

Jesus, Africa, & History
AFR 372G/HIS 382L/ RS 360
University of Texas at Austin
Spring 2019

Instructor:

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

When Jesus was two years old, he fled to Egypt with his family. He lived in North Africa as a refugee for many years before returning to Nazareth. His time in Africa marked a preparation period for the ministry he would eventually lead as an adult. Many of his followers and early leaders of the church would also find themselves in this region as they developed organized Christianity. And yet, we often hear nothing about Jesus's time in Africa. We do not often consider the ways Africa served as an important ministerial training ground or space of philosophical development. Nor do we understand it as a place of religious thinking and organizing. It is hardly ever thought of as a generative religious space. Instead, Africa—both historically and in the present moment—is often described as a place to introduce religious ideas and cultivate subordinate missions.

Christian missionaries and Islamic leaders made Africa a major site of spiritual conversion, especially in the 19th century. Not much changed in the 20th century. During this period, Africa became a place where Christian aid and Muslim almsgiving flourished even as Africans continued to engage indigenous practices in the face of devastation. Most Africans rely on some sort of spiritual engagement even though Africa is characterized as place in great need of moral redemption. Yet, one in four people in Sub-Saharan Africa consider themselves Christians. Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ethiopia are among the top ten countries in the world with the largest Christian population, quickly transforming Christianity into a non-Western religion. And Islam, Judaism, and indigenous religious practices loom large in African life. How and why is Africa a generative site of organized religion even if it is not described in that way? What impact did the early missionary enterprise have on the development of Christianity in Africa? Which ways did organized religion support multiple political structures, agents, and strategies from colonialism to colonial resistance, independent government, and beyond? And lastly, why are these histories often told from a western perspective even though Judeo-Christian religions such as Christianity seem to both begin and end in Africa? These four questions will animate our exploration of Christianity in Africa as well as other religions practiced on the continent.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course has two broad objectives. The first objective is to explore the long history of Christianity in Africa, while still engaging its relationship to other religious practices. Simultaneously, it wrestles with the ways African interpretations and religious expressions of Christianity have not been privileged. The second objective is to arm students with a set of analytical tools that require them to critically examine sources by contextualizing historical moments, engaging in close readings, corroborating evidence from

various places, and reading archival silences. These analytical tools, all of which will be introduced and modeled throughout the semester, are important lenses for gaining an understanding of African Christianity at various historical moments.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Mariama Bâ, *So Long a Letter* (1981).

Carl Wilkens, *I'm Not Leaving* (2011).

All required texts are available at the University Co-op (located at 2246 Guadalupe Street.).

All other texts will either be posted on Canvas or distributed to you in class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING CRITERIA

Below is a list of all class assignments and the grade distribution that will be used to determine your grades. All assignments for the semester come to a total of 100 points. I will not accept late assignments.

| Assignment | Points |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Participation & Attendance | 20 points |
| Quizzes | 20 points |
| 2 Reflection Papers | 30 points |
| Midterm Examination | 30 points |
| Total | 100 points |

Final Grade Distribution:

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|--------|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|------------|
| A | 94-100 | B+ | 87-89 | C+ | 77-79 | D+ | 67-69 | F Below 60 |
| A- | 90-93 | B | 83-86 | C | 73-76 | D | 63-66 | |
| | | B- | 80-82 | C- | 70-72 | D- | 60-62 | |

Description of Assignments

Participation & Attendance (Total: 20 points)

African Studies in a broad sense is very likely unfamiliar and foreign to you even if you are familiar with the study of religion or history. This means attendance at every class is among the minimum requirements for success. It will be incredibly difficult for you to do well in this class if you do not attend the lectures regularly. Each student is expected to attend class, participate in discussions, and complete all reading and writing assignments by the deadlines indicated in this syllabus or any written addenda. It is each student's responsibility to come to class prepared to discuss the reading for this course. Students are not allowed to record class interactions unless they have written permission from the professor. Please arrive to class on time and turn off cell phones and all electronic forums that do not facilitate a productive class environment.

Successful students rely on lecture notes alongside the text to gain understanding. These students also come to class prepared and ready to actively engage all assigned texts. This requires reading, watching, listening and reflecting on all the assigned texts (which might be given in various formats) as well as being prepared to pose relevant questions, provide comments, and feedback about these texts for each class period. In other words, you must have an active voice in the class (whether you use your actual voice and or writing). We will employ various strategies to encourage your participation beyond simply speaking-up in class. You can always actively ignite and join discussions via the discussion forum on Canvas. Plan on posing (via email, social media, or in class itself) at least one thoughtful question or comment at least every two weeks to ensure consistent participation.

