Colonial Africa
Fall 2013
Megan Vaughan

Classes take place on Wednesdays, 2-4.

Course requirements:
1. Active participation in all classes (20%)
2. Each student will be responsible for two short class presentations. We will assign these during the first session. You will prepare short analytic papers for each of these two classes, critically reviewing the literature on the reading list. These papers will be circulated to instructor and classmates in advance of the class. (40%)
3. Longer paper (c5000words) on a topic of your choice. Topics to be discussed with me in advance. Papers due 11 December. (40%).

Introductory reading: Please read some of these texts in advance, especially if you have little or no background in African history. Reid and Iliffe will be useful to refer to throughout the course.

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*,
Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963)

1. AUGUST 28: Introduction to course and organisation of class presentations.

2. SEPT 4 – NO CLASS

3. SEPT 11: Whose history: historiography
In this class we will study debates in the historiography of Africa including the question of the significance of colonial rule within the longer history of Africa and debates around the politics and writing of African history. We will also allocate class assignments.

Parker and Rathbone, *African History*

E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo, ‘From African Historiographies to an African Philosophy of History’ in Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings (eds),


J. Miller, ‘History and Africa/Africa and History’, American Historical Review, 104 (1999), 1-32

Derek Peterson and Giacomo Macola, ‘Homespun Historiography and the Academic Profession’ in Peterson and Macola (eds), Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa (2009), pp 1-31 (Google Books).


3: SEPT 18 : Sources. What sources do historians of Africa use to write the history of the continent? We’ll examine the constitution of the colonial archive and uses of oral history in the writing of colonial African history.

On the archive:
Carolyn Hamilton et al eds., Refiguring the Archive, Johannesburg 2002. Read
‘Introduction’ by Hamilton
‘The Power of the Archive and its Limits’, by Achille Mbembe, 19-26 and ‘Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance’ by Anna Laura Stoler, 82-101
[Note: Hamilton’s book is largely written in relation to the construction of the archive in South Africa, but the theoretical issues raised are larger ones.]

Sean Hanratta, Islam and Social Change in French West Africa (2010), Part 4: Ghosts and the Grain of the Archive

On oral history:
‘Introduction’, 1-27
Luise White, ‘True Stories, Narratives, Events History and Blood in the Lake Victoria Basin’.

Refer back to last week’s reading especially Peterson and Macola eds, *Recasting the Past*

Look at this example of a life-history/biography:


4. SEPT 25: Colonialism: what is it? In this class we'll examine theories of colonialism, and critiques of uses of the idea of the ‘colonial’. We will then begin to think about the relationship between theory and practice.


Now read Chinua Achebe’s reflections on growing up in British Nigeria and the consequences of colonialism (ideally in conjunction with his novel, *Things Fall Apart*)


Read Fred Cooper’s critique of the uses of the ‘colonial’:

Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question* (2005), Introduction: 3-33.

Begin thinking about the *practice* of colonialism in Africa by reading:

Reid, *History of Modern Africa* chapters 10 and 11.

5. Oct 2: Colonial Rule: the new political order
In this class we will examine the political strategies of colonial rulers in Africa from the late nineteenth century ‘Scramble’ to the Second World War. We’ll compare British Indirect Rule policies with French ideologies of ‘assimilation’, and then look at the relationship between theory and practice. How far was violence, of the threat of violence, inherent to all forms of colonial rule in Africa?
Iliffe, *Africans* Chapters 9 and 10 (as above)
Reid, *History of Modern Africa* Chapters 10 and 11


Hubert Jules Deschamps, ‘Association and Indirect Rule’ in R.O. Collins ed. *Historical Problems of Imperial Africa*, 162-176 (Deschamps was French colonial governor of Ivory Coast)


6. OCT 9: Colonial states in practice: law and ‘custom’

Historians of Africa have identified the use of the law as critical to colonial regimes of governance in Africa and have debated the extent to which colonial rulers ‘reinvented’ custom and ‘tradition’ through legal cultures. This is viewed by some (eg Mamdani) as a radical and distorting legacy of colonial rule.

