

# HIS 350L/AFR 372G: African Travel Narratives

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Office: Garrison Hall 3.106

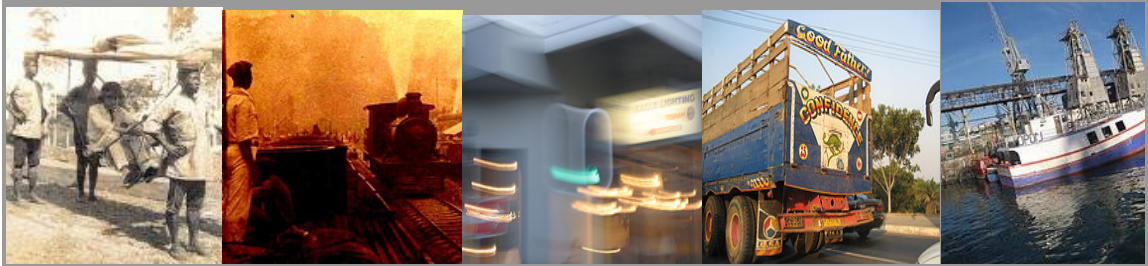
Office Hours: Mondays 2-3 pm

Class location: GAR 1.116

Class time: Mondays 3-6 pm

Questions? I prefer if you contact me through canvas email.

Email: ([osseo@utexas.edu](mailto:osseo@utexas.edu)) - label all additional emails in subject line with HIS 350L



## **Description.**

This course examines histories of Africa and travel through eyewitness accounts. Course participants will study journeys Africans have made within and from the continent alongside accounts of travelers visiting Africa from elsewhere. These travelers included migrant laborers, market women, Peace Corps volunteers, enslaved individuals, soldiers, political activists, adopted children, and religious evangelists since the 18th century.

The course readings and films focus on different groups of travelers in a number of time periods.

Some of the guiding questions we will consider:

- How did people experience the movement of their bodies from one location to another?
- How has 'Africa' taken on different meanings for our travelers?
- What do their narratives indicate about changing conceptions of ethnicity, migration, tourism, citizenship, and the environment in different time periods?
- And how did shifts in medical, transportation, and communication technologies shape their journeys?

## **Requirements:**

Open to all interested participants. Assignments include attendance and class participation (30%), Weekly Written Comments (20%), Oral Presentations (10%), and a short research paper (40%) due December 12 at 4 pm. **Excused absences require prior notice or a doctor's statement. Unexcused absences will result in the drop of a half a letter grade.**

## **Course Goals:**

Participants in this course will have the opportunity to:

- improve reading comprehension
- improve knowledge of African history
- improve historical research skills
- improve writing skills
- improve oral presentation skills

**All participants are welcome to stop by my office hours:  
Mondays 2-3 pm in Garrison Hall 3.106**

## **Flags:**

This course is designated as fulfilling the requirements for a **Global Cultures Flag**. At least one third of the course content requires an in-depth examination of the broader cultural context and perspectives of one or more non-U.S. communities, countries, or coherent regional groupings of countries, past or present.

It is also designated as fulfilling the requirements for a **Writing Flag**. At least one third of the course grade depends on writing. Course participants will produce regular written projects and receive feedback on their writing assignments from the instructor.

It also satisfied the requirements for an **Independent Query** course.

## **Travel Narratives:**

Each week we will closely study a first person account of travel to or from Africa. If you want to buy all the books for the course, they are available at the Co-op. Note that not all of them are required, some are available as e-books, and some are available for much less from resellers on amazon and other websites. Consider sharing books with someone else in the class who lives nearby, or reading on reserve at PCL.

### **Books available at the campus bookstore and on 2 hr reserve at PCL**

Maya Angelou, *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (1986)

Peggy LeBaron, *King Peggy*

Teju Cole, *Every Day is For the Thief* (Random House, 2014)

Tete-Michel Kpomassie, *An African in Greenland* (New York Review Books, Classics, orig. 1981)

George Packer, *The Village of Waiting* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001, orig 1984)

Arthur Japin, *The Two Hearts of Kwasi Boachi*

### **Available as free electronic books**

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1902) – UT libraries has an electronic book link

Oludah Equiano (1794), *The Interesting Narrative of Oludah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* – Free full text available on google books

Mary Kingsley, *West African Travels* (1897) – Free full text available on google books

## **Films:**

*Nollywood Babylon* (2008)

Steven Spielberg (dir.), *Amistad* (Dreamworks, 1998) 155 mins.

*Osuofia in London* (Nollywood, 2003)

Jon Shenk and Megan Mylan (dir.), *Lost Boys of Sudan* (New Video Group, 2003) 87 mins.

## **Study Strategies:**

This is a reading-intensive course. At the end of the semester, participants will also have the opportunity to apply what they have learned about historical narratives and primary sources in a short final paper.

Learning to read efficiently is an important skill that may take time for you to develop. The main thing to realize is that everyone reads and comprehends material differently. Someone may need a 5 hour solid block of time to read 200 pages and best retain the information if they type up careful notes as they read. Another person may need many 20 minute time blocks and best remember the material if they highlight and underline the text as they go. Advanced students may find that they can read a monograph over a couple of hours, jot down a few questions for class discussion, and remember the critical points in their head.

A note on films: During the course of the semester, we will watch several films and documentaries about migration. Take notes while watching these films, noting time code of interesting scenes and dialogue.