You are welcome to use Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and of course, Canvas as both formal and productive mediums of discussion as long as you mark your posts #AFR 372G, #RS 360, and #AfricaTeaches. You should also be prepared to share your posts and tweets with your classmates as well as with me. Your comments in this medium can and will also be used to evaluate your class participation. However, if the instructor finds that you are not using these platforms in a course-related manner, social media will be suspended from classroom use. Keep in mind that social media can be a challenging forum from which to engage course material given its parameters (e.g. Twitter's 144 character length for posts, unclear boundaries between the personal and the academic, or inaccessible private accounts), so be sure to think deeply and respectfully about each of your posts and ultimately your desire to even use social media in this course. Use your voice, writing, and if you choose your social media platform to critically engage in a sustained discussion this semester. The way you employ these various tools (in terms of your consistency and thoughtfulness) can greatly impact your understanding of the course material.

Each student is allowed three unexcused absences during the course of the semester. Each additional (unexcused) absence will result in a 5-point deduction from your **final grade**.

***Absences Due to Athletics or University Activities**

Any athlete competing for UT on an NCAA or club level team needs to notify me in the form of a written letter from university authorities (such as the Athletic Department) prior to the absence for my consideration.

Quizzes (Total: 20 points)

There will be several quizzes that cover major concepts, definitions, and ideas at various moments in the semester (most will be unannounced with the exception of the map quiz). For the map quiz, all students will be expected to be familiar with the cities, towns and regions, that we will study this semester. The list of all of these categories will be provided early in the semester to get students acclimated to the geography of Africa. Other quizzes will reflect concepts and ideas that were presented in previous lectures, readings, and or other types of information posted on Canvas. The purpose of these quizzes is to hold you accountable for these ideas and to highlight important aspects of the course that will be reflected in the midterm examination.

Short Reflection Papers (Total: 30 points)

Students are required to write a total of two short essays throughout the course of the semester on assigned readings or films.

These essays MUST:

- (1.) Provide a BRIEF overview of the reading to provide the reader with the intellectual context from which the author is engaged. The synopsis of the reading should work to bring to bare the ideas in the reading that are most relevant to your discussion. In other words, your synopsis should have a pointed focus on the topic you plan to discuss in your response paper and should not merely summarize the reading.
- (2.) Clearly identify and articulate the major argument(s) or narrative of the text you will analyze in the paper. In short, you must define the focus of your paper by making a clear and concise thesis statement that demonstrates your thinking/intellectual vantage point about an idea within the reading.
- (3.) Explain how the text informs, challenges, and/or expands your understanding of the particularities of African religious history by using specific examples and details. You must consider specific ideas within your paper, which will require you to consider specific ideas and cite them in your response paper.
- (4.) Make connections between the text and other course materials (lectures, other readings, documentaries, etc.) You must be clear on the ways this reading is situated in the course conceptually (and this must be demonstrated in your response paper). Gaining a sense of its purpose within this course and the larger field of African religion will allow you to formulate interesting conclusions in your response paper.

Essays must be a MINIMUM of 3 pages (and no more than 3.5 pages) in length, typed (in 12-point font), double-spaced with standard 1" margins. They must also be free of grammatical errors/typos and use proper citation techniques specific to the discipline of history (Chicago Manual Style). Please do not use any other form of citation.

Midterm Examination (Total: 30 points)

There will be a midterm exam part way through the semester. The Midterm will consist of pair identifications, short answer questions, and two broad conceptual essays. Pair identifications require the student to both define and link to key terms presented in the course. Short answer questions provide students with an opportunity to offer an answer to a concrete set of questions taken from the readings and lectures while broad conceptual essays aim at giving students an opportunity to think more cumulatively and substantively about a set of large themes. *All your answers to this exam must be entirely of your own making. Working with someone else on the exam in any way will be interpreted as academic dishonesty and will be reported.*

*Please note that portions of this syllabus may change at the discretion of the instructor but adequate notification will be provided.

COURSE SCHEDULE

As the professor of this course, I reserve the right to deviate or modify parts of this schedule. All changes will include advanced written notice. Please note that most of the materials for this course can be found on Canvas unless otherwise noted.

Week 1

1/22/2019-1/24/2019

Readings:

Binyvanga Wainaina, "How Not to Write About Africa"

Binyvanga Wainaina, "How Not to Write About Africa: The Revenge II"

Week 2

1/29/2019-1/31/2019

Readings:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg>

Bronislaw Malinowski, "The Role of Magic and Religion," ed. William Lessa and Evon Vogt, *Reader in Comparative Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979).

Week 3

2/5/2019-2/7/2019

Readings:

John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1991), 180-193.

