This course explores the early history of Africa and Africa’s place in the world from the beginnings of human evolution to the high point of Africa’s medieval empires in the fifteenth century. It introduces students to the multiple disciplines contributing to knowledge about early Africa, develops skills in internet research, and shows the centrality of Africa and Africans for humanity in general.

The five modules of the course address human evolution, language in history, archaeology of Neolithic and iron-age settlements, medieval empires, and slavery. For the first four modules there will be lectures, an assigned book, internet lab sessions, preparation of a two-page paper, discussion (of the lectures, readings, and papers), and an in-class exam. Each student paper will summarize topics selected from a list of key subjects. Research for the papers will rely on internet resources, assisted in lab sessions. Papers will be posted on the web, and the exam for each module will be based on the papers as well as on readings and lectures. The fifth module will be simpler, with an assigned book, lectures, and an exam.

Texts (available at Pitt bookstore):
- Graham Connah, African Civilizations
- C. Ehret, The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800
- B. Heine and D. Nurse, African Languages: An Introduction
- Patrick Manning, Slavery and African Life
- D. T. Niane, Sundiata, an Epic of Old Mali
- C. Stringer and R. McKie, African Exodus : The Origins Of Modern Humanity

Course modules and key questions:

**Human evolution** (Weeks 1-4). What were the stages in the evolution of hominids? What were the stages in the spread of modern Homo sapiens?

**Language** (Weeks 5-7). What can studies of language tell us about the early history of Africa and the world?

**Archaeology** (Weeks 8-10). What can studies of archaeology tell us about life in Neolithic and Iron-Age Africa?

**Medieval Empires** (Weeks 11-13). What was the character of life in Africa’s medieval empires?

**Slavery** (Weeks 14-15). How did slave trade and slavery change African life?
Course Grade:
Each of the four papers is worth 10%, for a total of 40% (based on group work).
Each of the five exams is worth 10%, for a total of 50% (based on individual work).
Class participation (including attendance): 10%

Note on Disability:
If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact the instructor and Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union 412-648-7890 or 412-383-7355 (TTY), as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1.
Tuesday, Aug. 29. Introduction to the course
Thursday, Aug. 31. Introduction to human evolution
   Reading: Ehret, Civilizations of Africa, 1-25
   Stringer & McKie, African Exodus

Week 2. Human Evolution
Tuesday, Sep. 5. Internet lab (1201 WWPH): Hominid evolution
Thursday, Sep. 7. Lecture: Hominid evolution
   Reading: Stringer & McKie, African Exodus

Week 3. Human Evolution
Tuesday, Sep. 12. Lecture: The spread of modern Homo sapiens
   Paper 1 (paper or PowerPoint on an aspect of human evolution)
   Reading: Stringer & McKie, African Exodus

Week 4. Human Evolution
Tuesday, Sep. 19 Internet lab (1201 WWPH): Review 1: Human evolution
Thursday, Sep. 21. Exam 1. (based on Stringer, Ehret + papers of classmates)

Week 5. Language
Thursday, Sep. 28. Internet lab (1201 WWPH): Language
   Reading: Ehret, Civilizations of Africa, 26-58
   Heine & Nurse, African Languages

Week 6. Language
Tuesday, Oct. 3. Lecture: Migration and African societies as seen through language
Thursday, Oct. 5. Paper 2 (paper or PowerPoint on an aspect of language in Africa)
   Reading: Ehret, Civilizations of Africa, 59-106
   Heine & Nurse, African Languages

Week 7. Language
Tuesday, Oct. 10. Internet lab (1201 WWPH). Review 2: Migration and language.
Thursday, Oct. 12. Exam 2. (based on Heine & Nurse, Ehret + papers of classmates)
Week 8. Archaeology  
Tuesday, Oct. 17. Lecture: Introduction to archaeology of Africa  
Thursday, Oct. 19. Internet lab (1201 WWPH): Archaeology  
Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 107-158  
Connah, *African Civilizations*

Week 9. Archaeology  
Tuesday, Oct. 24. Lecture: Archaeology of Africa  
Thursday, Oct. 26. Paper 3 (paper or PowerPoint on an aspect of archaeology)  
Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 159-237  
Connah, *African Civilizations*

Week 10. Archaeology  
Thursday, Nov. 2. Exam 3. Archaeology (based on Connah + papers of classmates)

Week 11. Medieval Empires  
Tuesday, Nov. 7. Internet lab (1201 WWPH): Medieval Empires  
Thursday, Nov. 9. Lecture: Medieval Empires of Africa  
Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 238-289  
Niane, *Sundiata*

Week 12. Medieval Empires  
Tuesday, Nov. 14. Lecture: Medieval Africa and the Islamic World  
Paper 4 (paper or PowerPoint on an aspect of medieval empires)  
Reading: Ehret, *Civilizations of Africa*, 290-348  
Niane, *Sundiata*

Week 13. Medieval Empires  
Tuesday, Nov. 21. Exam 4. Medieval Empires (on Niane + papers of classmate)  
Thursday, Nov. 23. Thanksgiving Holiday – no class.  
Reading: Niane, *Sundiata*

Week 14. Slavery  
Tuesday, Nov. 28. Discussion: Niane’s *Sundiata*  
Thursday, Nov. 30. Lecture: Slavery and Slave Trade  
Reading: Manning, *Slavery and African Life*

Week 15. Slavery  
Tuesday, Dec. 5. Lecture: Long-term changes in African history  
Thursday, Dec. 7. Review 5: Long-term changes in African history  
Reading: Manning, *Slavery and African Life*

Exam Week  
Dec. 11-15. Exam 5 (based on Manning + Niane)