Reid and Iliffe (as above)


Mahmoud Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject* (1996), Chapters 111 and IV


7. OCT 16: Colonial capitalism: peasants and migrant workers
Colonial capitalism in Africa was a complex and contradictory force. Colonial regimes needed to extract a surplus from their subjects, but often imagined they could do so without capitalism's socially disruptive consequences.
In this class we'll examine the social and economic consequences of two variants of the colonial economy: peasant cash-crop production and labour migration.


John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (1979), chapter 9

Allan Isaacman and Richard Roberts (eds), *Cotton, Colonialism and Social History in Sub-Saharan Africa* (1995), Intro and chs 6,8,13

Henrietta Moore and Megan Vaughan, *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition and Agricultural Change in Northern Province Zambia*, chapter 6

8. OCT 23: Settler states: labour and land, race and class
In this class we’ll examine the particular dynamics of African settler states, their political economies and ideologies of race and class.

Reid, Chapter 12
Dane Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 1987, Intro and chs 7 and 8

David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French: colonialism in Bone, 1870-1920* (1990), chapters 1, 3, 4

Doris Lessing, *The Grass is Singing* (1950) – a fictional account of white settler life and mentality

Tim Keegan, ‘Gender, Degeneration and sexual danger: Imagining race

**9. Oct 30: Religious change**

In this class we examine the impact of Christianity and Islam on African societies in the colonial period. To what extent was Christianity ‘complicit’ with colonial rule, and how far did Islam offer an alternative non-western version of modernity?

On Christianity:
Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 2 vols, 1992 and 1997 (note: this is an important text for debates in the history of African Christianity, but a controversial one. Read as much as you can!)

On Islam:

**10. Nov 6: Gender and sexuality**

Colonial regimes in Africa often appear intensely anxious about the nature of African gender relations and the sexualities of colonial subjects. Why? And with what consequences?

Berger, ‘African Women’s History’ (see Week 1)


Lisa Lindsay and Stephan Miescher (eds), *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa* (2003), Introduction

Jean Allman, Susan Geiger and Nakanyike Musisi, *Women in African*
Colonial History (2002), chs 4, 10, 11.


11. NOV 13: Colonial ‘intermediaries’ and literacy
Recent literature emphasises the dependency of colonial states on local intermediaries of all sorts. To label these individuals as ‘collaborators’ would be a great over-simplification. Their uses of the tools of literacy demonstrate a more complex story.

Benjamin Lawrence, Emily Osborn and Richard L. Roberts (eds), Intermediaries, Interpreters and Clerks (2006), chapters?

Karin Barber eds, Africa’s Hidden Histories (2006), Intro and chs 1, 5, 10


12. NOV 20: The post-war ‘Developmental State’
After the second world war colonial rulers in Africa reinvented their mission in terms of the ideology and practices of ‘development’. In this class we examine the impact and legacy of the developmental state in Africa.

Frederick Cooper, Africa since 1940 (2002), chs 1,3,5.

Steven Feierman, Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania (1990), chs 6 and 7

Moore and Vaughan, Cutting Down Trees , ch 5

John Iliffe, A History of Tanganyika (1979), ch 9

See also : Journal of African History, 41/1 (2000) – articles on Development in late colonial Africa.
13. NOV 27: NO CLASS

14. DEC 4: Ends of empire
Recent literature on decolonization and the end of empire in Africa has stressed firstly that nationalism was not the only form of political imagining current in post-war Africa, and secondly that violence was more extensive than has often been assumed.

Reid, add
Cooper, *Africa since 1940*, chapters 1-4


Martin Thomas, *Algeria’s Undeclared War* (2012), chs 5,7,8


15. DEC 11: CONCLUSION and PRESENTATIONS