Global Christianity: Africa

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FV2TkKPUcnY>

Week 4:

2/12/2019-2/14/2019

Readings:

John Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*, (Nairobi: Kenya: Action Publishers, 2012), 19-43.

Musa Dube, "Who do you say that I am?," *Feminist Theology*, 15, 3 (2007): 346-367.

Week 5:

2/19/ 2019-2/21/2019

Readings:

John Binns, *The Orthodox Church of Ethiopia* (New York: I.B Taurius, 2017), 1-6; 14-16; 20-32; 61-100.

Marilyn E. Heldman, "Architectural Symbolism, Sacred Geography, and the Ethiopian Church," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, XXII, 3 (1992): 222-241.

*** Map Quiz 2/21**

Week 6:

2/26/2019-2/28/2019

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The First Black Man to See the Baby Jesus," *The Root*, December 22, 2014.

<http://www.theroot.com/the-1st-black-man-to-see-the-baby-jesus-1790878103>

Paul Perry, *Jesus in Egypt: Discovering the Secrets of Christ's Childhood Years* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 7-14.

Antonio Pinero, "Herod I: The Controversial King that Transformed the Holy Land" <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/archaeology-and-history/magazine/2016/11-12/king-herod-judaea-holy-land-rome-new-testament/>

The Ancient Origins of the Coptic Church

<http://www.ancient-origins.net/history/origins-ancient-coptic-church-egypt-002462>

*Reflection Paper #1 Due 2/28/2019 on Canvas by 7pm.

Week 7:

3/5/ 2019-3/7/2019

Readings:

J.O. Awolalu, "What is African Traditional Religion," *Studies in Comparative Religion*, 10,2 (1976).

Stephen C. Volz. "Them Who Kill the Body: Christian Ideals and Political Realities in the Interior of Southern Africa During the 1850s," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36,1 (2010): 41-56.

John Glover, "The Prophet Muhammad Reincarnated and his Son, Jesus Re-centering Islam Among the Layenne of Senegal," *Journal of Historical Geography*,

Week 8:

3/12/ 2019-3/14/2019

Reading:

Nile Green, "Islam for the indentured Indian: a Muslim missionary in colonial South FRICA," *BULLETIN OF SOAS*, 71,3 (2008): 529-553.

George Shepperson, "Ethiopianism and African Nationalism," 14,1, *Phylon*, 9-18.

***MIDTERM-3/14/2019**

Week 9:

3/19/ 2019-3/21/ 2019
SPRING BREAK

Week 10:
3/26/2019-3/28/2019

Readings:
Mariama Ba, *So Long A Letter* (Heineman, 1981).

Week 11
4/2/2019- 4/4/2019

Reading:
David Anthony, "The Rise & Fall of Apartheid: A Timeline"

The Kairos Document, 1985."

Steve Biko, *"I Write What I Like: Selected Writings by Steve Biko,"* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978), 54-60.

Week 12:
4/9/ 2019-4/11/2019

Readings:
David Ratner, "A forgotten history, a marginalized community: Biographical Narratives of Ethiopian Jews, Former Activists in Underground Organizations During the Civil War in Ethiopia, *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 31,1 (2018): 32-47.

Week 13:
4/16/ 2019-4/18/2019

Readings:
Leave None to Tell: Genocide in Rwanda
* Read Introduction & History
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/> read sections under Introduction and History

Carl Wilkens, *I'm not leaving* (2011), 1-56.

Week 14:
4/23/ 2019-4/25/2019

Carl Wilkens, *I'm not leaving* (2011), 56-94.

Mushmire

<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/testimonies/pdf/95%20-%20Mushimire2009.pdf>

Xavier

<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/testimonies/pdf/6%20-%20Xavier%202009.pdf>

Reverian

<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/testimonies/pdf/10%20-%20Reverien%202009.pdf>

Week 15:

4/30/ 2019-5/2/2019

Carl Wilkens, *I'm not leaving* (2011), 95-129.

Leave None to Tell: Rwanda

* Read The Clergy

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/> read sections under Introduction and History

Deborah Bloom and Briana Duggan, “Bishops Sorry for Role in 1994 Genocide” CNN
<http://www.cnn.com/2016/11/21/africa/rwanda-catholic-church-apology/>

Excerpts from Outreach Programme on the Rwanda Genocide and United Nations

Belancille

<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/testimonies/pdf/16%20-%20Belancille%202009.pdf>

Clarisse

<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/testimonies/pdf/86%20-%20Clarisse2009.pdf>

Odette

<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/testimonies/pdf/17%20-%20Odette%202009.pdf>

*Reflection Paper # 2 Due 5/2/2009 on Canvas by 7pm.

Week 16:

5/7/2019-5/9/2019

Carl Wilkens, *I'm not leaving* (2011), 130-172.