the 1960s and 70s, and what projects were they beholden to? And more recently, how have the changing protocols of the field more broadly shaped scholarly conversation within particular sub-fields? What insights (if any) have economic historians, or social historians, or literary critics made to the particular field under study?

Students should prepare a brief (c. 500 word) **proposal** to be tabled and discussed at the session on 13 November. The final draft—of roughly 8,000 words in length—will be due on **Monday, 15 December** by 4:00 p.m. to my pigeonhole in the History Department.

Texts

The following books are required for this seminar:

Stephanie Newell, *The Power to Name: A History of Anonymity in Colonial West Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013).

Isabel Hofmeyr, *Gandhi's Printing Press: Experiments in Slow Reading* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010).

Bruce Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Derek Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Crawford Young, *The Postcolonial State in Africa* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

James McCann, *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop, 1500-2000* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

Tom McCaskie, *Asante Identities: History and Memory in an African Village, 1850-1950* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001).

Paul Landau, *Popular Politics in the History of South Africa, 1400-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 2011).

Meredith Terretta, *Nation of Outlaws, State of Violence: Nationalism, Grassfields Tradition, and State Building in Cameroon* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2014).

All of these books are available for purchase at Ulrich's and the Michigan Union Bookstore. *Please do bring a copy of the assigned readings to the seminar where they are to be discussed.*

Where I've assigned articles or book chapters, they can be downloaded from the CTools website associated with the course, under the 'Resources' tab. Readings available on CTools are marked with a ** below.

4 September: The Making of African History

Frederick Cooper, 'Conflict and Connection: Rethinking African Colonial History,' *American Historical Review* 99 (5) (Dec. 1994), 1516-45. **

Jean Allman, 'Kwame Nkrumah, African Studies, and the Politics of Knowledge Production in the Black Star of Africa,' *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 46 (2) (2013), 181-203. **

Derek R. Peterson and Giacomo Macola, 'Homespun History and the Academic Profession,' in Peterson and Macola (eds.), *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009), 1-28. **

Steven Feierman, 'Colonizers, Scholars, and the Creation of Invisible Histories,' in *Beyond the cultural turn: New directions in the study of society and culture*, ed. Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 182-216. **

Richard Reid, 'Past and Presentism: The "Precolonial" and the Foreshortening of African History,' *Journal of African History* 52 (2011), 135-55. **

11 September: No Class

Instructor at the African Studies Association (UK) meeting

18 September: South Africa in the *longue durée*

Paul Landau, *Popular Politics in the History of South Africa, 1400-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Books for review:

Michael Mahoney, *The Other Zulus: The Spread of Zulu Ethnicity in Colonial South Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

John Lonsdale, 'The Moral Economy of Mau Mau: Wealth, Poverty, and Civic Virtue in Kikuyu Political Thought,' in Lonsdale and Bruce Berman, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa*, vol. 2 (London: James Currey, 1992), 315-505.

25 September: Asante Identities

T.C. McCaskie, *Asante Identities: History and Modernity in an African Village, 1850-1950* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

Jean Allman, 'Rounding up Spinsters: Gender Chaos and Unmarried Women in Colonial Asante,' *Journal of African History* 37 (2) (1996), 195-214. **

Books for review:

Jean Allman and Victoria Tashjian, *I Will Not Eat Stone: A Women's History of Colonial Asante* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000).

Sara Berry, *Chiefs know their boundaries: essays on property, power and the past in Asante, 1896-1996* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000)

2 October: West Africa, Islam, and Race

Bruce Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Books for review:

David Robinson, *Paths Of Accommodation: Muslim Societies & French Colonial Authorities* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000).

9 October: African Print Cultures

Stephanie Newell, *The Power to Name: A History of Anonymity in Colonial West Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013).

Karin Barber, 'Experiments with Genre in Yoruba Newspapers in the 1920s,' forthcoming in Stephanie Newell, Emma Hunter and Derek R. Peterson, eds., *African Print Cultures*. **

Books for review:

Karin Barber, *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics: Oral and Written Culture in Africa and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

16 October: Christianity and Ethnicity

Derek R. Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Mark Noll, Justin Willis, J.D.Y. Peel, and Derek R. Peterson, 'Book Debate,' *Social Science and Missions* 27 (2) (2014). **

Books for review:

David Gordon, *Invisible Agents: Spirits in a Central African History* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2012).

John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Vol. I: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

N.R. Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999).

23 October: Race

Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010).

Books for review:

Laura Fair, *Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890–1945* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001).

Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

30 October: Environmental History

James McCann, *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop, 1500-2000* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

Nancy Jacobs, 'The Great Boputhatswana Donkey Massacre: Discourse on the Ass and the Politics of Grass and Class', *American Historical Review* 106 (2) (2001), 485-507. **

Books for review:

Tamara Giles-Vernick, *Cutting the Vines of the Past: Environmental Histories of the Central African Rain Forest* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2002).

Elias Mandala, *The End of Chidyerano: A History of Food and Everyday Life in Malawi, 1860-2004* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005).

6 November: Preparing for Isabel Hofmeyr

Isabel Hofmeyr, *Gandhi's Printing Press: Experiments in Slow Reading* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

Isabel Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim's Progress* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). **
 Introduction: 'Portable Texts: Bunyan, Translation, and Transnationality,' 11-41.
 Ch. 2: 'Making Bunyan Familiar in the Mission Domain,' 56-75.
 Ch. 3: 'Translating Bunyan,' 76-97.
 Ch. 4: 'Mata's Hermeneutic: Internationally Made Ways of Reading Bunyan,' 98-109.

Books for review:

Gaurav Desai, *Commerce with the Universe: Africa, India, and the Afrasian Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

10 November (Monday)

Please attend the following. Both sessions meet in the Erlicher Room, North Quad.

10-12 A Morning with Isabel Hofmeyr

4-6 Isabel Hofmeyr, 'Mandela's Copyright: Intellectual Property and the Postcolonial World'

13 November: Cultures of Nationalism

Meredith Terretta, *Nation of Outlaws, State of Violence: Nationalism, Grassfields Tradition, and State Building in Cameroon* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2014).

Frederick Cooper, 'Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective,' *Journal of African History* 49 (2008), 167-96. **

Books for review:

Elizabeth Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005).

Kelly Askew, *Performing the Nation: Swahili Music and Cultural Politics in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Due: 500-word proposal for final paper.

20 November: No Class

Instructor at African Studies Association (US) Annual Meeting

27 November: No Class

Thanksgiving Break

4 December: The Post-Colonial State

Crawford Young, *The Postcolonial State in Africa* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

Achille Mbembe, 'Provisional Notes on the Postcolony,' *Africa* 62 (1) (1992), 3-37. **

Mikael Karlström, 'On the Aesthetics and Dialogics of Power in the Postcolony,' *Africa* 73 (1) (2003), 57-76. **

Books for review:

Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar es Salaam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

Daniel Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

Monday, 15 December: Historiographical essay due by 4:00 p.m.