### **Written Comments:**

On Fridays by midnight, each participant will upload to Canvas an original one page comment on the book of the week. I understand that you may not have completed the entire book by the time you start writing, but the point is to get some initial thoughts down prior to our in-class discussions. You can view prompts, and guidelines on Canvas. Use full sentences, indent for new paragraphs, and try to write in simple, clear language. This weekly writing practice will help you hone your writing skills and will get much easier to complete over the course of the semester as you develop your writing style. With your permission, I will circulate well-written comments to other students in class for us to discuss. For more tips and guidelines, see Canvas.

**Please note that I will not accept emailed, printed, or late submissions so plan accordingly.**

Note: If you cannot type quickly without looking at the keys, I recommend you spend some time on your keyboarding skills. There are lots of free games and websites to help you learn, i.e.

<http://www.typingclub.com>

<https://play.typeracer.com/>

### **In-class Discussions:**

This class meets once a week for a 3 hour session. Please arrive on time and be prepared to discuss the book for the week. The purpose of our discussions is to think through life in another time and place, and learn more about the historical context in which a story takes place. It is an opportunity for you to sit back and imagine life in a faraway place which can be very relaxing and fun. African history also opens up many dilemmas, and these stories are a way to consider such complex themes as slavery, exploration, colonialism, migration, volunteering, and global poverty through the eyes of real people.

Often, course participants have travelled a lot in their lives, or are about to set off on new adventures, so do share how the stories remind you of your own experiences and inspire you to form new ones. **If you find it challenging to speak up in class or require any accommodations, please meet with me to discuss strategies.**

### **Oral Reports:**

All participants will choose two weeks to make a 3 minute oral report at the start of class. You may focus more on summarizing and analyzing the content in the book or provide geographic and historical context for the book of the week. For tips and guidelines, see Canvas.

## **Final Research Paper:**

One of the best ways to improve your historical writing is to read a variety of first-person accounts from different time periods. This will allow you to reflect on changes over time and the ways that people in different contexts witnessed African societies. Your experience in the class will culminate in a 6-8 page research paper (2,000 words or more). You will have the opportunity to select a travel narrative of your choice, or choose one discussed in class, to write an essay about the person's experience travelling to/from/within Africa. You can add background information on the historical conditions in the country that the writer visits using scholarly journal articles, newspaper articles, photographs, audiovisual recordings, and history books. We will discuss your proposed narrative, outside sources, and drafts in class. Our goal is to write a completely original and new paper on a topic that you find interesting.

Papers due on Canvas Monday May 10 by midnight. No late submissions or emailed papers.

**We will use Turnitin Software for all written submissions. Plagiarism (copy and pasting sentences and phrases from other sources including websites without use of quotation marks and full citations) will result in a failing grade.**

## **Grading Scale:**

A	93-100%	C+	77-79%
A-	90-92%	C	73-76%
B+	87-89%	C-	70-72%
B	83-86%	D	69-60%
B-	80-82%	Failing:	Below 60%

## **Safety:**

Please note that I do not allow concealed guns in my office, GAR 3.106 and may remind you orally when you visit. You may make arrangements to speak with me by phone during my office hours. While I am not permitted to ban concealed weapons in our classroom, please note that you must be 21 and older and hold a license for a firearm. Licensed carriers must have the gun in a holster on or about them. Openly carried weapons are not allowed on the UT campus. If a gun is visible in class, faculty and students are advised to immediately call 911 and leave the room. For more information on campus safety and campus-approved holsters, visit: <http://campuscarry.utexas.edu>

## **Syllabus (Check Canvas for further details on assignments and updates):**

### **Module 1: Middle Passages: Journeys from Africa**

January 28	Introduction: Travel and Africa – watch a youtube video about an African journey or visit a local African restaurant such as: Wasota Food Truck or Aster's Ethiopian Restaurant
February 4	Olaudah Equiano (1794; 2001), <i>The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself</i> , edited by Werner Sollors – ebook available
February 11	Arthur Japin, <i>The Two Hearts of Kwasi Boachi</i>

### **Module 2: Explorations and Returns: Journeys to Africa**

February 18	Stanley, (1878) <i>Through the Dark Continent</i> -ebook available Mary H. Kingsley (1897), <i>Travels in West Africa</i> –ebook available
February 25	Belloc (1898), <i>Modern Travellers</i> -ebook available Conrad (1902), <i>Heart of Darkness</i> - ebook available  Map quiz (countries only)
March 4	Campbell (2006), <i>Middle Passages</i> (2 sample chapters available on Canvas)
March 11	Angelou (1986), <i>All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes</i>

### **Module 3: Unsettling: Journeys from Africa**

March 18	Kpomassie (1981), <i>An African in Greenland</i>
March 25	Eshun (2005), <i>Black Gold of the Sun: Searching for Home in Africa and Beyond</i> –excerpts on canvas
April 1	Dent et al (2005), <i>They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky: The True Story of Three Lost Boys from Sudan</i> – excerpts on canvas

### **Module 4: (In)dependence: Journeys to Africa**

April 8	Packer (1984), <i>The Village of Waiting</i>
April 15	Bartels (2012), <i>King Peggy</i>
April 22	Cole (2014), <i>Every day is for the Thief</i> Film in class: Nollywood Babylon
April 29	Paper discussions
May 6	Paper discussions
May 10	Papers Due on Canvas (Friday by midnight)

