

History of Global Societies: Modern Africa

Last Updated: Fri, 12/19/2025

Course prefix: HTS

Course number: 3065

Section: B

CRN (you may add up to five):
34982

Instructor First Name: Georgia

Instructor Last Name: Brunner

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

Africa is the second-largest continent in both size and population. Its diversity has produced rich artistic traditions, world leaders, and important intellectual contributions. Simultaneously, Africa faces many challenges, from political instability to poverty to diseases like malaria and Ebola.

This course invites students to examine some of the significant changes that have shaped contemporary Africa. We will begin with the final decades of the slave trade. We will then explore European imperialism and colonization, patterns of economic, social, and cultural change, independence, and Africa in a global age. This course will enable students to engage with a range of sources and approaches to the African past. Through primary documents, secondary analyses, and engagements with art and literature, we will explore Africa's past and present.

Course learning outcomes:

1. Identify historical evidence and learn to read primary and secondary sources critically
2. Learn to construct and articulate historical arguments, using primary and secondary sources
3. Articulate the importance of culture, gender, race, economics, and politics to modern African history
4. Analyze trends in African history from European colonialism to the present

Required course materials:

- Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart. Penguin Books, 1994. ISBN-13: 978-0385474542 (available online)
- Hochschild, Adam. King's Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa. Houghton Mifflin, 1999. ISBN-13: 978-0618001903

Grading policy:

1. RESPONSE PAPERS- For two full-length texts we read, you will write reading responses of between 600-750 words. Describe the who, what when, where, and why. Further, think about the book in relation to the rest of the class. What can the text tell you outside its specific geographical location? What can it tell us about Africa more broadly during its time period? Each paper is due a week after we finish a book (15 points each x 2 = 30 points total)
2. MIDTERM PAPER- There will be an in-class open-note, open-book midterm. There will be two essay questions, one of which you, as a class, will choose. (20 Points)
3. FINAL PAPER- You will write a 7-page final paper on a topic from a list of options that you will receive in advance. You MUST meet me at least once to discuss the paper. You may send me rough drafts to look over. Please note I need a week to review any drafts, so plan accordingly. (30 points)
4. PARTICIPATION- Come with two questions prepared for every class from the readings. Actively participate in class discussions. If you have concerns about this or require an alternative, please speak with me. (20 points)

Attendance policy:

Attendance will be taken in every class period and will count toward your participation grade. You can miss up to three classes without an excused absence with no effect on your grade. Excused and documented absences will not affect the participation grade.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning

Outcomes:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion